“WHERE THE OLD WEST COMES TO LIFE”: THE STORY OF OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM

A Thesis by

Keith Aaron Wondra

Bachelor of Arts, Wichita State University, 2011

Submitted to the Department of History
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

July 2014
“WHERE THE OLD WEST COMES TO LIFE”: THE STORY OF OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Public History.

______________________________
Jay Price, Committee Chair

______________________________
Robin Henry, Committee Member

______________________________
Christopher Brooks, Committee Member
DEDICATION

To my family and friends who helped guide me throughout my college career.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a thesis on an institution that has a long history in Wichita, like Old Cowtown Museum, could not be done without a lot of help from the community. First I would like to thank David Flask, Teddie Barlow and the staff at Old Cowtown Museum for allowing me to do a thesis on “their” institution and for letting me research their vast collections. I would also like to thank Dr. Jay Price for his unending patience and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. My sincere gratitude goes out to my committee members for taking the time to help guide me through this process. I would also like to thank my family for their unending support throughout my entire college career. In addition, several people from several institutions helped guide me in my research:

Kathy Bell at Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City, Kansas
Coleen Dyson at the Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland in Wichita, Kansas
Gary Huffman at the First Presbyterian Church of Wichita
Mary Nelson at Wichita State University Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives
Paul Oberg at the McCormick School Museum in Wichita, Kansas
Jeff Sheets at the Dickinson County Heritage Center in Abilene, Kansas

In addition several people answered questions that helped in the writing of the thesis:

Delores Crum
Vance Davis
Bob Garrett
Stan Harder
Gary Lee
Mary Manlove
Jim Mershon
Denise Scribner
Francene Sharp
ABSTRACT

Old Cowtown Museum originally started as a shrine to the pioneers and founders of Wichita. It later reinvented itself around Hollywood’s version of the Old West. After the end of the Hollywood western, it reinvented itself around Wichita’s agricultural history. In recent years, Old Cowtown Museum has become a nationally recognized and accredited living history museum. This paper examines the role that Old Cowtown Museum plays in the history of outdoor museums in the United States and Kansas. This paper puts the institution into the scope of western-themed museum history.

Old Cowtown Museum is a local and regional attraction in spite of its problems has outlasted many of its peer institutions. A product of 1950s Old West nostalgia, it has become one of the most beloved of all of Wichita’s museums and institutions.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. OUTDOOR MUSEUMS IN THE UNITED STATES</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. OUTDOOR MUSEUM MOVEMENT IN KANSAS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. A DREAM BECOMES REALITY</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. “AUTHENTIC” OLD WEST</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. VICTORIAN CULTURE MEETS WESTERN THEME</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. DECLINE AND RESURGENCE</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A: IMAGES OF OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B: OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS &amp; BUSINESS MANAGERS</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX C: OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM BUILDINGS</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX D: OUTDOOR MUSEUMS IN KANSAS</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Relive yesterday at historic Cowtown. Walk down the wooden sidewalks of the Old West. Take an excursion into the past. Walk down the wooden sidewalks of Wichita’s Cowtown. The hollow echoes of your boots will bring back memories of Jessie Chisholm and “Buffalo Bill” Mathewson who walked this way so long ago. Here is the old West living on in these old frame buildings - bright and fresh with twentieth century paint but alive with old memories.¹

So read a brochure about Wichita’s Cowtown in the early 1960s. The end of the brochure proclaimed that there was fun at Cowtown as well as history, a theme that still holds true in the museum’s promotional literature today.²

Cowtown originally started as a shrine to the pioneers and founders of Wichita. It later reinvented itself around Hollywood’s version of the Old West. With the end of Hollywood westerns in the early 1970s, Cowtown adapted to portraying the Victorian era in Wichita and the importance of agriculture to Sedgwick County. Contrary to the museum’s early years staged gunfights were still held on the dusty streets but they took a back seat to other events. In the sixty-four year history of Cowtown, one thing has remained constant: the museum’s willingness to change and adapt while attempting to decide if it is tourist attraction, outdoor museum or a western historic preservation project. The future of Cowtown lies with its embrace and interpretation of western history.

The history of Cowtown and other western outdoor museums are ones that are barely covered in outdoor museum literature that tends to cover the history of agricultural, colonial, and

¹ Relive Yesterday at Historic Cowtown. (Wichita: n.p., n.d.); Unless noted, the majority of materials are located in Old Cowtown Museum archives.
² Through the years Old Cowtown Museum has gone by many names, for consistency, Cowtown will be used throughout the thesis unless in quotes.
technology based outdoor museums such as Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia; Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan; and the Farmers Museum in Cooperstown, New York. Outdoor western museums, if mentioned at all, are considered western tourist attractions, not actual museums. Just like Williamsburg and Greenfield Village, western-themed museums are staples of preservation and education sites and to relegate them to mere attractions ignores their role in teaching the public. In recent years, however, there is beginning to be a discussion of the value and legacy of western-themed outdoor museums, as is seen in the national register nomination forms that cover Boot Hill Museum and the beginnings of Old Abilene Town. Even here, however, museums that preserve agricultural or small town history have the status as “museums,” while those that preserve or tell the story of, for example, the cattle towns, are covered in literature about “attractions.”

Cathy Ambler’s article on small outdoor museums in Kansas covers the history and architecture of seven outdoor museums in the state but fails to mention outdoor museums devoted to the preservation of cattle towns and western history such as Boot Hill Museum and Cowtown. By ignoring western themed outdoor museums she is relegating them to tourist attraction status. Her argument that common structures such as churches and schools are mainstay buildings in small historic sites can be applied also to western-themed outdoor museums. Ambler concludes that the emphasis of small historic sites “proscribes their ability to place their communities in the context of historical movements and impoverishes their account of the past's rich complexities and diversities of experience.” This can also be applied to western
themed outdoor museums. By ignoring institutions such as Boot Hill Museum and Cowtown she is relegating them to tourist attraction status.³

While Ambler’s article deals with the funding and beginning of Kansas outdoor museums Hal K. Rothman’s Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West deals more with how tourism has affected the American West. The book is essential in studying how tourism affects not only Cowtown but also the American West in general. According to Rothman the move toward tourism started to break apart community attachments. The embrace of tourism starts to pit factions against each other.⁴ For outdoor museums, such as Cowtown and Boot Hill Museum, the embrace of tourism began to set in opposition the role of historical accuracy with what brought in the public.

The preservation of western architecture and history is one that has been tied to “frontier history,” perhaps reflecting Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous Frontier Thesis, or just reinforcing what American popular culture says is the “authentic Old West,” influenced mainly by Hollywood’s re-interpretation of western history.⁵

Since Cowtown is a combination of attraction, museum, living history site, and historic preservation project, this thesis fills a void in historiography on the role of outdoor museums, suggesting that these parts have very different expectations and sometimes they are in conflict with one another. Even though it started out as a shrine to early Wichita, Cowtown has

reinvented itself over the years to remain relevant. Despite the conflicts it has outlasted several of its peers to become one of the nation’s leading western-themed museums.
CHAPTER TWO

OUTDOOR MUSEUMS IN THE UNITED STATES

According to the National Trust, an outdoor museum is a “restored, re-created or replica village site in which several or many structures have been restored, rebuilt, or moved and whose purpose is to interpret a historical or cultural setting, period, or activity.” William Murtagh, historic preservation veteran and first Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places for the Department of the Interior, divides outdoor museums in the United States into three categories. "They may consist of original buildings on their original sites preserved and operated as a museum for educational purposes. Or they may be buildings of historical or aesthetic interest moved to a new site for similar purposes. Or they may be composed of totally reconstructed buildings built with the same educational aim in mind.”

Preservation of historic structures goes back to the 19th century, when efforts by groups such as the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in saving Mount Vernon in Virginia resulted in the salvation of major shrines across the country. These included, but were not limited to Andrew Jackson’s Hermitage in Nashville and Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Virginia. By the 1920s, preservation efforts shifted from historic homes to historic villages, historic districts and outdoor museums due to the efforts of private philanthropy. As the first ones became successful, more historic villages and outdoor museums opened with additional historic districts designated across the nation.

---

The most famous outdoor museum in the United States is Colonial Williamsburg, a facility that started out as a dream of Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin, Bruton Parish Church Rector and Biblical Literature professor at the College of William and Mary. As he walked the streets of Williamsburg, he “saw the last, fading vestiges of its 18th-century greatness, and mourned at the often tawdry impress of the present which seemed about to obliterate all those traces of a glorious past that still remained.”

Goodwin believed Williamsburg to be the “Cradle of the Republic” and the “birthplace of liberty.” He dreamed the preservation of the authentic buildings as an historical shrine to the founding of the United States. To finance his dream Goodwin first contacted Henry Ford, who declined. Goodwin then relentlessly pursued another American business magnate, John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

In 1926, Rockefeller promised to donate money to restore Williamsburg under the condition of anonymity. At the donor’s suggestion, Goodwin started to secure the whole town instead of an assortment of buildings. As the project grew, the need to preserve the secret donor became more of a challenge, with speculation on its identity ranging from Henry Ford to J.P. Morgan and George Eastman. By June of 1928, work at Williamsburg was in full swing but features, such as new sidewalks and sewer systems made the cooperation of the town vital to the success of Goodwin’s dream. Goodwin decided to get the citizens support by revealing the donor’s name. On June 12, 1928, Goodwin announced the donors were John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Abby Rockefeller. The primary motivation behind Rockefeller’s donation was his

---

8 Murtagh, Keeping Time, 36.
motivation to maintain a proper image with the American public and the city where many of the
country’s founding fathers walked became the perfect venue.\textsuperscript{10}

Over the years, researchers in the fields of history, archaeology, and architecture
combined to produce an historically accurate restoration. This resulted in Colonial Williamsburg
becoming a model on available solutions for preservationists, with lessons on how to totally
reconstruct whole buildings as well as the rehabilitation, restoration, and adaptive use of existing
ones. The Williamsburg model also changed the purpose of preservation from merely
rehabilitating existing structures to recreating ones that have been lost. The inclusion of
educational programs and interpretation added to the importance of the museum. It included
well-trained costumed guides, working craftsmen, period dining, military drills, music, dancing,
fireworks and plays that appealed to the visitor and required their participation. This increased
the museum’s appeal to tourists thus making it the most visited outdoor museum in the United
States.\textsuperscript{11} By the 1950s, Colonial Williamsburg had become one of the top historic tourist
attractions in the country, a national shrine that extolled the American Revolution in a time when
Cold War patriotism raged. The museum even inspired a wave of “Colonial Revival”
architecture and decorating trends.

While John D. Rockefeller, Jr. funded the restoration of Williamsburg out of patriotic
motivation and to maintain his public image; education, self-promotion and patriotism of the
founding fathers and American technology according to William Murtagh were the primary force

\textsuperscript{10} Raymond B. Fosdick, \textit{John D. Rockefeller, Jr., A Portrait} (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956.), 280,
Foundation/journal/Autumn04/perry.cfm, accessed April 17, 2014.; Handler and Gable, \textit{The New History in an Old
Museum}, 31-37.

\textsuperscript{11} Edward P. Alexander, \textit{Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums}
(Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 91; Murtagh, Keeping Time, 96.; Alexander,
Museums in Motion, 91-92.
for Henry Ford’s founding of Greenfield Village. Unlike Colonial Williamsburg which used professionals to reproduce an authentic eighteenth century capital city, Ford decided to recreate an historic village via the reconstruction and moving of historic buildings to Dearborn, Michigan. In 1928, Ford expressed the reasons in creating Greenfield Village and its role in the education of America:

We are trying to assemble a complete series of every article used or made in America from the days of the first settlers down to the present time. When we are through we shall have reproduced American life, and that is, I think, the best way of preserving at least part of our history and our tradition.

For by looking at the things that people used and the way they lived, a better and truer impression can be gained in an hour than could be had from a month of reading—even if there were books the authors of which had the facilities to discover the minute details of the older life.

Improvements have been coming so quickly that the past is being lost to the rising generation, and I think it can be preserved only by putting it in a form where it may be seen and felt. At least that is my idea of one side of education and the reason behind the collection.

The biggest part of Greenfield Village was the restoration and moving of Thomas Edison’s Menlo Park Laboratory to Dearborn. Being a close friend of Edison, Ford demanded accuracy with seven freight cars full of New Jersey topsoil including weeds and grass arriving at the Dearborn site. After a year and a half of preparation, on October 21, 1929, President Herbert Hoover and Henry Ford ushered Thomas Edison to the restored and reconstructed buildings of Menlo Park. In the recreated laboratory, Edison with one of his former assistants, Francis Jehl, tested one of the famous inventor’s filament light bulbs. After the test’s success, lights around

---

the nation that were shut off for the occasion were turned back on with a Liberty Bell replica announcing its success to Dearborn visitors.\textsuperscript{14}

The 1929 opening of the Menlo Park buildings and the museum did not stop Ford from continuing to add to Greenfield Village. He believed that there were more notable people other than Thomas Edison who needed remembering. To coincide with the opening of the Menlo Park buildings, Ford acquired the bicycle shop where the first airplane was built and the Orville Wright homestead. Greenfield Village continued to grow throughout World War II but efforts came to a stop with Ford’s death in 1947. Even though Ford never authorized professional charts and maps, the layout of the village remains the same.\textsuperscript{15}

Meanwhile, to help promote Cooperstown, New York as a cultural center, Stephen Clark, a major executive in the Singer Sewing Machine Company and a New York City resident who resided in Cooperstown during the summer, enlisted the help of the director of the New York State Historical Association, Edward P. Alexander. Unlike Henry Ford, Clark sought advice and guidance from professionals in developing the Farmers’ Museum. For years, he owned a non-profitable farm complex, an inheritance from his brother, and under the advice of his financial advisor, Paul S. Kerr, turned it into a farmer’s museum.\textsuperscript{16}

In the middle of the planning and discussion on the development of the Farmers’ Museum, Clark had his own ideas. “In the beginning when we discussed it he said he didn’t want another Williamsburg, he didn’t want one of the palatial mansions on the Hudson, but he wanted to show the life of the village farmers in and around Otsego County in the early

\textsuperscript{14}Greenleaf, From These Beginnings, 102; Hosmer, Jr., Preservation Comes of Age, 1:90.
\textsuperscript{15}Hosmer, Jr., Preservation Comes of Age, 1:91,95-96,97.
\textsuperscript{16}Hosmer, Jr., Preservation Comes of Age, 1:99; Murtagh, Keeping Time, 98; Hosmer, Jr., Preservation Comes of Age, 1:103.
Clark and his advisors agreed that that the village would resemble a street depicting a crossroads settlement instead of the original idea of a circle of buildings. “Clark did not feel that the bandstand village square idea was typical of every upstate town, and he also felt that things should grow as they would have along a village street.” As World War II ended, the village began to materialize using the revised plan. By 1944, the village opened to the public and it included a blacksmith’s forge, a law office, and a farmhouse.

The middle of the twentieth century ushered in a new wave of outdoor museums starting with the opening of Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Like Colonial Williamsburg and Greenfield Village, Old Sturbridge Village had a big time financial donor, Albert Wells, co-owner with his brothers, Channing M. and J. Cheney of the American Optical Company in Southbridge, Massachusetts. After rain cancelled his golf game with friends, Wells reluctantly went antiquing and got hooked. Soon he filled his home and several outbuildings in Southbridge with antiques and collectibles. Along with his brothers, they founded the Wells Historical Museum in 1935. A year later, Albert Wells purchased a 167 acre farm near Sturbridge, Massachusetts to start a village to store his collection in appropriate buildings. The village was named the Quinbaug Village in 1938 with all of the buildings moved to the new site. This followed what Henry Ford did with Greenfield Village and predates the plan for Old Cowtown Museum. Like Greenfield Village, Wells perceived the goal of his museum and village to be educational. He explained,

---

17 Hosmer, Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age*, 1:104.
18 Ibid., 1:105.
19 Ibid., 1:105.
20 Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, 98.
Old Quinbaug Village will be a living museum where the arts and industries of early rural New England will be preserved and taught anew…. The basic purpose of the Village extends, however, far beneath these surface objectives of display. It will not pretend, for example, to be a finely accurate reconstruction or restoration. It will make no apology to the expert who examines each board and nail with a critical eye to historical exactness…. This purpose, briefly, will be to preserve the ever-good things of New England’s past in a manner that will teach their usefulness to the people of the present and the future. By “good things” of the past is meant not merely antique objects, but rather everything these objects imply—how they were made, how they were used, what the people and conditions of life were that made them necessary and influenced their designs; above all, how virtues and ideals expressed in them can be applied to life and work today.\(^{22}\)

Wells also started an apprenticeship program using the village as the classroom. Just like Ford, Wells believed that schools that turned out industrial workers with knowledge of the past with an appreciation of present conveniences made them strong and productive citizens.\(^{23}\)

In the fall of 1945, Albert Wells suffered a heart attack and his daughter-in-law, Ruth, took over and became the village’s first director. To avoid confusion with Quinebaug, Connecticut, the director and Wells family proposed changing the name to Old Sturbridge Village in 1946. On June 8, eighty-one visitors paid a dollar admission to tour the eighteen reconstructed and old buildings during its opening day. By the end of 1957, Old Sturbridge Village welcomed over a million visitors. Today it is considered one of America’s best and most visited outdoor museums.\(^{24}\)

With the success of Colonial Williamsburg, the Farmers’ Museum, Greenfield Village, and Old Sturbridge Village, additional outdoor museums started appearing across the United States. Examples range from restored plantations in the south to western forts to tourist railroads

---

\(^{22}\) Hosmer, Jr. *Preservation Comes of Age*, 1:111.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 1:114.

to maritime museums such as Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, where ships function akin to restored buildings. Some of the new museums were created as ways of preserving their region’s past, while others served as extensions of their founders’ collections nor were these just large-scale institutions. Across the country, communities both large and small began to create outdoor museums and moving old structures to new recreated “villages.” For example, Nebraska saw the creation of two outdoor museums that illustrate some of the same issues seen in Williamsburg and Old Sturbridge, but on a smaller level. One was the Harold Warp Pioneer Village in Minden, Nebraska. Founded in 1953 by Harold Warp, an inventor of plastic devices for better chicken breeding, Pioneer Village houses the world’s largest collection of antique farm machinery along with over 50,000 other items. Like the Farmers’ Museum and Greenfield Village, Warp also moved several historic buildings to Minden including a church and a Pony Express station.25

In 1961, Grand Island became home to Nebraska’s second outdoor museum, the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer. In 1960, Leo Stuhr, a prominent farmer and descendent of one of the pioneering families of Grand Island, donated land and $25,000 to start a museum. After his death in 1961, Stuhr’s will donated more land and money to the museum. Two years after Stuhr’s death, the museum hired Edward D. Stone, architect of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. to design the new museum building. In July 1967, the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer opened with Stone’s designed building as the foundation of the new museum.26


Whether being created as a way to preserve historic buildings, as an educational tool, or as a sense of patriotism, the success of the early outdoor museums created scores of knock offs and similar ideas from local building zoos\(^{27}\) to house museum/plantation museum venues to blatant “tourist traps.” While other outdoor museums were formed as preservation projects, such as Dallas Heritage Village in Dallas, Texas. It formed in 1966 after several prominent women blocked the demolition of Millermore, one of the city’s last and best preserved antebellum mansion. They formed a non-profit organization and moved the house to a historically significant city park.\(^{28}\) The success of the early outdoor museums also spawned a series of outdoor museums in Kansas that portrayed a sense of nostalgia towards the Old West. It truly is a case of imitation being the sincerest form of flattery.

One challenge that these other facilities faced, however, was financial. Williamsburg, Greenfield Village, and Old Sturbridge emerged with the aid of very wealthy donors. While not poor Stephen Clark and Harold Warp did not have the equal wealth that Ford, Rockefeller, Jr., and Wells had therefore the Farmers Museum and Pioneer Village are not on the same footing that Williamsburg, Greenfield Village, and Old Sturbridge are. Restoring buildings was expensive. So were maintaining buildings and grounds. Hiring professional staffs either as administration, interpreters, or behind the scenes curators added more costs. These smaller facilities had patrons and supporters but without the deep pockets of major business families. Creating a “Williamsburg of the West” without a “Rockefeller of the West” behind it meant

\(^{27}\) Building zoos are collections of buildings with now central guiding interpretive theme other than to bring historic buildings together in a way that looks something like a village setting.

relying on public funds or looking to tourism and attendance revenues, often at the expense of historic accuracy. Outdoor museum founders in the 1950s, however, often had a “build it and they will come” attitude where creating a collection of old buildings always seemed like a good idea.
CHAPTER THREE
OUTDOOR MUSEUM MOVEMENT IN KANSAS

With the development of an extensive state and federal road system in the middle of the twentieth century, came roadside attractions which, in turn, gave a rise in tourism. In Kansas, roadside attractions, such as the world’s largest hand dug well in Greensburg, the largest ball of twine in Cawker City, and the Garden of Eden in Lucas played major roles in Kansas tourism. In 1942, with help from the New Deal’s Works Project Administration (WPA) and National Youth Administration (NYA) the first roadside attraction with Old West ties, the Dalton Gang Hideout in Meade opened. The beginning of western movies and the continuation of western dime-novels further enhanced the need for museums to preserve the past. In Kansas, the three most important of the outdoor museums that emphasize Old West history are: Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City, Old Abilene Town in Abilene and Old Cowtown Museum in Wichita.29

Boot Hill Museum’s history is closely aligned to the history of the Boot Hill cemetery, which got its name from the bodies of outlaws and other bad men supposedly buried with their boots on especially during those years between 1876 and 1885 when Dodge City was the “Queen of the Cowtowns.” With the cattle trade came an increase in violence that brought in men like Wyatt Earp and “Doc” Holliday to tame the wild town. The creation of Boot Hill cemetery filled the need for a place to bury cowboys and other transients since the town cemetery was reserved for the “moral” people of Dodge City. By 1878, six years after Dodge City’s founding, the town was growing and Boot Hill became a prime piece of real estate. The Dodge City Town

Company sold the land to Herman Fringer and Samuel Marshall as lots for homes. A year later, the city council ordered the bodies removed and reinterred in the new Prairie Grove Cemetery and the old cemetery became the site for a new schoolhouse. After a fire in 1890 destroyed the first school house on Boot Hill, the school district built a larger building, known as the Third Ward School.30

By the turn of the century, the cattle drive days had ended and Dodge City residents and boosters, tired of the image they got from being a cowtown, looked to new ways to promote their community, concentrating, for example, on motorcycle racing. The first Dodge City race occurred in 1913 with the last one occurring in 1916, the beginning of World War I ended motorcycle racing in Dodge City all together.31 The abandonment of the Third Ward School to make room for a new municipal building in 1927, gave residents of the once “Queen of the Cowtowns” the start in promoting its rich cowboy and western heritage.32

In the 1920s, concerns arose among Dodge City citizens that the notorious hill might be leveled for development. The release of Stuart Lake’s *Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal*, the many stories on the real West in pulp magazines, and the rise of silent western movies prompted the concerns of the fate of the notorious hill. This encouraged the city commission to pass Ordinance 614, which called for a special election to purchase the site. The ballot passed and the city commission passed Ordinance 650 issuing $12,000 worth of bonds to purchase Boot Hill.

31 More coverage on motorcycle racing in Dodge City and Kansas is covered in *Early Motorcycle Racing in Kansas 1910-1922* by Karl M. Schletzbaum, a 2002 Master’s thesis from Wichita State University.
With possession of Boot Hill, Dodge City was unsure what to do with their newly acquired property. Dr. Oscar H. Simpson, a retired dentist and amateur sculptor, offered, free of charge, to sculpt a cowboy statue as a tribute to “the true Kansas cowboy.” The statue’s unveiling coincided with the laying of the Dodge City Municipal Building’s cornerstone on November 4, 1929. Along with the cowboy statue and the Dodge City Municipal Building, a local preservation group spread rocks, sage, cacti and sagebrush around the site. These additions gave the area a southwest feel to coincide with the area’s “southwestern” image. This also started a trend of veering away from the real history towards a more commercial focus or “hucksterism.” It was a change facilitated by a lack of ideas on what to do with the famous hill.

The 1932 addition of Dr. Oscar H. Simpson’s steer head monument gave Boot Hill a new role as a preserver of a segment of the Old West for the audience’s children and their children’s children. Simpson, with the help of the Dodge City Rotarians, created a parody of the Boot Hill Cemetery on the original site to entertain attendees of the State Rotary Convention in May of 1932. To add to the phoniness, Simpson made a few cement skulls and buried them. He also included on the other end of the heads boots protruding from the ground; a version of this still exists at Boot Hill Museum. All these additions catered to the Old West symbolism that helped draw in tourism during the Great Depression.

---

33 Jeanie Covalt, *Notes from the Dodge City Commission Meetings* (Dodge City: Kansas Heritage Center, 1979) 1; Faulk, *Dodge City*, 195.
34 Ida Ellen Rath, Dr. O.H. Simpson: *Who Designed and Made the Cowboy Statue which was Unveiled on Boot Hill November 4, 1929* (Dodge City: Ida Ellen Rath, n.d.), 2.
By 1935, tourists were visiting Boot Hill but there was no museum to tell the story of early Dodge City. The enthusiasm among local citizens to build a museum on top of Boot Hill was put into high gear with the world premiere showing of *Dodge City* at the Dodge Theater in 1939. A year after the world premiere, the Dodge City Jaycees persuaded the city commission to finance the building of a museum on top of the historic hill.37

The coming of the Second World War delayed the momentum of building a museum on top of Boot Hill. After the war, however the pressure to build a museum continued with the newly named “Boot Hill Jaycees” leading the way. In 1946, they raised over $4,500 to construct a museum on Boot Hill. After years of hard work, the Junior Chamber of Commerce obtained permission from the city to build and operate a museum. On March 26, 1947, Merrit Beeson, son of pioneer and Cowboy Band leader Chalk Beeson, broke ground on the museum addition.38 Thus began one of Kansas’ oldest outdoor museums.

Boot Hill Museum struggled at first with only 43,000 visitors in 1949 but these numbers did not deter Junior Chamber of Commerce members. Four years later the museum “acquired” the Fort Dodge Jail from the state. Since state officials could not officially donate the building, Dodge City Junior Chamber of Commerce members dressed as “bandits” and “stole” the jail under the cloak of darkness and relocated it to the top of Boot Hill.39

---


38 Davis and Martin, “Boot Hill Museum,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form Draft, 19; Boot Hill Museum, *Boot Hill Museum, Inc. Time Line* (Dodge City: Boot Hill Museum, n.d.), 1; Dodge City Cowboy Band was a local band that played parades, when politicians came and other events. It later went on a national tour as an “authentic” cowboy band. The band even participated in the 1889 Presidential inaugural parade for Benjamin Harrison; Dodge City cowboy band info from Faulk, Dodge City, 128.

In 1955, Dodge City was one of several cities in the running to become home to the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. Dodge City’s proposal put the hall of fame on top of Boot Hill. The other cities included Abilene, Kansas; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Denver, Colorado; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Las Vegas, New Mexico; Prescott, Arizona; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and North Platte, Nebraska. The selection committee announced Colorado Springs, Colorado; Dodge City, Kansas and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma as the three finalists. They then selected Oklahoma City due to its location in a major population center and location on highways traveled annually by thousands of people. The decision upset many citizens of Dodge City. As an editorial in the *High Plains Journal* stated “We don’t believe we have ever seen a bunch of people as mad as Kansans over the decision of the national board of trustees of the Cowboy Hall of Fame to sell the memorial to Oklahoma City for cash on the barrelhead.”

Fortunes soon changed for the proposed “Cowboy Capital of the World.”

Even though Dodge City was bypassed for the home of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, it gained a favor from Hollywood. In 1955, the television show *Gunsmoke* came on the air and by 1958 the show was #1 in the nation. Dodge City, the show’s purported setting, became an overnight sensation and the city cashed in. In 1958, Rev. Clayton P. Stepard, pastor of the Cimarron Christian Church wrote the song “Front Street Goes Marching On” to the tune of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” The same year, the Jaycees began work on a replica of the original Front Street, built four and half blocks west of the original Front Street at a cost of $80,000. The Jaycees built the replica in three parts with the first part going from Rath General Outfitting Store to Zimmermann’s Hardware. Construction looked like the 1870s but was made

---

out of modern materials, with cinderblock buildings behind plywood facades. By 1958, Chestnut Street became Wyatt Earp Boulevard and Walnut Street was renamed Gunsmoke. James Arness, Amanda Blake, Milburn Stone and other cast members attended the renaming of the street as part of a press junket. During the years _Gunsmoke_ was on the air, Boot Hill Museum’s attendance peaked at 200,000 to 300,000 visitors a year.\(^{41}\)

In 1964 the construction of the second part of the Front Street replica\(^ {42}\) coincided with the closing of the Beeson Museum, a collection of artifacts from Dodge City’s wild-west days collected by pioneer and Cowboy Band leader, Chalk Beeson, with Boot Hill Museum acquiring the collection. The second part of the Front Street replica going from City Drug to Beatty & Kelley’s Restaurant. The second addition opened in 1966 just in time for the 100th anniversary of the cattle drives. Festivities included 150 Texas Longhorn steers driven in front of the Front Street replica. In 1969, the acquisition of the Hardesty House became the second building moved to Boot Hill Museum in sixteen years. It was starting to combine reconstructed buildings with the movement of historic buildings to a new site. Moving the house and jail to Boot Hill Museum, mimicked what Old Cowtown Museum done nineteen years earlier.\(^ {43}\)

As long as _Gunsmoke_ was on the air, Dodge City and Boot Hill Museum thrived. In 1967, the show was taken off the air for only a short time. In response, Dodge City’s commissioners and The Kansas Legislature passed resolutions and sent letters to CBS in hopes


\(^{42}\) The first part of the Front Street Replica constructed in 1958 went from Rath General Outfitting Store to Zimmermann’s Hardware.

of bringing back the popular show. *Gilligan’s Island* was cancelled instead and Dodge City dodged a bullet for a time. In 1970, bulldozers tore up the remaining part of the original Front Street, consisting mainly of turn-of-the-century structures, to make room ironically for a parking lot for the Front Street replica. While the bulldozers were at work the museum completed the last part of the replica, consisting of the Old West Photo Parlor to the Old House Saloon. In 1974, as a possible omen for Dodge City, lighting struck and destroyed Boot Hill’s hanging tree. A year later *Gunsmoke* was cancelled for good and citizens pondered what to do next.44

The success of Boot Hill Museum inspired other Kansas communities to construct museums dedicated to their western heritage. One of these that followed Boot Hill Museum’s creation was Abilene, which was one of the first cattle towns in the state, founded in 1867 under the guidance of Joseph McCoy. For a short time, the town thrived as droves brought cattle up the Chisholm Trail to a Kansas Pacific railhead. By the 1870s, however, the cattle era was gone and Abilene became another modest Kansas city along the Union Pacific.

The city’s fortunes changed dramatically in the 1950s, when local boy Dwight Eisenhower became president in 1953. One of Eisenhower’s most famous policies, the Interstate Highway System, began in 1956 and ushered in a new era of automobile tourism. With the popularity of the Old West as a tourist site, Abilene’s residents reconnected with their Joseph McCoy legacy. In 1957, the newly formed Abilene Town Company, made up of local citizens, sold shares of stock at $10 each to help finance the recreation of Abilene’s old main street. After months of planning, the company selected land south of what later became the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, as the future home of Old Abilene Town. Starting in October

---

of 1958 the Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees) partnered with Old Abilene Town Company to help promote the sale of the company’s stock. Unlike Boot Hill’s total recreation of Front Street, the goal here was to bring in neglected and abandoned historic buildings. Construction of the restored town started with the moving and restoration in February, 1959 with one of the first schools and churches in Dickinson County, one of the county’s original homesteader settler cabins, the former Grove Hill school from the Lincoln Township, northwest of Abilene and another old original log house became the foundation of Old Abilene Town. With the reconstruction of the old general store and other buildings Old Abilene Town opened to the public on June 28, 1959 with an estimated 600 persons visiting the site on opening day. In October, the Rock Island Railroad donated its old depot to the Eisenhower Library Commission who then partnered with Old Abilene Town Company to operate it as a museum. The structure was moved to the restored town’s site south of the railroad tracks to make room for Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum expansion.45

By the 1960s, Abilene looked to another source of local pride: President Eisenhower. With the end of his second term in 1961, Eisenhower turned his attention to finding a site for his presidential library. He decided on his boyhood home and soon Abilene embraced its status as the site of a presidential library instead of a cattle town. Old Abilene Town’s history of moving and reconstructing of Abilene and surrounding area’s buildings resembles the formation of Old

Cowtown Museum in Wichita and contradicts the founding of Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City. Boot Hill Museum started out as more of a tourist attraction with a constructed museum building and Front Street replica.

The 1960s also saw the addition of other western-themed museums and attractions in Kansas due to the popularity of the Old West, which include the Cherokee Strip Museum in Arkansas City, Burketown in Greensburg, the Stockade Museum in Medicine Lodge, the Chisholm Trail Museum in Wellington and Frontier Town in Wichita. While Frontier Town and Burketown were primarily attractions, the others were more museums than tourist attractions. The late 1950s also saw the involvement of historical societies with outdoor museums, which ended in the 1970s. Examples include the Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village in Great Bend (1963), McPherson County Old Mill Museum in Lindsborg (1959), Old Jefferson Town in Oskaloosa (1966), and the Santa Fe Trail Center in Larned (1974). The involvement of historical societies with outdoor museums started with preservation of the community’s historic structures. Once the source of buildings dwindled historical societies concentrated their efforts on educational efforts. Several outdoor museums started without the help of historical societies following the lead of Boot Hill Museum and Old Cowtown Museum and they include Shawnee Town in Shawnee (1966) and Old Prairie Town at Ward-Meade Historic Site (1980).\textsuperscript{46} Outdoor museums in Kansas evoke a combination of tourism and historic preservation. “Often in an effort to stave off generic commercialization and to save their heritage, historical societies, community groups, and individuals went to great lengths to preserve, and in some cases to recreate, pieces of their early history. The result was ‘Old Town’

where modern visitors could experience life as it was perceived to have been in days gone by. This brand of heritage tourism captured a period in history that was particularly significant to the locality."\textsuperscript{47}
CHAPTER FOUR
A DREAM BECOMES REALITY

Even though agriculture was a dominant economic force in Wichita during the early 1870s, city leaders looked to connect itself to the major economic force of the day, the cattle trade. By 1871, Abilene had abandoned the cow town image and the Kansas Pacific railroad hired Henry Shanklin to stake and route a new trail for the cattle herds. The new trail went from the Ninnescah River to Ellsworth via Park City, bypassing Wichita. Wichitans, such as James R. Mead, heard of Shanklin’s activities and created one of the most iconic groups in the city’s early history, “The Four Horsemen of Wichita;” Mead, Nathaniel A. English, Mike Meagher, and James M. Steele. They confronted the cowboys, their herd, and Shanklin. After some heated discussion and promises from the Four Horsemen including “a handsome consideration which proved more potent than words,” the herds of cattle swung around and headed for Wichita. Thus the Four Horsemen killed Park City’s chances of becoming a major cattle town.

To be a cattle town, Wichita needed a railroad connection to the Santa Fe line in Newton, itself a cattle town for a short time. On June 19, 1871, locals including Mead incorporated the Wichita and Southwestern Railroad. To pay for it, Wichita leaders proposed a county-wide election to put up $20,000 in bonds. Wichita ran into opposition from Park City that felt that Wichita’s new railroad would be competition for their bid to be a cattle town. To counter their votes, Wichita supported the formation of Harvey County from Sedgwick County’s northern half

---

48 The Park City mentioned in this chapter is not the current Park City, Kansas. The current Park City was founded in the 1950s.
with Newton as the new county seat in return for their support of the railroad bonds. The successful election gave Wichita its newest railroad, the Wichita and Southwestern, a branch of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. On May 16, 1872, the first Wichita and Southwestern train pulled into Wichita starting the era of Wichita being a cow town. The arrival of the railroad also aided in the founding of *The Wichita Eagle* and *The Wichita Beacon.*

With the cattle trade, Wichita flourished and became a town of impressive multi-story buildings in highly fashionable Victorian styles. These replaced the log houses, like the Munger House for example, that Wichitans were living in just two years earlier. Unlike Mead, who was involved with the cattle trade, other Wichita leaders, such as William Greiffenstein and W.C. Woodman built hotels, banks, and stores. Even during the cattle trade years, 1872-1876 agriculture, commerce, and real estate played a strong role in the city’s varied economy. With the end of the cattle trade, agriculture took over as the city’s main economic force.

The cattle trade also brought with it the need for stockyards, and depots to ship the cattle to eastern markets. It also produced a need for saloons, gambling establishments, and brothels to cater to the cowboys after a long hard ride from Texas. Most of these were established in a community west of Wichita called Delano. By isolating the vice west of the Arkansas River, the image of Wichita as a moral upstanding community would still be intact. The isolation of vice in Delano was not always possible especially when it came to prostitution. It became a problem when several of the prostitutes from Delano dance halls raced naked from the buildings to the river with the cowboys loudly cheering and betting on their favorites. This led to the Wichita City Council outlawing daytime bathing but allowing nighttime bathing. This relaxed attitude

---

toward prostitution and all vice by Wichita remained in place as long as the cattle trade prospered.\textsuperscript{52}

By 1874, Marshall Murdock’s \textit{Wichita Eagle}, which early on was promoting the cattle trade and its accompanying business, started to go against the image that the city was getting from all of the rowdy, lawless, and rootless cowboys.\textsuperscript{53} After the shooting and death of saloon owner Edward T. “Red” Beard at the hands of another saloon owner, Joseph “Rowdy Joe” Lowe, \textit{The Wichita Eagle} wrote:

Wichita is fast getting rid of that element which has proved such a curse to her prosperity, thanks to the County attorney and the improved sentiment of the place which is backing him up. Rowdy Joe made a telling shot that night. It shot Red into eternity, himself out of the country, Anderson through the head, Beebe, Red's bar tender, into the penitentiary, Rowdy Kate to parts unknown, and Smith, Omet and another into jail for perjury. The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small. Patten was sentenced for a year, Beebe for three years, and Josephine De Merritt for ten years.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{The Eagle} continued to denounce the cattle trade and the image it gave Wichita into 1875. As a December 2nd article noted:

At that time (1873) the streets were thronged with Texas cow boys, with huge spurs on their heels, and howitzers strapped upon their backs. Every other door opened into a saloon. The first thing heard in the morning and the last thing at night was the unceasing music at the saloons and gambling houses. The town was headquarters for harlots for two hundred miles around. Fighting, shooting, and even killing were not infrequent…. Gamblers were more numerous than respectable men. Those were the days of the cattle trade in its glory. Then the name of Wichita was a synonymous with crime….But these days are gone happily for Wichita, never to return. The demoralizing and debasing effects of the cattle trade will never be felt here again.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Price, “Cowboy Boosterism,” 302; Miner, \textit{Wichita}, 115-116; More information on saloons in Wichita and Sedgwick County can be found in \textit{The Quarantine of Vice: Saloons in Sedgwick County} by Austin Rhodes a 2014 Master’s thesis from Wichita State University.

\textsuperscript{53} Price, “Cowboy Boosterism,” 302; Miner, \textit{Wichita}, 121.

\textsuperscript{54} “A Telling Shot,” \textit{The Weekly Kansas Chief}, January 29, 1874, Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers Database.

\textsuperscript{55} “WICHITA. The Metropolis of the ‘Happy Valley.’” \textit{The Wichita City Eagle}, December 2, 1875, Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers Database.
In the same article, *The Eagle* started to praise the farmers and the growing impact that agriculture had on the city’s economy. It noted:

…the cattle trade, comparatively speaking is gone, but in its stead has come the grain trade, a hundred fold more beneficial and conducive to the permanent growth and prosperity of the City of Wichita….It is the metropolis of four counties…and is surrounded by the finest wheat growing district in the world. It has well been designated the “Happy Valley.” The soil is unsurpassed, the climate is delightful and all things continue to render this the best place for the home-seeker. Wichita affords a good market for all kinds of produce.56

Early Historical Societies and Museums in Wichita

As Wichita progressed away from its cowtown days, several of its early buildings were torn down, allowed to deteriorate, or were converted for other uses. A national trend that Wichita followed. A notable example was that of Wichita’s oldest structure, the Munger House, built between 1868 and 1869 by Darius Munger for the Wichita Town Company. Munger had used local materials for its construction except for the building's hardware, doors, flooring and windows, which Munger brought from Emporia. The foundation was made from local stone and the cottonwood logs used as walls came from Teuchel Island, now part of the north bank of the Big Arkansas River near Old Cowtown Museum. River sand, water, and lime made out of clam shells formed the buildings mortar and plaster. Once completed, the building had three rooms, two large and one small, on the first floor with four rooms upstairs reachable only by an outdoor staircase. Since Munger was integral in the development of Wichita, his home served as the Post Office, a boarding house, a meeting place, and the Justice of the Peace's office. Munger then added a large downstairs room, a small kitchen addition, and three additional rooms upstairs in the winter of 1870-1871.57 W.C. Woodman, a local entrepreneur and the city’s first banker

56 Ibid.; “The Happy Valley” was one of many slogans Marshall Murdock used to promote Wichita. Others include “the Peerless Princess of the Plains,” “the Magic City” and “the New Chicago.”
bought the house in 1874 and built his famous “Lakeside Mansion” completely engulfing the
Munger House. For the next seventy five years, the log structure was hidden beneath a Victorian
facade.

In 1870, Wichita’s Presbyterian congregation built the city’s first permanent church
building on the southeast corner of Wichita and Second streets. This church replaced a log
structure built in 1869 located east of present day Wichita Street. The new building cost $1,500
and measured 25 by 46 feet. Along with the Presbyterian congregation, the Methodists and
Baptists also used the building as a place of worship. During spring of 1871, the building also
served as the first public school in Wichita. By 1873, the church building became too small for
the developing congregation and its location was on the wrong side of the growing city.
Therefore the Presbyterians sold the structure to the Catholic Church and it was moved to the
corner of St. Francis and Second Street where it stood for at least a decade before the Catholics
outgrew the building. Around 1885, Millie and Wesley Hodge, members of one of Wichita’s
first African American families, acquired the church and moved it to 605 N. Main Street. The
Hodges added a second story to fulfill the structure’s new goal as a rooming house. It was later
abandoned after World War II and rescued to become one of the four buildings that formed
Cowtown.58

58First Presbyterian Church of Wichita, Kansas, This is Who We Are: A History of First Presbyterian
Church, Wichita, Kansas (Wichita: First Presbyterian Church of Wichita, Kansas, 1995), 14-15; Historic Wichita,
University Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives; Old Cowtown Museum, “Hodge
Another example of early buildings from Wichita’s early years that was allowed to
deteriorate, or got converted for other uses was the city’s first jail, built in 1871, on the southeast
corner of Market and Second Streets. It contained only four holding cells and no offices. Its
purpose was for holding short term prisoners such as drunkards. With the new six-cell and two
story county jail built in 1874, the city moved the original “calaboose” to 12th and Main where it
became a storage shed.59

By the late 1870s, Wichita was moving away from being the tight-knit little village that
Mead, Munger, and Greiffenstein helped establish in the late 1860s and early1870s. This led the
city to start appreciating its heritage as early as 1877 with the founding of the Old Settlers
Association of Sedgwick County, seven years after the city’s incorporation. The formation of
the association started via a conversation between W.T. Jewett, farmer and pioneer, and Dr. R. B.
Greenlee. They decided that a meeting to call for all persons that settled in Sedgwick County
before 1872 with the announcement printed in The Wichita Eagle. The new association formed
to preserve memories of the early years of Wichita. On September 27, 1877, the Old Settlers
Association met for the first time at the Fairground’s pavilion. Dr. Greenlee called the meeting
to order and the first officers were elected. The people present elected Henry W. Vigus, owner
of the Buckhorn Tavern, president with Darius Munger, builder of the Munger House, vice
president.60 William B. Hutchinson, publisher and editor of the Wichita Vidette, along with Fred
Sowers,61 “moved that all persons - men, women and children - who settled in the county
previous to 1872, be eligible for membership.”62 The motion carried. The first Old Settlers

59 Hammond, et.al., The Historic Structures of Old Cowtown Museum, 14; Old Cowtown Museum,
Cowtown History: Myth, Mystery and Reality (Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, c.2010), 2.
60 “Origin of the Old Settlers of Sedgwick County, Kansas,” The Wichita City Eagle, March 24, 1881;
Mead, Hunting and Trading on the Great Plains, 234n.
61 Mead, Hunting and Trading on the Great Plains, 234n.
banquet was held in the Turner Opera House on February 22, 1878, becoming a yearly event held in February.  

About fifty years after Wichita’s founding, the Old Settlers Association of Sedgwick County merged into a new group, the Sedgwick County Pioneer Society to help preserve the memory of Wichita’s early years. Mrs. Norma Aley Whitney, wife of George M. Whitney, a local banker and a group of Wichita pioneers founded the Sedgwick County Pioneer Society in 1914 and set up a small museum in the Sedgwick County Courthouse. This was at the same time that other organizations and writers were publishing books on the city’s early history including the Daughters of the American Revolution-Eunice Sterling Chapter which published *Illustrated History of Early Wichita: Incidents of Pioneer Days* in 1914. Covering the 1870s-1880s, the book described extensively the city’s early buildings, institutions and structures, barely mentioning its role as a cattle town, while concentrating mainly on Wichita’s booming years. The few brief mentions of the cattle trade are included in the histories of institutions like the Fourth National Bank and the railroads.  

To help remember Wichita’s founding, along with the boom and bust years of the 1880s and 1890s, O.H. Bentley published in 1910 his *History of Wichita and Sedgwick County, Kansas: Past and Present, Including an Account of the Cities, Towns and Villages of the County*. Bentley mentions the colorful days of the cattle years but more as a contrast to the modern, progressive city that Wichita had become. Along with Bentley’s work came along series of articles written by “Old Timers” that were published in *The Wichita Beacon* and *The Wichita Century*.  

---

Wichita Eagle until the end of the 1920s. These writings spurred the start of a movement to build a new historical museum that finally occurred in the late 1930s. Even so, these recollections tended to concentrate on how different those early cow town days were from twentieth century Wichita with its businesses, banks, airplanes, and modern conveniences. The days of cowboys and saloons were long in the past, or so it seemed.

By 1938, a move was in store to build a new historical museum for the city since the second floor of the old Sedgwick County Courthouse, where local history exhibits had previously resided, became too small. A year later, after the move for a new historical museum failed the exhibits were moved from the courthouse to the new Wichita Historical Museum housed in the Forum. In 1957, the Wichita Historical Museum moved from the Forum to the Beachy Home at 3751 East Douglas and remained in the location until 1980 when the museum moved to the old Wichita City Hall downtown.  

In 1947, Wichita celebrated the Chisholm Trail Jubilee, a weeklong festival to honor the 75th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail. The project was the idea of the Wichita Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees). After realizing the scope of the project the Jaycees secured help from other Wichita civic groups including the American Legion and Civitan Club, and civic leaders such as Robert Israel, owner of the Riverside Boathouse and Henry Levitt, co-owner of Henry’s Department Store. The festival included a parade, costume contest, old fashioned merry-go-round, booster trips, and a rodeo. This being during the Cold War, the festival showed a short movie about national security. The festival’s official program announced that the movie “should

---

be a MUST for everyone attending the jubilee.” By celebrating the Chisholm Trail Jubilee, Wichita tried to remember the simple times of its history even as aviation dominated the city’s image and identity. The event’s brochure was a line drawing that showed cowboys herding cattle over the prairie, but viewed from the air from the cockpit of a small aircraft. Even then, Wichita struggled with its identity and image between being the “Air Capital” or a cow town, a tension that later resulted in Cowtown struggling for support. The cattle days were fine to remember from time to time, but Wichitans were uncomfortable with the idea that their city was still “just a cow town.”

**Beginning of Old Cowtown Museum**

Another attempt to capture Wichita’s early days came in the 1940s, when Richard “Dick” Long, manager of *The Wichita Eagle* morning edition, started writing articles on the city’s early history that appeared in *The Wichita Eagle* paper with illustrations by Ben Hammond. These articles were known as the “Wichita Historical Panels” and coincided with several articles on Wichita’s history from Victor Murdock, son of *The Wichita Eagle* founder Marshall Murdock. The importance of Murdock’s and Long’s writing on Wichita’s history led to their effort to preserve buildings from the city’s history and thus became the start of Old Cowtown Museum. It was also during this time that Long turned in an article on Wichita’s first permanent church building and its current state as a boarding house on North Main. Murdock tried to purchase the building but, due to a wartime shortage of housing, the owner would not sell. He was certain that once World War II was over, the house would be condemned as a fire hazard and made

---

Long promise that, if he was gone, Long would restore the former church building. Victor Murdock passed away in 1945.68

A few years after Murdock’s death, Long received word while on vacation that the boarding house was being condemned due to a small fire and its hazardous state. Once back in Wichita, he found out a salvage operator acquired the building from the owner. After paying $400 for the old building and thinking he got a bargain, Long soon found out that the salvage operator got the building for free from the owner. Long then contacted several civic minded Wichitans who raised the purchase money and they moved the newly acquired structure, piece by piece, to the County Engineering Yards on south Seneca.69

With the purchase of the boarding house came the Hodge House that was added to the sale by the salvage operator. For years, community members believed the structure to be the church’s parsonage since it was located right beside it on the 600 block of North Main. In actuality, the structure was built by an early African American family, the Hodges, between 1878 and 1885.70

With the two buildings now saved from demolition, Long contemplated an idea of forming a non-profit organization to operate the affair in a more business-like style. The two attorneys on board drafted the incorporation papers so general that anything could be done as long as Long and his group labeled it “Historic.” On April 28, 1950, the State of Kansas

---

chartered Historic Wichita, Inc. The sole purpose of the new non-profit was “to purchase, remove, locate or relocate, replace, remodel, renovate, restore, repair, reproduce, furnish, equip and exhibit buildings in the City of Wichita, Kansas deemed by the corporation to have historic merit, associations or interest.” The next goal for Historic Wichita, Inc. was to find a suitable location for the First Presbyterian Church and the Parsonage. The establishment of Historic Wichita, Inc. came about during a transition in historic preservation.  

Due to the Wichita Park Board’s control of the greatest amount of available land, Historic Wichita thought that the Wichita park system might be able to spare a few acres for such a suitable project. With a cool, even wary caution, the Park Board passed Long’s group off to Emery Cox, director of Wichita’s parks. Historic Wichita’s first choice was Central Riverside Park, which was unattainable. Long’s group and Director Cox then drove to Oak Park believing that they had worn the director down but he explained that the city had put thousands of dollars into the city’s parks. A parking lot and historic buildings would ruin the atmosphere of the natural woodland. As Larry Roberts, an early Historic Wichita member, later recalled, “talking ‘Parky’ Cox out of a square inch of his treasures (city’s parks) was like stealing money from Fort Knox.” Director Cox suggested an undeveloped area closer to downtown that could be acquired for the purpose of housing Historic Wichita’s buildings. The Wichita Water Company owned the twenty-three acres on the sandy northern bank of the Big Arkansas River which they only used as the location of emergency water wells. Cox offered help to Historic Wichita in acquiring the land and, therefore, no amount of park space would be used for the new “museum.”

---

71 Long, “Wichita Cowtown,” 94; State of Kansas, Articles of Incorporation of Historic Wichita (Topeka: Larry Ryan-Secretary of State, 1950), 2; Murtagh, Keeping Time, 154.
72 Even though the official name is Historic Wichita, Inc. for consistency, Historic Wichita will be used throughout the thesis unless in quotes.
74 Roberts, Historic Wichita, Inc., 2.
With his help, Historic Wichita leased the land for ninety-nine years at a dollar a year and, needing only one acre, the group got all twenty-three. Unlike Boot Hill Museum, Cowtown’s location was in the center of town near Wichita’s downtown, where as Boot Hill Museum’s was developed on a major highway. This would come up again when solutions on what to do with Cowtown formed in 2006-2007.\(^{75}\)

With the site chosen, restoration of the church could now begin. Long appointed Lola Fisher, wife of Methodist minister Jesse Clark Fisher, chairwoman of the committee to supervise the restoration of the first permanent church building. Her committee then conducted a search for pews from the 1870s. They found ones of the same style in the old Riverside Church built in 1876. As work on finding items to restore the structure’s interior continued, local lumber companies donated lumber that became unseen after the completed restoration on the church and parsonage. The visible lumber was salvaged from both buildings. No sooner had the group completed the restoration of the church and parsonage, than Historic Wichita acquired the museum's most famous and only building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Munger House.\(^{76}\)

The first attempts to restore the Munger House took place in the 1910s. Back then, plans centered on the house being used as the foundation of an outdoor historical museum. In the 1920s, Dr. Dalton H. Fuller moved the Munger House from 901 North Waco Street to Back Bay Boulevard. During the 1930s, questions arose as to the location of the Munger House and were

\(^{75}\) Long, “Wichita Cowtown,” 95.

answered with the removal of Woodman’s additions in the early 1940s. In 1944, the Eunice Sterling Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution acquired the house. Seven years later the chapter deeded it to Historic Wichita to cover the historic structure’s preservation. It arrived at Cowtown in 1952 as Historic Wichita’s third building.77

Just as restoration on the Munger House was nearing completion, the Wichita School Board acquired residential property at 12th and Main Streets with plans to add a playground for the Horace Mann School. On the property was Wichita’s first jail being used as storage shed to store junk from a second hand furniture store. Since the school board could not give the structure to Historic Wichita, the organization bought it for $1. In 1952, it was moved to Cowtown and erected west of the Munger House.78 The jail became the fourth building that formed “the nucleus of the Cow-Town of 1872,” thus being a “functional unit in the memorial to the pioneers who settled Wichita.”79 Unlike the other three buildings, the jail needed the least amount of restoration work with only the original locks needed to complete the restoration. On June 24, 1952, Wichitan Fred J. Cooley donated the locks to Historic Wichita to be used on the jail. Even though the locks were found, Historic Wichita had to find a locksmith to make keys. Don and Mark Fell of the Wichita Key, Lock and Safe Company donated the new keys they made for the locks to Historic Wichita as their contribution in helping recreate the memorial to pioneer Wichita.80

80 “Search Launched for Lock Used on City’s First Jail,” “Search for Locks Used on City’s First Jail Is Ended,” “Keys Made to Fit Locks On First Jail in Wichita,” The Wichita Eagle Morning Edition, June 24, 25, & July 2, 1952, Sedgwick County Clippings Volume 11, Kansas State Historical Society, 42-44, 47-48; Old Cowtown Museum, Cowtown History: Myth, Mystery and Reality, 2; In 1990, the jail was moved again to a vacant area
By 1952, Historic Wichita had four buildings and 23 acres, and the idea of creating a museum village, formed. The 1950s saw the change from the historic house museums toward the western outdoor museum model that includes Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City, Kansas; Nevada City Museum in Nevada City, Montana; and South Park City in Fairplay, Colorado. Starting in the 1960s, several cattle related museums and attractions opened which include National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, Chisholm Trail Museums in Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas and Old Abilene Town, in Abilene, Texas. The model that was emerging emphasized more than just a collection of structures into a “building zoo,” and instead give the impression of a whole village. Cowtown’s founders decided to develop their collection of buildings into a miniature western town to differentiate it from the other western-themed museums.81

In March of 1953, Historic Wichita moved a two story building from 712 North Market to their new village south of Sim Park with plans to convert the first floor into a drug store and the second story into a recreated version of a 1870s land office. John McEwen, president of Steffens Dairy Foods Company, sponsored and financed the restoration. Four months after its move to Cowtown, a storm destroyed the second story and restoration plans were modified to make the recreated Bon-Ton Drug Store, a one story drug store. Inside was one of Kansas’s first soda fountains, from Junction City, Kansas.82

In November 1953, work started on the sixth building at Cowtown, a replica of the first Wichita school, although it would later be known as St. John’s Episcopal Church. McCormick-Mathers Publishing Company (now McCormick Armstrong), a Wichita firm that was one of the biggest publishers of school books in the country, sponsored the structure’s construction. The replica was built east of the Munger House and across the dirt road from the Hodge House. It was “authentically” restored down to the uneven oak logs used in the construction of the walls. The oak logs were split to form benches for the students with sod used on the roof.83

Historic Wichita and a group of Santa Fe Railway officials met in 1953 to finalize plans to recreate Wichita’s first railway station. To accomplish Cowtown’s goal of having a depot built in the same time period as Wichita’s station, a delegation from the railroad was selected: J.A. Lippert, architect for the eastern lines; Bill Burk, public relations representative out of Topeka, Kansas; L.V. Lienhard, divisions engineer out of Newton, Kansas; and W.A. Sweet, general bridge and building foreman out of Newton. The delegation from the Santa Fe Railway and members of Historic Wichita toured the three possible candidates in the towns of Adams, Anness, and Eula, Kansas. Historic Wichita chose the Anness depot, built in 1887 and the Santa Fe Railway gave and moved the structure to Cowtown in 1954.84

Cowtown started as a way to preserve buildings from the city’s founding and cattle days as a shrine to Wichita’s founders and settlers. The addition of the Santa Fe Depot in 1954,

---

83 “New Cow Town Structure to Be Replica of Original,” The Wichita Eagle Morning Edition, November 19, 1953; “Sod House to be Erected Near Historic Cow Town,” The Wichita Eagle Morning Edition, July 11, 1952, Sedgwick County Clippings Volume 11, Kansas State Historical Society, 49; St. John’s Episcopal Church Exhibit File, Old Cowtown Museum Building Archives.; Old Cowtown Museum, Building Database History (Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, 2014), 2; In the 1980s the structure was closed to visitors due to the instability of the sod roof. By 2007 the sod roof had started to cave in and the structure was torn down on November 7.

propelled the museum into the preservation of buildings from the 1870s and 1880s from across Sedgwick County. Even though the founders wanted to portray Wichita in the 1870s, they actually created a small town and ignored the boosterism that started in the late 1870s and went through the middle 1880s. Wichita’s actual history of many churches, hotels, and at least four depots was ignored and instead, the site contained only one example of each.

By 1955, Cowtown had ten buildings with plans for even more. Historic Wichita even added to the interpretation of the Depot when the Santa Fe Railway donated “Old 21441,” a Santa Fe boxcar of the cow town era to Historic Wichita. Santa Fe Railway assistant general manager, C.S. Cravens, rescued it from the junk yard. Due to its fragile state, the boxcar shipped via a flatcar from Topeka to the West Wichita Shops for restoration. Once restoration was done, the restored car prepared for its move to Cowtown and new home, next to the depot. Longtime local contractor, Martin Eby, donated his heavy equipment to help with the move.85

Cowtown got its eleventh building, the Wichita Township Hall, in April of 1955. The structure dated from November of 1881, located at the 400 block of North Hydraulic, on the banks of Chisholm Creek, which was then outside of the city of Wichita. For years, it served several functions: a meeting place for township trustees, a polling place for residents and even a hamburger stand. With the city of Wichita no longer needing the structure, and being owned by the city, it was condemned by the Wichita Fire Chief so the city could dispose of it. Therefore, Cowtown acquired the building and used it as a Post Office exhibit until the mid-1980s.

Afterward it became its current function as the Barber Shop exhibit. Cowtown began as a shrine to early Wichita but that would change with the museum’s opening in 1955.

---

CHAPTER FIVE

“AUTHENTIC” OLD WEST

Wichita World Premiere

By the middle of 1955, Cowtown started to tap into America’s growing fascination with the Wild West. By July, Historic Wichita felt the time was right to open their village to the public. The opening coincided with the world premiere of *Wichita* starring Joel McCrea and Wichita’s own Vera Miles at the city’s Miller Theatre. However, connecting the museum’s opening with the *Wichita* World Premiere meant that Cowtown was no longer just a shrine to the founders of Wichita. Instead, it became a place to celebrate the image of the Wild West. Even the promotional material helped promote this new image by glorifying Wyatt Earp and “Billy the Kid” and their roles in Wichita history.\(^{87}\)

On July 13, 1955, the Miller Theater was packed for the world premiere of *Wichita* with several people unable to get in, and instead, were serenaded by Bill Wimberly’s Western Band performing the movie’s theme song. In connection with the premiere, Governor Fred Hall proclaimed July 13th “Wichita Day” in the state. Even actor Joel McCrea, who played the lead character Wyatt Earp in the film, was on hand for the premiere. As part of the premiere festivities, the first 100 women got free corsages and the first 1000 women received photos of McCrea’s co-star and Wichita’s own Vera Miles. Even though only for a night, curbside floodlights gave Wichita a Hollywood feel.\(^{88}\)


Opening of Old Cowtown Museum

During the opening of Cowtown the public inspected the buildings, among them First Lady of Kansas, Leodell Hall and her son, Nibs. In the morning, the Halls, McCrea, and George Earp, first cousin of Wyatt Earp, were special guests at the unveiling of the Wyatt Earp memorial plaque on the city’s first jail. Naming it the Wyatt Earp jail was a way Cowtown tied into the growing interest of Hollywood westerns and the tourists that came to see the “original” structures from Wichita’s wild days. Ironically, Wyatt Earp was hired on April 21, 1875, almost a year after the jail became a storage shed so there was very little chance that he ever sent people to this calaboose.\(^{89}\)

Meanwhile, Cowtown saw the first of many weddings take place on its grounds. The wedding of Margaret Lofton and Kenneth Mantz of Udall, Kansas, took place in the restored First Presbyterian Church. Originally planned for May 29, 1955 in Udall, the nuptials were moved back and relocated to Cowtown when a tornado destroyed the church and town on May 25th. Among the guests were Kansas’ First Lady, Leadell Hall, Joel McRea, and George Earp. A large crowd waited outside the church to see the couple, with small children looking through the windows and relaying information to those too small to see. As a sign of support for the new couple, Wichita businesses gave several gifts including matching wedding bands from Winter’s Jewelry, a wedding dress from Murray’s Women’s Wear, a flash camera from Lawrence Photo, a

three night stay in the Muehlbach in Kansas City, Missouri, and a one night stay in Wichita’s Allis Hotel, both courtesy of Barney Allis of Kansas City.\textsuperscript{90}

\textbf{After Cowtown’s Opening}

Once the opening festivities subsided, however, Cowtown became something of an afterthought in Wichita. It became so ignored that Marcel Wallenstein, a former reporter for \textit{The Wichita Eagle} and European correspondent for the \textit{Kansas City Star} wrote that Cowtown is distinctive but unloved by Wichita. His reason is that Cowtown reminded Wichitans of “a time before the virus of bigness bit the community.”\textsuperscript{91} He added that the recreation of a small frontier village was unique to Wichita even though

\begin{quote}
Worthy as a city is in the number of airplanes it manufactures, the tons of broomcorn and barrels of crude oil it sells and its fine bank clearings. Wichita is hardly the metropolis which would attract a visitor interested in art galleries, museums, ancient monuments… But Wichita draws strangers from distant states to see the restored frontier town assembled by a little band of men and women with a sense of the past.\textsuperscript{92}
\end{quote}

For much of the 1950s, Cowtown received little promotion; even the Chamber of Commerce failed to mention it as one of Wichita’s major attractions. The museum’s financial support from the city varied from year to year. In 1957, Historic Wichita asked for $15,000 to help defray the costs of operating Cowtown. City officials declined the proposal by citing “economic” reasons and declining funds for emergencies. Adding another entity to fund was not in the city’s best interest.\textsuperscript{93}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Along with financial issues came the idea that Cowtown may have to move to make way for expansion of the Wichita Water Company. City Manager Frank H. Backstrom said that water company needed to acquire land west due to the State forcing Wichita to stop adding lime in the purification of water from the Arkansas River. The city had been in the process of building a plant to reuse the lime, with long range plans including additional fresh water storage and additional pumping facilities. The land that housed Cowtown was the preferred spot and the idea emerged that the museum be moved to the former Beechwood neighborhood. Fortunately for the struggling institution, the expansion plan fell through.  

Without assistance from the city, rumors spread that Cowtown might close. In 1958, Historic Wichita members Dick Long, Tom Fuller and Bill Walker approached the Wichita Area Girl Scouts to assist with interpretation. The Girl Scouts agreed to serve as Cowtown guides, thus beginning one of Cowtown’s most beloved traditions. Marge Kirby, a high school teacher at Wichita East High School, became the founder and site director of the “Girl Scouts at Old Cowtown.” For the first eighteen years of the project, Girl Scouts were assigned to each of the museums buildings. Senior Girl Scouts were known as Cowtown Museum Aides, with Junior and Cadette Girl Scouts serving as Cowtown Guides. Two or three girls would be assigned a certain building and memorized a script that covered the history of the site. Marge Kirby and Cowtown staff wrote and approved the scripts. The collaboration between the Girl Scouts and Cowtown saved the museum from going under, thanks to the Girl Scouts’ ability to give tours.

---

during the busy summer tourist months. This started one of Cowtown’s most enduring and lasting partnerships with the community.\textsuperscript{95}

Also in 1958, Cowtown continued to move away from restoring original historic structures, to their original use with the recreation of \textit{The Wichita Eagle’s} first building. Since Dick Long and Dr. Albert Kirk, two of Cowtown’s founders and both editors of \textit{The Wichita Eagle}, it made sense that one of Cowtown’s earliest buildings recreated the city’s most famous newspaper. To accomplish the recreation, Larry Roberts found a late nineteenth century building which was originally located on the southwest corner of 9\textsuperscript{th} and Main streets, that was vacant and the owner donated it to Historic Wichita. It was moved to Cowtown in 1959 and fully restored by 1960. Unfortunately, the one story wood building does not in the least look like the ornate two story brick building at Douglas and Main which the \textit{Eagle} called home from 1872 to 1883. The recreation of the first building for the \textit{Eagle} and Cowtown in general, ironically went against the forward looking stance the newspaper took in the 1950s. When Marcellus Murdock, son of \textit{The Wichita Eagle} founder Marshall Murdock and brother of Victor Murdock, inspected the completed Eagle Building at Cowtown, he said “the thing Larry (Roberts) is doing here, recreating this little 1872 town, is the atmosphere the \textit{Eagle} has been trying to live down for fifty years, and the only thing….that is not right is the fact that it is not covered with Cow Dung!”\textsuperscript{96}

The expansion of Cowtown with the help of the Girl Scouts made it a model for other outdoor museums like Old Abilene Town. In 1959, Richard Long gave a speech as the outgoing president of the Kansas Historical Society. In the speech, he outlined the growth of Cowtown

and impressed society members like Alf Landon, former governor of Kansas, 1932 Republican candidate for President, and past historical society director. Landon said Cowtown “was an unusual account of historical activity”97. For other historical society members Long’s account taught them how to preserve their buildings for the upcoming Kansas Centennial.98

The celebration of the Kansas Centennial in 1961 gave Cowtown its biggest growth in the number of buildings with eleven new buildings added by January 3, 1961 bringing the total to eighteen. The event also redefined the museum, which, three years earlier, was rumored to close, as one of Wichita’s attractions. The majority of events during the Kansas Centennial pertained to Kansas’ Old West history and the Santa Fe Trail while very few celebrated the Bleeding Kansas era of Kansas history. The biggest event was the performance of The Kansas Story, a two-act musical written and directed by Vladimir Rosing, director of the Chicago Grand Opera, and produced by Wayne Dailard, producer of America’s best pageants and producer of The California Story and The Oregon Story. The Mid-America Fairgrounds in Topeka hosted The Kansas Story from June 13 to 25 while Veterans Field, on the campus of the University of Wichita, hosted the play from July 4 to 16.99

The Kansas Centennial transformed Cowtown from an ignored part of the city to Wichita’s signature location for centennials and other citywide events. The church at Cowtown became the place to hold special centennial services. On February 5, 1961, the Catholic Diocese

98 Ibid.
of Wichita became the first congregation to hold a service in Cowtown’s church with the Most Reverend Mark K. Carroll, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Wichita, as the special guest. The church was filled to capacity with the service broadcasted via a public address system to the crowd waiting outside. The next Sunday, Rabbi Norman M. Bernhard of the Hebrew Congregation led a Jewish centennial memorial service at the church with more than 100 people in attendance. Many of them were children who were excused halfway through the service to explore the rest of the buildings. Three weeks later, on March 5, the First Presbyterian Church held service at the Cowtown church. As with the Catholics, the church was packed and a public address system addressed the crowd outside.

Along with the expansion of Cowtown came the opening of Frontier Town on U.S. 54, west of the city, on June 14, 1961. Frontier Town was a replica of a western town and more of a tourist attraction than Cowtown. Even Joyland Amusement Park created “Joyland Park’s Frontier Town” which included a main street and gunfights. Wichita now had three attractions that promoted the lore of the Old West even though the city was proclaiming itself as the “Air Capital of the World.” Along with attractions, local businesses such as Cowboy Cleaners with its western interior and the newly formed KFDI radio station that played country music embraced the western image.

Perhaps intending to jab at Boot Hill Museum, Phil Manning, owner of Manning-Clampitt Meat Company, former Wichita mayor and city commissioner, and president of Cowtown, said that the completed town would be the real thing, not a tourist trap, such as

---


Frontier Land and Burketown. On March 21, 1961, the directors of Cowtown announced a new $100,000 building campaign. By June, Cowtown projected a goal of 30 to 35 buildings with eventually 70 buildings by the end of 1961. By the end of the year, Cowtown only had 26 buildings, far from the 70 they planned. Most of the buildings were originals from early-day Wichita with others constructed as replicas of buildings of the 1870-1880 time periods, such as the bank and marshal’s office, which continued the way Cowtown grew during the 1950s. *The Wichita Cow Town Vidette*, a newly formed newspaper published by Cowtown chronicled the museum’s progress.  

The dedication of the museum’s restaurant, known as Delmonico’s, became the feature of the Kansas Restaurant Association’s 28th annual convention held in Wichita in 1961. The building was historic, being built in the 1890s and donated to Cowtown by John Jr. and Jim Jabara of Jabara’s Market. The biggest building to be erected during the centennial was the Variety Theater, a place where Wichitans could dance and party. Sponsors included Kansas Gas & Electric, Southwestern Bell Telephone, Gas Service Company, Cities Service, and Arkla Gas. The Variety Theater was one of two building projects that area businesses sponsored at Cowtown. The other building was the drug store sponsored by Steffens Dairy (now Hiland Dairy).  

By the end of 1961, Cowtown was getting a lot of attention, both local and national. On April 20, 1961 an hour long special aired on the local CBS affiliate, KTVH (now KWCH). The

---


special gave viewers a complete tour of the historical site with each building shown and
explained in great detail. The April 20, 1961 issue of Lowell Thomas’s Travel Key featured
Cowtown as one of the top spots to see in America sharing space with the Air Force Academy in
Colorado and the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Along with the national and local attention,
Cowtown received many visitors. Possibly the most historic was the visit of the great grandson
of Darius Munger, Edgar A. Williams, on October 28, 1961. The Williamses were impressed
with the house, with Edgar’s son, Richard, saying “It’s a pretty neat house. But it must have
been pretty hard then without television.”

A year after the Kansas Centennial, Cowtown kept on growing. In 1962, the “Little Red
Schoolhouse” that served as a museum beside the Meridian School was moved to Cowtown.
Built in 1911, the structure served as an overflow classroom for many different schools at
different locations. It was moved next to the Meridian School around 1950. For the Kansas
Centennial, antique desks, maps, equipment and supplies were displayed in the building. On
March 5, 1962, the Board of Education voted to give the building to Historic Wichita, at no cost,
and it was then moved to Cowtown so more people could see it.

The dedication on September 28, 1962 of the Carry Nation Fountain gave Cowtown
another attraction in addition to buildings. As a memorial to the famous temperance leader, the
Women’s Christian Temperance Union, in 1911, first placed the fountain in front of Union
Station. Just like many of the buildings at Cowtown, the fountain had a myth attached to it that

---

said a beer truck backed into it while the fountain was in front of the Union Station.

Unfortunately the myth is not true. Years later, it was moved to storage in the city warehouse.

Around 1962, the Randolph Loving Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution restored the fountain and presented it to Phil Manning, now Cowtown’s Business Manager. It remained just east of the parking lot on the west side of Cowtown in the commercial and shops area until the mid-1980s when Cowtown had no use for it. Longtime Cowtown volunteer, Francene Sharp contacted Frank Smith, director of the Parks and Recreation Department and the park department moved it to Naftzger Park. 106

From 1963 to 1965, Cowtown continued to grow but not at the pace that occurred in preparation of the Kansas Centennial. In 1963, they built a museum building that contained items used in Wichita from 1869-1905 such as antique furniture and wagons. Twenty-three years later it was torn down to make room for the Arkansas Valley Grain Elevator from Bentley, Kansas. In 1964, Cowtown added a wooden, one-story replica, of Wichita’s oldest funeral home, the I.W. Gill Undertaking Parlor. Since the original Gill Funeral Home was a three-story brick structure, the replica became a perfect example of Cowtown replicating the one-story buildings that were popular in Hollywood Westerns instead of recreating the original historic structures of Wichita’s past. Most of the interior items, like the fireplace and an 1888 horse drawn hearse, were from the original funeral parlor and the Gill mansion. 107

Cowtown acquired two buildings from Derby, Kansas in 1966 which later became Fritz Snitzler’s Saloon, and Turnverein Hall. The acquisition continued Cowtown’s role in preserving buildings from inside and outside of Wichita. The 1885 Rockford Township Hall was donated to

---

Cowtown when Derby expanded their city hall. To this date Cowtown had no saloon and no recreated Old West village would be complete without one! Therefore, the old Rockford Township Hall became the museum’s saloon known as the Buckhorn Bar. In the early 1980s, the Buckhorn Bar was renamed the Fritz Snitzler Saloon which coincided with Cowtown’s move to become more historically authentic.\footnote{108}{“Derby’s Old Rockford Township Hall Rolls Toward New Cow Town Home,” The Wichita Eagle-Beacon, November 24, 1966; “Cow Town May Have To Relocate, “The Wichita Beacon, November 15, 1966; Hammond, et.al., The Historic Structures of Old Cowtown Museum, 25; Dave Mackie, “Derby City Hall Starts for Cow Town,” The Wichita Eagle, September 9, 1966.}

Along with the Rockford Township Hall, the city of Derby also donated its old city hall. The structure was built as a hardware store in 1880 in the town of El Paso, later renamed Derby. From 1955 to 1966, the structure housed the city offices and the site became home to the new city hall. Once on the grounds of Cowtown, it became the Cowtown Community Hall. Later on, the structure also served as “Keno Corner,” recalling the two story gambling center from the Wichita’s cattle trade days, located at Douglas and Main.\footnote{109}{Hammond, et.al., The Historic Structures of Old Cowtown Museum, 25; Dave Mackie, “Derby City Hall Starts for Cow Town,” The Wichita Eagle, September 9, 1966.}

Continuing as Wichita’s signature location for centennials and other citywide events, Cowtown, in 1967, hosted a day long affair commemorating the centennial of the Chisholm Trail founding, not to be confused with the Chisholm Trail Jubilee held twenty years earlier in 1947. Wichita was one of six Kansas towns that celebrated the centennial from August 22 to 24 with activities ending in Abilene. The celebration started in Austin, Texas with an opening speech by Texas Governor John Connally on June 6th. The firing of a cannon opened Cowtown’s celebration with members of the Chisholm Trail Gun Club patrolling the grounds. Activities included gun fights, bank robberies, and can-can girls. The event included Carrie Nation attacking the museum’s Buckhorn Bar which made the scene totally incongruous via the mixing
the 1900s with the 1870s. Roughly 10,000 people wandered the dusty streets and toured the buildings of recreated 1870s Wichita. As Lee Whitegon wrote in The Wichita Beacon:

Children squealed with delight as three cowboys were ‘gunned down’ in the street. They stared in wide eyed wonder at gun club members wearing buckskin shirts and carrying long barreled flintlock rifles as they patrolled the streets….they began leaving about 10 p.m., tired and dusty but filled with visions of frontier glory and probably just a little thankful they were born after the invention of air-conditioning and the development of more tender beef cattle than the longhorns that trudged past Wichita on their way from Texas to the railhead of Abilene.

The celebration of the Chisholm Trail and Kansas’ centennials propelled Cowtown into not only a Wichita attraction but also a state attraction beside Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City.

The late 1960s saw the continuation of buildings moved to Cowtown from Sedgwick County. In 1969, Louis A Sautter of Clearwater, Kansas, donated a cottonwood log cabin built c.1865 by an unknown individual when the area was part of the Osage Trust Lands. When the Osage Trust Lands opened to settlement in 1870, Samuel Kincaid acquired the land near the Ninnescah River south of Clearwater, Kansas, which included the cabin. Nine years later, Kincaid sold it to a Swedish immigrant, Adrian Sautter. He started to build around the cabin and by 1934 it was incorporated into the larger farmhouse and preserved. After its donation to Cowtown by Adrian Sautter’s son, Louis in 1969, it became known as the Horse Thief Cabin. The renaming of the cabin over the years coincides with the renaming of several of buildings at Cowtown, like Snitzler’s Saloon and Turnverein Hall. The renaming of these structures relegates them to secondary status while ones like the First Presbyterian Church, Grain Elevator,

---

111 Whitegon, “Chisholm Centennial Draws 10,000.”
Munger House, and Murdock House have remained Cowtown’s landmark buildings by keeping their original names and functions.\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{Westerns And Their Influence on Old Cowtown Museum}

Cowtown originally was planned as a shrine to Wichita’s founders and pioneers such as Darius Munger, James R. Mead and William Greiffenstein but the official opening, in 1955, which coincided with the world premiere of the movie \textit{Wichita} changed the mission. The renaming of the city’s first jail and the placing of the Wyatt Earp Memorial Plaque began to capitalize on the growing phenomenon of Hollywood westerns.

Four years after the \textit{Wichita} world premiere and the opening of Cowtown in 1955, Joel McCrea came back to Wichita for his premiere of \textit{Gunfight at Dodge City} at the Orpheum Theatre. He later starred in a short lived NBC series based on Wichita’s history called \textit{Wichita Town}. \textit{Gunsmoke} used Dodge City as the town for the show and rarely used any of the town’s history. \textit{Wichita Town}, on the other hand, was loosely based on information and stories of early Wichita history contributed by Kansans.\textsuperscript{113}

Starting in the early 1950s, Western movies dominated American culture. What started out as children television shows had, by the end of the 1950s and going into the 1960s become the favorite form of airing not only children westerns but adult versions also. By 1959, there were at least thirty-five westerns airing on the television screens. Of the top ten shows on

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Hammond, et.al., \textit{The Historic Structures of Old Cowtown Museum}, 24; Historic Wichita Cow Town, \textit{Horse Thief Cabin} (Wichita: Historic Wichita, Inc., n.d.), 1, Old Cowtown Museum Building Files; Douglas C. Reed, \textit{Horse Thief Cabin} (Sharpsburg, MD: Preservation Associates, Inc., 1982), 18, Old Cowtown Museum Building Files; City of Wichita, \textit{Historical Background} (Wichita: City of Wichita, 2012), 25, \url{http://www.oldcowTown.org/NR/rdonlyres/4F5B3840-C918-40FD-A15E-81AC53840A88/0/2012volB.pdf}, accessed December 19, 2012.; Decades later, Douglass C. Reed, architectural conservator and a leading authority on log constructed cabins, suggested that horse thieves did not build the cabin due to the structure’s fine workmanship. Due to his recommendation Cowtown renamed the structure the Trader’s Cabin in the 1980s. In 2012, Cowtown renamed the Trader’s Cabin, Gifford’s Store, an early Wichita store and saloon.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
television by 1960, eight were Westerns. Television made the Westerns more popular than the
genre’s movie versions.114

By the early 1960s, Cowtown fully embraced Hollywood’s version of the Old West. In 1961, Historic Wichita acquired a house from Leo McKenzie, whose ancestors founded the Wichita Carriage Works in 1885. Once moved to Cowtown, however, the home underwent a transformation into something that had nothing to do with early carriage making. Even though Cowtown had no records that “Billy the Kid,” his mother, Catherine McCartney, and his brother ever lived in the house, the museum promoted it as “the restored childhood home of Billy The Kid.”115

During this time Cowtown was promoting itself as the only “authentic recreation of an actual western cow town village.”116 However, this authenticity was based more on Hollywood’s version than on how Wichita was during its western days of the 1870s. The founders of Cowtown catered to the public’s image of a recreated western town. At Cowtown, a recreated marshal’s office and an historic jail were acceptable but a recreated Victorian style courthouse was not. The village’s dirt streets lined with false front buildings made the perfect setting for the museum’s staple, staged gunfights.117

Things were about to change, however. By the 1970s, the western began to decline in popularity, with fewer westerns appearing on the big screen. On television, the gunfight-laced

---


*Gunsmoke* gave way to the family-friendly pioneer setting of *Little House on the Prairie.*

Cowboy-themed attractions began closing. In Wichita, the west-side western themed attraction called Frontier Town had long since closed. Meanwhile, the cowboy and the Old West that dominated the image and identity of Cowtown of the 1960s, started to give way. In the 1970s, a shift towards an image of a frontier village instead of a bustling, growing city became the main focus of the museum.
CHAPTER SIX
VICTORIAN CULTURE MEETS WESTERN THEME

The period of Cowtown’s founding and growth ended in 1971 with the passing of Richard Long. With his death, the city gave more support to the museum but Historic Wichita now had to work with the city-appointed Historical Wichita Board created as the overseer of all city-owned properties. Sedgwick County got financially involved with Cowtown and the name of the main controlling board changed to Historic Wichita Sedgwick County, Inc.118

Meanwhile, as the city celebrated its second hundred years, a new, broader vision of Wichita’s history was emerging, one where the cattle and pioneer days were part of the story, but not the only story. Along with helping in the founding and growth of Cowtown, Long had, just before his death, completed one of the most important books on Wichita’s history, *Wichita Century: A Pictorial History of Wichita, Kansas 1870-1970* for the city’s upcoming centennial. Although the 1860s and 1870s were well covered, the book also included the 1890s, 1900s, and the twentieth century with its aviation industry and national corporations. Meanwhile, Dr. Craig Miner, professor of business history at Wichita State University, wrote *Wichita: The Early Years, 1865-1880* with the help of a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities. Six years later he wrote the landmark *Wichita: The Magic City* which delved deeper into Wichita’s early history. Along with Miner’s books, the 1980s brought a renewed effort in a broader writing of the city’s history which included Kay Kirkman’s *Wichita, a Pictorial History* and *Talking Pictures: Images of Old Wichita from the ‘20s to the 50s*, a fascination that continues to the present day. In this retelling of the city’s history, the boom years of the 1880s, the

depression of the 1890s, and the city’s revival in the turn of the century were just as important as
the Chisholm Trail. Wichita’s history-minded citizens began turning their attention to the
Victorian era, especially the ornate Victorian buildings constructed in the years following the
cattle drives, back when Wichita was the “Peerless Princess of the Plains” and working to
become the next Chicago.119

Beginning in the late 1970s, Cowtown started to seek accreditation and the old
Hollywood version of history prevalent in the 1960s was “put out to pasture.” During this
period, the museum started to make a precise and detailed inventory of its collections. Bob
Garrett, an anthropology student at Wichita State University, created the first inventory of
Cowtown’s collections in 1972. He even proposed that Cowtown should become the
Williamsburg of the West, an idea that never came into being due to no major financial
benefactor. As part of Cowtown’s move for accreditation, Dr. Craig Miner and Dr. William E.
Unrau, professors of history at Wichita State University, collaborated with Stan Harder, curator;
Patricia Christgau, managing director; and Liz Kennedy, educational curator to design a story
line to help advance the development of Cowtown to authentically depict 1865 to 1880 Wichita.
It outlined the change in the museum’s focus from cowboys and cattle to an interpretation of
Wichita’s Victorian history. By including Miner, the Willard W. Garvey Distinguished
Professor of Business History, the story line became more of an outline of structures needing to
be moved and built along with new theme areas that concentrated on the business history of early
Wichita. Its vision for the museum included industrial buildings such as a tall grain elevator and
a steam powered planing mill. It also visualized more vibrant signs on the main street with

symbols of boots, cigar store Indians and mortars. For the residential area the story line envisioned more outbuildings and landscaped yards. 120

As Gunsmoke went off the air and Little House on the Prairie replaced it as the quintessential western, western-based museums, such as Boot Hill Museum and Cowtown, had to reinvent themselves. Boot Hill Museum tried to reinvent itself by following Cowtown’s example of moving historic buildings to the museum grounds, while Cowtown reinvented itself by going back to promoting Wichita’s founding fathers, such as Murdock, Munger and Mead. Acquiring and moving Marshall Murdock’s house to Cowtown in 1974 gave the museum a focal point to emphasize Wichita’s Victorian history. 121

In 1874, Wichita Eagle founder, Marshall Murdock, built a house, known locally as “Eagle Roost”, at Fourth and Oak Streets (now St. Francis and Murdock). After Marshall’s death in 1908, and that of his wife, Victoria, in 1918, the house became vacant. Two years after Victoria Murdock’s death, the structure became a boarding house. Later on, it became slated for demolition and was saved by the Midtown Citizens Association in 1974, a year after the association’s founding. In an onsite ceremony to honor the purchase, Midtown President Carol Rutledge and Richard Huffman signed the purchase contract representing the Midtown Citizens Association. Also participating in the ceremony were: Wichita mayor, Garry Porter; Marion Cone, chairwoman of the association’s historic committee; Robert Puckett, Director of the Wichita Historical Museum; and Robert Goetschius, “mayor” and manager of Cowtown beginning in 1973. To help raise money for its move and restoration, the Midtown Citizens

120 “This is Wichita: Historic Wichita Cowtown,” Wichita 57 (January-February 1979): 17. Wichita State University Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives; Wilma Moore, “Curator Would Like Cow Town to Become West’s Williamsburg,” The Wichita Eagle, July 26, 1972; Unreau, et.al., Old Cowtown Museum Story Line, 1-2.

Association opened the house for tours starting on September 20, 1974 when Brit Brown, publisher of The Wichita Eagle and Beacon and great-grandson of Marshall M. Murdock, cut the ribbon. The opening of the Murdock House for tours started the Midtown Citizens Association’s annual historic home tours held now yearly in October.\textsuperscript{122}

On November 10, 1974, the Murdock House began its move to Cowtown as a partnership between the Midtown Citizens Association, the Urban Renewal Agency, and Cowtown. The historic house’s move did not please Larry W. Roberts, one of Cowtown’s founders and a local mortgage agent.\textsuperscript{123} He wrote in an editorial that moving the house to Cowtown went against his version of an “authentic Cow Town, the only one, the unique one on the Chisholm Trail.”\textsuperscript{124} Roberts also wrote that it was “heartbreaking to see it adulterated” by the addition of the historic house and since The Wichita City Eagle Building represented The Wichita Eagle and Marshall Murdock, there was no need for the Murdock House to be at Cowtown.\textsuperscript{125} Roberts was outnumbered and restoration started on one of the finest houses left from Wichita’s early Victorian era. The restoration was one of two federally recognized and funded projects for Wichita’s celebration of the nation’s Bicentennial in 1976. The other project was the construction of the Mid-America All-Indian Center. On March 6, 1978, Mary Manlove, Linda Loveren, and Dean Bradley of the Midtown Citizens Association met with Ed Muribito of the Urban Renewal Agency, along with Stan Harder and Pat Brooks of Cowtown, to discuss

\begin{footnotes}
\item[124] According to Larry Roberts, he was the originating force behind Cowtown while Richard Long, who gets the majority of credit for starting Cowtown, just assisted him. This is contrary to Long’s account and even goes against Roberts own account found in the \textit{Kanhistique} August-September 1975.
\item[125] Larry W. Roberts, “That’s a Bummer,” 1973-1975 Cowtown Scrapbook, Old Cowtown Museum Building Files.
\end{footnotes}
restoration of the Murdock House on the grounds of Cowtown. After its move to museum
grounds Mary and Merle Manlove supervised volunteers painting the house to its original yellow
color. Eight years after its move and years of restoration, the house opened to the public at
Cowtown with William Ebersole, president of the Midtown Citizens Association cutting the
ribbon for the public openining.126

Historic Midtown was not the only citizen’s group to take notice of Cowtown. During
the 1974 Wichitennial River Festival, now the Wichita Riverfest, Mary Jane Teall, founder and
director of the Wichita Community Theater, directed the first performance of “The Wonderful
Story of Windwagon Smith” at Old Cowtown Museum. The play was based on Walt Disney’s
famous animation *The Saga of Windwagon Smith*. In 1976, after some reworking it came to be
known as “The Legend of Windwagon Smith.” It became a part of every River Festival until
1998. It was brought back and read as a story during the 2005 and 2006 River Festivals.127

In the 1950s and 1960s, Cowtown had something of a reputation of being an “old boy’s
club.” By the 1970s, women were becoming more visible in Cowtown’s operation. The 1970s
saw an addition and a change in two of Cowtown’s two volunteer groups, the Dixie Lee Saloon
Girls and the Girl Scouts. In 1975, Marge Kirby retired as the site director of the Girl Scouts
program at Cowtown. By 1976, the Girl Scouts shifted from being guides to living history
interpreters. They dressed in period clothing and instead of being in each building they were
assigned one of six interpretive areas. The areas were: Story and a Half House, One Room
School, Henry Wolf House, Immigrant’s Camp, and Turnverein Hall. At each area the scouts

---
126 “Murdock Home Restored as Bicentennial Project,” *The Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, January 26, 1975; Bob
127 “Up the River, Down the River: Timeline,” *The Wichita Eagle*, May 10, 1996; Diane Lewis,
Wichita River Festival Programs.
learned through experiences of what life was like in the “good old days.” The addition of the Henry Wolf House and the reinterpretation of Turnverein Hall brought Cowtown’s focus away from the Wild West to immigrants and the residential story, with the assigning of the Girl Scouts emphasizing the new focus.

One of the oldest groups at Cowtown is the Cowtown Social Club, founded in 1975, as a group to support the museum’s missions and programs through the donation of both time and money. Over the years they have sold homemade crafts and goodies that have funded the construction of the bandstand, sponsored the creation and maintenance of the Dress Shop (now Fechheimer’s), and the creation of fresh evergreen wreaths used during the Christmas events. The group’s early members included the whose who of Wichita society with.

In late 1978, Wilma Sehnert, an accountant, amateur historian, Cowtown volunteer docent, and a member of the Cowtown Social Club, took it upon herself to bring a new focus to the saloon by having dancers since nothing else generally took place in the building. Sehnert did research on dances, costumes and music from the 1870s. Originally the group was called the “Snitzies Fritzies” after Fritz Snitzler, longtime Wichita saloon owner. Older members of his family objected to the name and it became the Dixie Lee Saloon Girls. The original members were Brenda Alber, Margaret Clayton, Teddy Evans, Roslyn Hoch, Hazel Jones, Shelly McKinney, Shirley Meeks, Carol Peterson, Peggy Thornhill, and Wilma Sehnert as Dixie Lee. They all came from different backgrounds which included an accountant, secretary, and even a professional ice skater. The group performed the “Can Can,” “She’ll Be Comin’ Round The Mountain,” and other songs popular during the late nineteenth century. What was going to be a

one-time show became a staple group at Cowtown that performs to this day. The role of saloon girls was uncomfortable in family-oriented Wichita, even in the 1870s, but saloon girls were also a staple of the western genre, an accepted, even expected part of the myth. Also the group’s founding occurred during the start of new West version of history that concentrated more on minorities and women’s role in Western history (including that of prostitutes) instead of the Old West/white male cowboy image of the 1950s to 1960s.\textsuperscript{130} This period also saw the introduction of several scholarly works on women in the West including Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson’s \textit{The Women’s West} and Joanna L. Stratton’s \textit{Pioneer Women}.

To portray activities of Victorian society, Roselyn and Phil Hoch, longtime Cowtown volunteers, started the Entre Nous group with the Hochs training the new dancers. With help from several members of the Dixie Lee Saloon Girls including Chrystal and Gayle Meek, Francene Sharp and Bob Garrett the group learned several popular nineteenth century dances including the waltz and the Grand March. As the group grew, it began to perform programs outside of Cowtown. It became one of the first groups to shift the focus away from the gunfight image of the Old West to a urban image.\textsuperscript{131}

In 1978, Cowtown under the co-chairmanship of John M. Bell, executive vice president and co-owner of Security Abstract & Title Company, and Betty M. Minkler, longtime community volunteer, led the $590,000 Historic Wichita Capital Funds Drive campaign. The main goal of the campaign was to recreate replicas of several pre-Wichita landmarks which


\textsuperscript{131} Bob Garrett and Francene Sharp interview.
included: Durfee’s Ranch, an early trading post; Camp Beecher, an early military camp (known more for drunk soldiers than protection from Native Americans); a Native American grass lodge; Vigus’ Buckhorn Bar, a social center during 1870s Wichita; and a stockyards. Even though Cowtown already had a Buckhorn Bar, the recreation became geared more to the original structure, a one story log structure with a sod roof. Additional goals of the campaign were the restoration of a 110-year-old building from St. Joseph, Kansas, adding a second story to the community hall, enlarging Delmonico’s Restaurant to become a showcase for Cowtown.  

While these plans to recreate late 1860s and 1870s Wichita did not materialize due to funding, others did, including the construction of a new visitor’s center. Because the Munger House was enclosed by W.C. Woodman’s Lakeside mansion, it was “natural” that a replica of the original Lakeside be considered for Cowtown’s new visitor’s center and administrative offices. By reproducing the famous home, Historic Wichita decided to locate the new structure on the southwest corner of the museum, near the Arkansas River. This in turn moved the entrance to the west side of the museum. The first floor of the building included a foyer, ticket booth, meeting room, and restrooms with the second floor reserved as museum offices. In the mid-1990s, with the development of the DeVore Farm, the former Delmonico’s restaurant became the new visitor’s center and the old Cowtown Fire Station, next to Delmonico’s, became the new Orientation Center. 

---


Originally, the entrance was on the east near the First Presbyterian Church and Munger House and visitors went forward in time as they reached the “downtown” of the mid-1870s. In 1978, with the construction of Lakeside, Cowtown moved the entrance to the west, thus making visitors “walk back in time.” Before the move, the entrance was on the east near the First Presbyterian Church and Munger House. The walking back in time confused visitors and was unsuccessful but until 2005, the entrance stayed on the west side. Also during this time, Cowtown, named its streets after prominent 1870s Wichita streets which gave visitors the impression that Cowtown looked exactly like early Wichita. Like the walking back in time attempt, this one became unsuccessful due to it looking more like a Hollywood movie set instead of the real 1870s Wichita.  

The same time Cowtown staff added interpretation of the area’s agricultural history to help compliment the new focus on Victorian history the nation saw the rise of agricultural museums, such as Conner Prairie in Fishers, Indiana, Living History Farms in Des Moines, Iowa; and the Stuhr Museum in Grand Island, Nebraska. While Cowtown was readapting itself, Boot Hill Museum and Old Abilene Town, on the other hand, still concentrated on gunfights and Hollywood’s version of the Old West.

To bring the interpretation of Wichita’s agricultural history to life the Harvest Home Festival was added in 1977. Four years later, it was renamed the Old Sedgwick County Fair as a thank you to Sedgwick County for providing the funding of the museum’s growing number of

---

staff. The event grew and became an annual event. According to Stan Harder, Cowtown’s county fair event “replicated the look and feel of an 1870s county fair in…almost everyone and everything that represented agriculture and commerce in society was present at the fair. Everyone wanted to be seen or to show off their accomplishments as well as see what their friends had brought to the fair.” During the 12th annual Old Sedgwick County Fair in 1988, Jerry Ottaway, co-owner of Carousel Skate Center and whose father founded Joyland Amusement Park, displayed an 1895 steam operated carousel restored with the help of his son, Gary and father, Herb. The carousel remained a popular attraction at the Cowtown event until 1993 when Ottaway sold the popular ride.

Along with the addition of the Old Sedgwick County Fair, the 1970s saw the addition of another one of Cowtown’s most revered events, “Christmas Through the Windows.” When it started in 1975, visitors strolled the grounds looking at reenactments through the windows of the historic structures. By 1982, the event started to have other activities besides the reenactments. They included the involvement of the Girl Scouts via the singing of Christmas carols, and the sampling of homemade donuts and pecan pralines candy in the Community Hall. The festivities also included performances by the Dixie Lee Saloon Girls, children’s programs, as well as Father Christmas roaming the dusty streets. Due to the museum’s expanding collection, Cowtown

135 Old Cowtown Museum, History (Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, n.d.), 5; Old Cowtown Museum, Girl Scouts at Old Cowtown Museum Living History Program, 1; Stan Harder interview by author, June 19, 2014, Wichita, KS.
137 Susan L. Rife, “This fair recalls simpler, quieter times,” The Wichita Eagle, October 6, 1989; Susan L. Rife, “Have a fair time at Cowtown,” The Wichita Eagle, October 1, 1993.; Beccy Tanner, “Cowtown’s education day is appetizer this weekend’s Old Sedgwick County Fair and its education day spark curiosity about the 19th century,” The Wichita Eagle, October 5, 1996, Newsbank; The annual Old Sedgwick County Fair became Cowtown’s most popular event drawing over 14,000 people per year. In 1996, with the help of Sedgwick County 4-H agent Beth Dresher, Cowtown developed an education day that coincided with the Old Sedgwick County Fair. The education day taught school children the function of county fairs from competitive judging to the process of showing animals. It also showcased 4-H and its processes to school children who had no experience with the organization. Even though Sedgwick County 4-H no longer helps with the event, Education Day is still one of the museum’s important educational tools.
renamed the “Christmas Through the Windows” event to the Old Fashioned Christmas in 1993. Since 1993, Cowtown’s Christmas has become the signature event for the museum and for many Wichitans, the start of the Christmas season. As an addition to the popular Old Fashioned Christmas Cowtown created the Breakfast With Santa event in 2005. The event’s festivities include arts and crafts, and a catered breakfast. The highlight of the event is the reading of Clement Moore’s *Twas the Night Before Christmas* by Santa Claus himself after his arrival via the stagecoach.¹³⁸

The 1980s saw Stan Harder, Liz Kennedy and Michael Husband, director, try to make Cowtown more historically accurate. It was during this time that they renamed Delmonico’s to the Empire House since Wichita never had a Delmonico’s. The Empire House name was synonymous with early Wichita history with city founder William Greiffenstein. Along with the change to the Empire House came the renaming of the Buckhorn Bar to Fritz Snitzler’s Saloon, a popular saloon in the early history of Wichita and a nod to the role immigrants had in Wichita’s early history. Along with renaming structures to coincide with Wichita’s history, Harder removed mannequins put in the buildings during the 1950s from areas where the visitors were fenced off by barriers of wood and chicken wire. Along with removal of the mannequins, the Cowtown staff removed the old chicken wire and wood barriers allowing visitors to walk through the exhibit areas. To reflect that it was a museum, not a frontier village, Cowtown changed its name to Old Cowtown Museum in the early 1980s.¹³⁹

---


The museum was becoming more professional in its approach, including its staffing. With the hiring of Michael B. Husband in 1985, Cowtown transitioned away from building managers to having directors. From 1977-1997, Stan Harder, as Cowtown’s curator, tried to make the museum historically authentic. One of the first things he did with the help of curatorial staff was to paint the building exteriors authentic Victorian colors. From 1955-1970s the majority of buildings were painted white. Pat Brooks, Cowtown building manager, hired Harder, and the first thing he did was educate himself on early Wichita history and artifacts of the time period. After work he would go to the public library to do research on everything, including graphics. Harder also redid the Land Office exhibit in the old Indian Museum basing it on a *Harpers Weekly* image showing a Sedgwick County Land Office in 1870. Along with Harder came Anthony Horsch as the director of education. His efforts led Cowtown in efforts to attract school groups and strived for historical accuracy much to the chagrin of staff and volunteers.\(^{140}\)

In 1987, with financial help from Koch Industries, Harder led the effort to reconstruct the 1870s Turnverein Hall, located originally on the southwest corner of First and Main Streets, and torn down in 1917. Again, like the majority of reconstructions at Cowtown the Turnverein Hall building is one-story while the original was a two-story building. The renaming of the Turnverein Hall and Fritz Snitzler’s Saloon represents the shift of interpretation at Cowtown from one of cattle and cowboys to the story of immigrants, ethnic traditions and groups, a basis of New West version of history.\(^{141}\)

It was during this period that Cowtown started concentrating on living history. A trend that was occurring nationally at institutions such as Bent’s Old Fort and Fort Larned. Along with

\(^{140}\) Stan Harder interview by author.

living history programs education and school groups are becoming more a part of mix. This was the same period known as “The Golden Age of Museums”—this was the good time, when museums really expanded, got a lot of private donations and added on new wings. One of the holdovers from the old west theme, the blacksmith shop became the main focus of Cowtown’s living history program. The addition of the DeVore Farm in 1998 continued the museum’s living history focus by concentrating on agricultural aspect. During this period, Cowtown became a member of the Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (AHLFAM), an organization devoted to the role of living history with farm and agricultural museums. The 1970s saw the beginning of the era of Humanities Councils, chautauquas, rendezvous and other “living history events” that were rooted more in historic interpretation than volunteer nostalgia.

The move to become more historically accurate drove out some of the longtime veteran Cowtown volunteers, including Charley George who ran a small train ride beside the Variety Theater and C.I. Blair who worked in the carpentry shop demonstrating woodcraft and selling wooden tops. Cowtown staff asked George to remove his train due to it being inaccurate to the museum’s time period. They also asked Blair to move from the museum grounds to the commercial area west of the Variety Theater and the Empire House. In its exhibits, Cowtown started to tell the story of the whole community, not just the history of great men or gunfights based on myths. These changes gave Cowtown more historical accuracy and eventually led to the museum’s accreditation by the American Associations of Museum in 1990. The accreditation put Cowtown in the same esteemed company as Colonial Williamsburg and Greenfield Village. Locally, Cowtown joined the Wichita Art Museum and the Wichita-Sedgwick County Museum in achieving accreditation.142

---

In 1986, to help represent the agricultural history of Wichita and Sedgwick County, Cowtown under the direction of Michael Husband, oversaw a donation from the Burlington Northern Railroad of an 1870-1880 era grain elevator located in Bentley, Kansas. The need of a grain elevator at the museum was stressed in Cowtown’s 1984 long range plan. Stan Harder, Husband and other staff members made the decision to put the elevator on the site of the 1963 museum/orientation center. In preparation of its move to Cowtown by Eby Construction, the staff, led by Stan Harder, started to remove and photograph exhibits in the soon to be torn down museum/orientation building. During the tenth annual Old Sedgwick County Fair, over 10,000 people saw the new but incomplete structure. The second phase of the project involved construction of a scale house and an engine room. With architect David Burke overseeing the project and funding for the restoration contributed by the Ross Foundation of Newton, Kansas, the Arkansas Valley Grain Elevator opened September 18, 1987. The addition of the grain elevator added another multiple story building to Cowtown and gave the museum another aspect of authenticity.\textsuperscript{143}

Cowtown again became the place to celebrate historical anniversaries in Wichita’s history when it celebrated the city’s 125\textsuperscript{th} birthday on October 7-8, 1995 during the 19\textsuperscript{th} annual Old Sedgwick County Fair. Even though Cowtown’s celebration was a low key event, other institutions like the Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum did not even plan a celebration for the 125\textsuperscript{th} and the city’s convention and visitor bureau completely forgot.

Marshall Murdock would not have been proud of the lack of boosterism and promotion of Wichita lacking in 1995.\textsuperscript{144}

In 1990, Donald R. Buma, Director of Botanica, The Wichita Gardens; J. Richard Gruber, Wichita Art Museum Director; Michael B. Husband, Director of Old Cowtown Museum; and Richard C. Mitchell Director of the Mid-America All-Indian Center joined forces to form the Museums-on-the-River district. According to \textit{The Wichita Eagle} “the best reason for this new Museums on the River push is to get the word out, not just too potential visitors and newcomers, but also to those of us who may have forgotten what we have.”\textsuperscript{145} The continued partnership between the four museums continues to this day.

The shift to a more accurate portrayal of 1870s daily life included a plan to build a new two story drugstore. The new structure would replace the one-story “Bon-Ton” Drug Store moved to the museum in 1953. In 1995, with funding from the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing, along with money from the local medical community, construction started on the new building. To make way for the new drug store, Cowtown moved the old version west of the General Store in late October of 1995. The move gave the building a new name, McGinn’s Feed and Seed and a new purpose, as a center for the museum’s volunteers. The new building housed the J. P. Allen Drug Store Exhibit on the first floor with a doctor and dentist office exhibits on the second floor. After months of construction and combing antique stores for exhibit items by volunteers and staff, including Stan Harder and Roslyn Hoch, the J.P. Allen Drug Store was ready for its Grand Opening on May 9, 1996.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{146} Old Cowtown Museum, \textit{Exhibit Development in Progress: Opening May 1, 1996, J. P. Allen Drug Store} (Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, 1995), Old Cowtown Museum Building Files; Beccy Tanner, “Creating
The resignation of Michael Husband in 1992 as Cowtown’s director signaled a change from historical accuracy to more of an entertainment mission. With Hugh D. Gurney, former director of Old World Wisconsin, becoming director. Just like Husband before him, Gurney got tired dealing with the Board and resigned in 1994. In his place, Lyle Koerper, a former executive at Kansas Gas and Electric (Westar) became the interim director. He started a campaign of “fun” and tried to get Cowtown away from historical authenticity. Koerper also aligned with the board to come up with a way to get rid of the “dead wood.” After a year of Koerper’s directorship, the board hired Michael Knecht in 1995. Knecht went along with “fun” campaign and in 1997 forced the resignation of Stan Harder, curator; Liz Kennedy, associate director; and Robert Tennyson, head of buildings and grounds.  

In 1996, Cowtown’s director, Michael Knecht, and its board proposed a $3.3 million fund drive. Included in the campaign was a list of projects that would help boost attendance at the 46 year old museum. Several of the projects, such as a milliner’s and dressmaking shop, new visitor’s center, and the moving of the entrance to the east side of Cowtown, would take at least another nine years to complete due to lack of funding from the City of Wichita, Sedgwick County and private donors. One of the projects, a reconstruction of an 1870s farm would come to fruition and become one of the museum’s signature exhibits.  

The idea of an 1870s farm dated back to a 1985 long range plan that museum staff, trustees, and area scholars proposed for the museum. This plan included a proposed expansion for a farm and a new visitor’s center on the west side of the museum. In 1990, Clayton Bruce

---

Cowtown’s drugstore took doctoring,” The Wichita Eagle, May 20, 1996; Medical Society of Sedgwick County and Old Cowtown Museum, J.P. Allen’s City Drug Store Exhibit, Dr. A.H. Fabrique’s Office Exhibit and The 1870s Dentist’s Office Exhibit Grand Opening Program (Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, 1996), 2, Old Cowtown Museum Building Files.

147 Stan Harder interview by author; Beccy Tanner, “Director shakes up Old Cowtown’s staff,” The Wichita Eagle, January 28, 1997, Newsbank.

Smith donated his relatives’ 1884 farm house at 15428 East Central to Cowtown and moved it to the museum. The structure became the foundation for the 1870s farm. Seven years after the move, construction started on the farm. The location of the farm to the west of the restored town caused the removal of the shops area west of the Variety Theater and the loss of 75 parking spaces. It also caused the closing of the Empire House Theatre, a melodrama theater ran by longtime Wichitans John Boldenow and Michael Ballinger. As work continued, local lawyer Paul Dugan, in 1997, donated his family’s 1882 barn for the farm project. Paul’s great-grandfather, Henry Dugan Jr., built the barn in 1882 on 160 acres near the Cowskin Creek at Maple Street. Around 1928, John J. Dugan, son of Henry Dugan, Jr. moved the barn across Maize Road after buying 160 acres of land near the his father’s original 160 acres. He sold his father’s acres in 1932 and they became Rolling Hills Country Club. In 1928, John moved the barn to his farm while the original location is now the site of the country club’s tennis courts.

After studying the barn to make sure it was safe to move, Cowtown staff made the decision to only use materials from the Dugan Barn to trim the interior of the farm’s barn. After a $150,000 donation from the DeVore Foundation, one of the largest in the museum’s history, the 1870s farm was renamed the 1880 DeVore Farm. On May 22, 1998, Cowtown’s newest exhibit opened to the public with over 750 people attending the opening and on Memorial Day weekend, 1,000 people came.149

Meanwhile, other Western-themed institutions in Kansas had different fates. Old Abilene Town was a major western-themed museum until the late 1970s. In 1981, after twenty-two years of struggling, Old Abilene Town went bankrupt. Years after the bankruptcy, several individuals and groups owned and tried to get the museum open with even a plan to move the buildings up to I-70. As of this writing, Old Abilene Town is open on Saturdays with gunfights happening on the main street which makes Old Abilene Town a shell of its former self.\textsuperscript{150}

Boot Hill and Dodge City, meanwhile, after the cancellation of Gunsmoke annual visitation continued to decline up to 25 percent which forced the museum to start charging an admission fee. In 2004, Boot Hill Museum moved an old Catholic Church from Bucklin, Kansas to the museum with the completion of the Kansas Cowboy Hall of Fame exhibit two years later. Even with all of the changes annual visitation continued to decline. In 2009, the first state ran casino opened west of town and took the name from the famous hill. To this day Boot Hill Casino is giving the Boot Hill Museum a run as Dodge City’s top attraction. Thus Dodge City still is a “good town living up to its bad name.”\textsuperscript{151}


In 2000, Cowtown celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a reunion of the first couple to get married at Cowtown, Margaret and Kenneth Mantz, and an oral history project, documenting visitor’s memories of Cowtown, were highlights of the event. For many people saying their favorite or best memory was of the Old Sedgwick County Fair and the Christmas events. With the new entertainment area east off Douglas Avenue, Old Town, growing in popularity by the turn of the twenty-first century, Old Cowtown Museum urged visitors to “Live it up in the original Old Town” and to “Celebrate in the original Old Town.” The celebrations boosted the 2000 attendance to 54,926, one of the highest annual attendances during the first decade of the twenty-first century.  

After Knecht left in 1998, a series of short-term directors such as Gloria Campbell tried to run the museum. Also during this time new staff such as Vanya Scott, and Fred Goss, as well as Anthony Horsch came on board. In 2001, Cowtown got its third director in two years, Jan McKay, the communications and marketing director for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Tasked with bringing in attendance and revenue, McKay embarked on a program of numerous events, much to the exhaustion of the staff and volunteers. The next year, Cowtown added several events that concentrated on special themes, such as Women of the West, a celebration of women’s role in the Old West and Rails and Trails, an event celebrating the role of railroads and the cattle trails in the growth of Wichita. For the Rails and Trails event, Cowtown

---

volunteer, Galen Arnett, helped start reenactments of the longhorn cattle drives that occurred during Wichita’s cow town days which lasted until the city took over in 2007. Instead of promoting a few special events, however, McKay felt that having an event every weekend would boost attendance. This worked for her first three years but by 2005 attendance was dropping. McKay brought a passion to Cowtown, bringing in consultants on how to revive the museum. Her approach, however, also irritated many volunteers, government officials, and staff, each of whom had been used to having a great deal of authority and autonomy when it came to how they functioned at Cowtown. In October of 2006, after being on paid leave for three months, Cowtown’s board unanimously fired Jan McKay. Her dismissal brought out into the open how dysfunctional was the whole governance of Cowtown. Her absence also brought about the question of who really ran Cowtown—was it the board, the staff, the volunteers, the city, or the county? This led to the city and county fighting over who was going to “bail out Cowtown” as well as talks about if the struggling museum needed to be bailed out at all. This era in Cowtown’s history, 2006 to 2007, has been named the “Time of Troubles” by former Cowtown board member, Dr. Jay Price.

Cowtown tried to reach out to new groups and interests beyond just the Old West or agricultural history. In 2004, Gary Lee and Vance Davis started a new volunteer group at Cowtown, the Vintage Base Ball Club. The club based the teams and uniforms on two 1870s baseball clubs in Wichita, the Red Stockings and the Bulldozers. The organization, composed of players in the 14 to 65 age group with several father and son combinations, was started as a way to portray another aspect of Wichita history instead of only dancers as is the Entre Nous and the

---

154 More information on this period of Cowtown history from the 2006-2007 Historic Wichita-Sedgwick County Board Minutes and from Dr. Jay Price, a member of the board during this era.
Dixie Lee Saloon Girls. In October 2004, the new teams played their first game. The group plays about twenty games a year at Cowtown, across Kansas and other states. Lee and Davis’s goal was to establish a museum-to-museum group that would represent Cowtown across the country. Between 2007 and 2008, the teams moved from playing in the DeVore Farm pasture to a new field, near Lakeside, along the banks of the Arkansas River.\(^{155}\) The addition of the Vintage Baseball Club and an 1870s bowling alley allowed Cowtown an avenue to get away from the “Old West” image of the 1950s to the 1970s. It also brought the history of sports into the museum’s interpretation of the New West history.

The museum continued to consider new buildings. In 2002, the Board received a donation of the 1870s Heller Cabin from Dickinson County, Kansas. Leonard Hoffman, a Civil War veteran, built the cabin in the 1870s in Elmo, near Abilene, Kansas. Later, the Heller family purchased the land and cabin. In September of 2000, Richard Basore, from Intrust Bank, notified Cowtown of Donna Heller’s donation of her family’s one hundred and thirty year old cabin. Cowtown was one of three possible organizations that the cabin could go to, the other two were Old Abilene Town and the City of Enterprise. After inspecting the cabin, Collections Manager Vanya Scott recommended the museum take the cabin in December. Her recommendation led to a contentious staff meeting over the acceptance of the cabin due to Cowtown’s history and policy to only accept Wichita and Sedgwick County buildings. After considerable discussions, the staff approved moving the cabin to the museum grounds.\(^{156}\)

\(^{155}\) Gary Lee interview by author, May 28, 2014, Wichita, KS.
With the staff and board approval, Doug Reed, an expert on historic cabins, came on site to evaluate the structure and analyze moving costs and feasibility. The Hoffman Cabin became an issue for Jan McKay in September 2001. She became the second director to have to deal with the controversial structure. Two months after McKay’s hiring, the board to get the cabin to the museum voted to accept the structure and approved funding to move it to Cowtown. By July, staff approved the cabin’s final route to the museum.\textsuperscript{157}

This acquisition also started a conversation on what to do with it and where to put the historic cabin. It continued the tradition of Cowtown being a “home for orphan buildings.” Many supported acquiring it because it was seen as a good thing and it was hard to say no. Not because the board and staff sought it out. This went against Cowtown’s process of acquiring buildings if they fit a certain time frame and preserved Wichita and Sedgwick County buildings. A stance the museum adopted in the early 1980s in preparation for accreditation from the American Association of Museums.

While the museum waited for the cabin’s move, the board held a discussion on where to place the cabin once it got to Cowtown. The initial favored location by Dr. Jay Price and Bob Garrett was in the Old Town area in front of the Munger House, Trader’s Cabin and St. John’s Episcopal Church and across from the One Room School. The addition of the structure’s wings made it too big to be placed in the Old Town area. An alternative was to move it to the road that went to the DeVore Farm to help break up the long trek to the farm. But this solution posed interpretation problems such as the acquisition of limited farm land, and how to interpret farmsteads from two different eras adjacent to each other.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{157} Old Cowtown Museum, \textit{Director’s Review-Heller Cabin Project}, 32, 35.
\textsuperscript{158} Old Cowtown Museum, \textit{Director’s Review-Heller Cabin Project}, 39; Old Cowtown Museum, \textit{Heller/Hoffman Cabin} (Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, n.d.); Eventually, however, the cabin was moved from
When the cabin was moved to the museum in 2002, only the center part of the cabin was put on display, wrapped in bubble wrap on the road to the farm. The east and west lean-tos were put into storage until a suitable location could be found. The addition of a new Visitors Center on the east side of the museum grounds in 2005 ended the dream of the cabin being put in the Old Town area. Another idea for the placement of the cabin was to put it on the pathway from the visitors center and the Old Town area to help ease the dullness and boredom of the journey. In 2009, nine years after its acquisition, Cowtown moved the cabin from west side of the museum, barely passing the Meat Market, on its way near the Visitors Center. After five months of restoration, the cabin was open to visitors in October 2009. The cabin, like other buildings at Cowtown, interprets an history that is not its original use thus it is used to interpret a trader’s cabin. The interpretation of not just the Heller Cabin but also other buildings at Cowtown away from their original use is unique only to Cowtown and not found in other western-themed museums.

In the middle of the debate on the Hoffman Cabin, Cowtown broke ground on a long awaited Visitor’s Center in 2004. The construction of the Visitor’s Center moved the museum entrance back to the east side after being on the west side of the museum’s grounds since 1978. Began under Jan McKay, the idea of a new visitors center was the goal of four directors, two campaign funds, and many board members. The one man who held the idea together through all the personal changes was Clark Bastian, chairman and chief executive of Fidelity Bank. His leadership got the new building built. On November 29, 2005, with flames shooting and smoke near the DeVore Farm to near the main entrance in April of 2009. Several factors influenced the decision, including having a wide enough road to allow for emergency vehicles, maintenance trucks and large equipment and visitor experiences that situated the structure in relation to the other structures in the Old Town area. It also allowed for sufficient traffic flow areas during special event days and ample space for outdoor interpretation.

---

billowing, Bastian and McKay burned the museum’s brand into one of the pillars during the Visitors Center’s Grand Opening in front of 150 Cowtown volunteers and supporters. Originally intended to be an interpretive space as well as a rental facility, certain plans even considered space for collections storage. Funding limited grand plans and the result was primarily a rental facility, a symbol that Cowtown was becoming not just a museum but also a facility place for events that brought in an extra funding stream. This transition started the idea that the museum should be self-sustaining instead of relying on taxpayer money. Ironically, one of the first set of activities to take place in the new building included meetings involving the termination of McKay. The actual announcement was in the Southern Hotel, but a follow up meeting, along with the media circus that ensued, mainly happened in the Visitor Center.\footnote{Beccy Tanner, “Well-wishers put the brand to Old Cowtown,” \textit{The Wichita Eagle}, November 30, 2005.}

During the “time of troubles,” several ideas by government leaders and the general public were given on how to “fix” Cowtown. The county, who paid the museum staff’s salaries, sought ideas from several people including, at the time, Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper owner and Wild West World theme park developer, Thomas Etheredge. His suggestion was to make Cowtown into more of a theme park and downplay the historical aspect and authenticity of the museum. He said “Does that mean stores, restaurants, Ferris wheels, roller coasters-something that draws people? It could be three-headed bearded ladies for all I care. Something to draw people in and cause them to spend money.” Etheredge even suggested bringing back the Hollywood version of the West that worked well in the 1950s and 1960s. He also suggested that Cowtown should be run like a private business and not rely on government funding. Naturally,
his ideas did not set well with Cowtown’s board who preferred to stick to historical authenticity and keep the museum’s accreditation.¹⁶¹

Etheridge was not the only person who wanted Cowtown to get away from historical authenticity. In a September 30, 2005 editorial in The Wichita Eagle, Jim John, also known as “Kansas Jim,” a cowboy poet and musician from Wichita, advised that Cowtown needed to go back to its roots by having more gunfights, stagecoach robberies and other Hollywood western-based skits. Along with skits, John suggested that the museum get away from historical authenticity by allowing Marty Robbins songs, “Tumbling Tumbleweeds” and other popular cowboy songs, and not be so hung up on the accuracy of interpreters’ and volunteers’ clothing. He concluded that people are hooked by the legend of the cowboy, while giving the actual history of the cowboy should not be told to the public. Other ideas to save Cowtown included a restaurant on site to the county’s idea of moving it to Park City near the Kansas Coliseum and the future Wild West World.¹⁶²

At the August 28, 2006 Historic Wichita-Sedgwick County Board of Trustees meeting in the Visitor’s Center, John D’Angelo, Director of Arts and Cultural Services with the City of Wichita, presented the board with three options to save the struggling museum: 1.) close the museum permanently, 2.) drastically reduce staff and museum operations for 18 months, or 3.) immediate acquisition of an estimated $650,000 to keep the museum open and operational through April 2007. After debate among board members and input from the public, the board agreed to meet again to discuss the options further. After the August meeting, $76,000 of gifts came in for the museum including $50,000 in anonymous pledges but far from the $150,000 to

cover Cowtown’s debt. The outpouring of gifts caused Tim Holt, president of Cowtown’s board, to offer a new option for the board to consider when it met on September 11, 2006.\textsuperscript{163}

Holt’s options for Cowtown included: delaying the spring opening until May or June while possibly scaling back the number of days and hours the museums is open; drawing up a new budget based on the $800,000 the city and county allot to Cowtown and use it for addressing health and safety issues, protection of its collections and buildings, and the payment of salaries; and making any additional spending be collected in advance. He also lambasted the idea of Cowtown closing by saying “We are not going to close. I wish people would stop using the word ‘close.’ We are going to make some adjustments, but we are not closing.”\textsuperscript{164}

Holt’s idea started a showdown with the city and county, who wanted to close the museum for 12-18 months. On one side was the Cowtown board and staff who felt the city and county leaders were trying to close the museum permanently, and on the other was the city and county leaders who felt a temporary close of 12-18 months would help address many of the perceived museum’s problems (mainly Cowtown’s board). A day before Cowtown’s board decided the next action for the museum, \textit{The Wichita Eagle} printed an article quoting Tim Holt, County Commissioner Ben Sciortino, and city council woman, Sharon Fearey.\textsuperscript{165} In the article, Holt expressed that he and the staff were convinced that city and county leaders were trying to shut down Cowtown and that the board and staff “were not going to roll over. If they are wanting to shut us down, they are going to have to answer to the public.” Meanwhile Sciortino, in the article, put the blame for Cowtown’s problems all on the board, claiming that “the real

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{163} Historic Wichita-Sedgwick County Board of Trustees August 28, 2006 Meeting Minutes, 3; Beccy Tanner, “Museum History?” \textit{The Wichita Eagle}, September 5, 2006, Newsbank; Ibid., “Cowtown Board will vote Monday,” Ibid., September 10, 2006, Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{164} Beccy Tanner, “Museum History?” \textit{The Wichita Eagle}; Beccy Tanner, “Cowtown Board will vote Monday,” \textit{The Wichita Eagle}.
  \item \textsuperscript{165} Beccy Tanner, “Cowtown Board will vote Monday,” \textit{The Wichita Eagle}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
problem at Cowtown isn’t the roof or the nail that is coming up, it is the board of Cowtown.” Fearey, on the other hand, tied the impending board’s actions to the city and county’s funding of Cowtown. “There is always room for negotiation. But if they flat-out say we are going to stay open and this is how we are going to do it, then it has to come back to the major funders, which are the city and county.”

On September 11, 2006, Cowtown’s board voted to keep the museum open and not adopt John D’Angelo’s plan of “temporary” closing the museum. The major parts of the proposal were that Cowtown would stay open until October 31 and would reopen hourly Monday through Friday beginning in June of 2007, appointments needed for school and bus tours, inclusion in the budget for the protection of the museum’s collections, and the development of a new strategic plan emphasizing financial planning and fundraising. D’Angelo’s role went unexplained.

Weeks after the board’s proposal, City Manager George Kolb sent a letter to Tim Holt stating that Cowtown had several health and safety violations that needed to be fixed. The violations ranged from mouse droppings in the restaurant to mold growing in some of the buildings. The report also cited the lack of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers in the jail and the chicken coop. The number of violations and additions cited in the report led many supporters of Cowtown to question if it was sent as retaliation for the board’s decision to keep the museum open. The report started rumors that the city would close Cowtown and sell the prime riverfront land to a developer. As Bob Garrett, Cowtown’s then interim executive director said, “It seems to me this is harassment. Every week they are coming up with something. It seems like there is an agenda for getting rid of us.” So much ire was raised by the community that during a city

---

166 Quotes from Beccy Tanner, “Cowtown Board will vote Monday,” The Wichita Eagle.
167 Beccy Tanner, “Cowtown to retool mission, cut budget,” The Wichita Eagle, September 12, 2006, Newsbank;
council meeting on October 3, Fearey and other city leaders made a promise that Cowtown was not closing.\textsuperscript{168}

During this time, Cowtown was not the only museum or attraction in Wichita to be struggling financially. Unfortunately, it was the one getting all of the negative front page headlines and editorials in \textit{The Wichita Eagle}. News of other institutions such as Botanica, The Wichita Gardens, which suffered losses from 2003-2006, were hidden inside the newspaper instead of on the front page. This led to board members not wanting to make suggestions just in case they wound up on the front page of the newspaper.\textsuperscript{169}

Annual attendance at Cowtown reached its maximum for the 2000-2012 period at 64,276 in 2004. By 2007, the attendance at Cowtown was 16,416. This was due in part to Wichita’s unusually hot weather but also the uncertainty of whether Cowtown would be open. Something had to be done or Cowtown would ride into the sunset like the Westerns it idolized in the 1950s and 1960s. During this time several volunteers “picketed” outside along Sim Park Drive in historic costume, asking passers-by to support Cowtown. Also, this was a period that saw the passing of a number of key figures such as Sehnert and later Galen Arnett.\textsuperscript{170}

In December, Cowtown’s board unanimously approved a $1 million budget and an agreement with the city to hire a structural engineer and an historical architect as consultants and to use John D’Angelo as a consultant for the museum’s financial, operational, and five year plans. The museum board shrunk from twenty-one to twelve, something city and county leaders

\textsuperscript{168} Bob Garrett quote and information found in Beccy Tanner, “City: Cowtown’s here to stay,” \textit{The Wichita Eagle}, October 4, 2006, Newsbank.
were asking for in August 2006. After years of being in the red, Cowtown cut its deficit from $300,000 to a little over $1,000 in the black. But the good news was not to last due to the tension between John D’Angelo and Cowtown’s board and a deficit of $50,000 to start the year. Even after it gave in to many of the city’s demands, city leaders still blamed the board for Cowtown’s woes. Fearey compared the board to unruly teenagers who “think they are too old to have a baby-sitter while mom and dad are out of town,” she said. "But mom and dad have hired one. The baby-sitter is seeing the unruly kids won't talk and the unruly kids won't accept the fact the parents want him there to help. If the board had their money in order, the city and county wouldn't be in there telling them how to work." Along with the financial problems, 1,000 to 2,000 of the Cowtown’s 13,000 artifacts became unaccounted for due to the high turnover of curators and the different documentation of the artifacts. Wichita State University students volunteered to look for and archive items since Amy Loch, who was hired as full-time curator, had other jobs and responsibilities due to the tighter budget and reduced staff. Loch and her team did find 750 items that were labeled missing for 20 years.

Cowtown’s collections consist of in the order of 10,000 artifacts in its permanent collection. This includes roughly 1,550 textile items, 770 furnishings, 300 pieces of furniture, 2,400 tools and agricultural equipment, 1,500 food service items, 1,850 documents, and 200 pieces of art. Along with the permanent collection the museum maintains a hands-on collection of items used for interpretation and a research library of about 100 items. A brief list of Cowtown’s most important items include the Munger family collection which contains the

---

family bible and a picture of Julia Munger, wife of Darius Munger; the Fabrique Family Records and a pistol owned by Dr. Fabrique; Blood family items and photographs; rare 1880s farm equipment that includes a horse powered sweep, tread power, Gilpin plow, and threshing machine; and an assortment of transportation items including an 1860s stagecoach, Newton Wagon, and a Boxcar. Along with the items in its permanent collection are the forty buildings that make up Cowtown.¹⁷³

As the disagreement with the city continued, Cowtown’s board thought Sedgwick County would be willing to own and finance the museum just like its involvement in Exploration Place. Instead, the city of Wichita took the board by surprise and took over day-to-day operations of the living history museum on August 14, 2007. A day later, the county took $115,000 from the money slated for Cowtown and redistributed it to the Sedgwick County Zoo and the Sedgwick County Extension Service. With the city taking over Cowtown, the 99-year lease signed in 1950 ended. In its place however, the city and board signed a five year Operating Agreement that has the board act in an advisory and fund raising capacity. This agreement was automatically extended at the end of 2012 for another five years.¹⁷⁴

In 2007, the attraction that was going to save Old Cowtown Museum, Wild West World, closed and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Etheredge blamed the weather but his investment strategy could not bring enough money into the park and eventually landed him in jail. Since he owned both Wild West World and the Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper in Benton, Kansas, both ventures closed due to the bankruptcy. The Benton attraction’s major draw, the Prairie Rose Wranglers, needed a place to play their worldwide popular version of cowboy music. The city of

¹⁷³ Summary of Old Cowtown Museum’s permanent collection found in Old Cowtown Museum’s archives.
Wichita decided to make them the draw that would help Cowtown. Renamed the Diamond W. Wranglers, the group played to sold out crowds in the Visitors Center. As the popularity wore off, ticket sales were not what the city wished for. In 2008, the city decided to build a new 400-600 seat theater for the group. Due to the less than stellar ticket sales, the $4 million cost, and complaints of competition from Wichita theater mogul, Bill Warren, and the new owners of the Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper, the idea was dropped and the band moved into Cowtown’s Empire House where they still play today.\(^\text{175}\) The struggle of Old Cowtown Museum to stay open parallels Old Abilene Town’s struggles. The same firm that recommended Cowtown move north to Park City also suggested moving Old Abilene Town up to I-70 to get the increase visibility of highway travelers. The city takeover of Cowtown in 2007, ended another chapter in the museum’s history. The new era has Cowtown functioning not only as a museum but also as an events center something that Boot Hill Museum and other institutions such as Colonial Williamsburg have been doing for years.

As a visitor “takes a stroll down the dirt-lined streets of Old Cowtown, you’ll realize that the past hasn’t simply been re-created it has been brought back to life.”\textsuperscript{176} This comment came, not from the 1960s, but 2008, yet it reflects some of the same themes: a place to connect with the past, an outdoor setting that involves a recreated historic place. In other ways, much had changed, the museum went through a struggle with the county and city trying to close the institution down for twelve to eighteen months to the city taking over Cowtown in 2007. Under city control, the role of the volunteers changed. Before city ownership, volunteers ran and staffed Cowtown during the weekends, with paid interpreters being used during the weekdays. Afterwards, the city hired interpreters to work during Cowtown’s main season.\textsuperscript{177}

In November of 2010, Cowtown hosted Wichita’s first Steampunk convention. The event was part of the growing Steampunk movement that is best described as Victorian science fiction akin to Jules Verne or H.G. Wells novels. Even though it was unique and different, the event allows Cowtown to reach out to a younger audience, one that it would not achieve if it stuck to the Hollywood version of the cowboy and western history. With most Steampunk conventions held in hotels, Cowtown’s event became the first local Steampunk gathering held outdoors. The affair featured machines such as an anti-airship gun and penny farthing bicycle races. As the popularity of the event grew, staff and volunteers added penny farthing bicycle races and demonstrations of Steampunk related gear and gadgets. In 2012, Cowtown’s

\textsuperscript{176} Old Cowtown Museum, \textit{Where History Lives} (Wichita: City of Wichita, 2008).
\textsuperscript{177} Bob Garrett and Francene Sharp interview.
Steampunk Day made *True West* magazine’s “Best of the West” list. As the magazine stated “folks can really get into the spirit walking around Old Cowtown’s drover’s camp, trader’s area and 1870s residential street.” “Steampunk is a technically advanced, alternate history where steam power is widely used and anything can exist—airplanes to flying ships, computers to time machines—as long as they’re mechanically made with gears and cogs.”

As a plan to get more people interested in Cowtown, the staff, under the leadership of Teddie Barlow, head curator, started the Empire House LIVE! concert series in 2012. The series brought back the popular melodramas, Shakespeare in the Park, and musical artists such as Ronny Cox, the Steel Wheels, and Carrie Nation and the Speakeasy. Due to its success the series, continued into 2014 and brought much needed revenue and exposure to the museum.

In 2013, Cowtown staff remodeled the first story of the brown storage barn with financial help from Historic Wichita. The brown storage barn was originally constructed to house the museum’s volunteer fire department. It became a storage building when all of the fire equipment was moved out in the 1980s to the Kansas Firefighters Museum on South Broadway. The location of the brown barn was ideal as an orientation building due to it being the first one visitors see when entering the town site itself from the pathway and the Visitors Center. The new building gave information on the history of the museum and also provided a scale model of the grounds so visitors could orient themselves.

---

179 “Best of the West’ Cowtown’s Steampunk Day honored by magazine,” *The Cowtown Chronicle* 14 (Summer 2012), 2; “Steampunk Day at Cowtown,” Ibid., 14 (Summer 2012), 3.
By November, the 40th exhibit building opened, the McKenzie House. With linoleum and carpet torn out of the front parlor and bedroom of the 1880s house, work began to present the living conditions of a 1865-1880 single, middle-class woman. She left her extended family to “go West” and find adventure and a good man, a common story that had not been interpreted at the museum before. Leo McKenzie of the Wichita Carriage Works, built the house in the 1880s, possibly located at 3rd and Water Streets in Wichita. In 1961, the McKenzies donated and moved the house to Cowtown. Over the years, it became the caretaker’s residence, volunteer headquarters and interpreter’s lounge. Its most famous function was as the Kirby House, headquarters for Cowtown’s Girl Scouts program.182

The McKenzie House and the brown barn were the sixth and the seventh buildings opened to the public from 2009-2013. The others were the Eagle Cornice Works in the former Weaver’s Building, the Children’s Corner Creative Emporium in the original Cowtown Fire Station No. 1, Finlay Ross Furniture Store in the former City Hall, Hodge House formerly known as the Parsonage, and Empire Hall Exhibit Gallery in the original Delmonico’s Restaurant. The reinterpretation of these buildings conform more to the 1984 story line due to the emphasis on business and industrial history of Wichita, an emphasis of New West history, the telling of the role of immigrants, women, and minorities in Wichita’s history something that was not done in the 1950s to the 1960s.183

It is in this light that even Cowtown became the location to film western movies. In 1992, Cowtown was the location for filming the second installment of the Sarah Plain and Tall

183 Ibid.; Originally the idea to turn the former City Hall and collections lab into a furniture store was the idea of Amy Loch, former curator, to adapt a storage facility into an exhibit to showcase furniture from the museum’s collection.
series, Skylark, starring Glen Close and Christopher Walken. The filming of Skylark started Cowtown’s role as a ideal location for filming of movies and television shows that continues to this day. Local filmmaker, Ken Spurgeon, used the museum as one of the settings for the filming of his trilogy based on the Civil War in Kansas with the first movie, Touched by Fire filmed in 2004, Bloody Dawn in 2006, and Road to Valhalia in 2013. Other movies filmed at Cowtown include The Only Good Indian in 2007 and Wichita in 2013. The use of Cowtown as a set for television and movies offers another source of revenue for the institution.184

For both Boot Hill Museum and Cowtown, the influence of westerns on the history being presented to tourists relies heavily on a generation who grew up on television and motion picture westerns. The more years that pass since the cancellation of Gunsmoke and Bonanza, the more generations that did not grow up with Hollywood westerns, even Little House on the Prairie look as outdated to the current generation. With the rise of “virtual” history and living history now about forty years old it remains to be seen how museums such as Cowtown and Boot Hill Museum adapt to the change.185

Museums such as Old Cowtown Museum have to think of new ways to get tourists in to see their collections thus the addition of Steampunk Day, Vintage Base Ball and Civil War Day are important tools to draw the public in. According to Rothman luring tourists in communities and historic sites make a “Devil’s Bargain.” They sell out their culture and traditions for the promise of new revenue.186 The influence of Hollywood westerns is still felt in the way the skits are presented during Cowtown’s annual Age of the Gunfighter event and its daily gunfights, and

186 Rothman, Devil’s Bargains, 25.
the seasonal gunfights at Boot Hill Museum. They also still hang on to the major theme of all westerns-the good guy vs. the bad guy-and still bring in tourists, foreign and domestic.

The lack of coverage on the value and legacy of western-themed museums, their roles as staples of preservation and education sites, emphasizes the errant roles as mere attractions, ignoring their role in teaching the public. The story of Cowtown chronicles an evolution from being a shrine to a tourist attraction, then becoming a living history museum, and finally a western themed museum. Over the years, it has been an attraction, a place of events, a museum village, and a building zoo. A product of 1950s Old West nostalgia, Cowtown has, in spite of its problems, outlasted many of its peer institutions. Old Abilene Town\textsuperscript{187} is a shell of its former self, while Burketown and Frontier Town are long gone. Boot Hill remains, for better or worse, tied to interpreting just the Old West History. Cowtown has had to adapt to survive, gone are the days of interpreting just the Old West version of history. The inclusion of western-themed museums in preservation and museum literature would elevate them to the status of museums instead of just roadside attractions.

\textsuperscript{187} Even though Old Abilene Town is still in existence it is not the regional attraction it was in the 1960s and 1970s.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Articles


Books


First Presbyterian Church of Wichita, Kansas. *This is Who We Are: A History of First Presbyterian Church, Wichita, Kansas*. Wichita: First Presbyterian Church of Wichita, Kansas, 1995.


**Interviews**


Garrett, Bob, E-mail messages to author.


Harder, Stan, E-mail messages to author.

--------------, Interview by author, June 19, 2014, Wichita, Oral History interview, Wichita, KS.


**Manuscripts**

2005 Wichita River Festival Program.

2006 Wichita River Festival Program.


Historic Wichita-Sedgwick County Board of Trustees August 28, 2006 Meeting Minutes.


**Newspapers**

*Abilene Reflector-Chronicle* (Abilene, Kansas), Old Abilene Town Files, Dickinson County Heritage Center

*The Cowtown Chronicle* (Wichita, Kansas)

*Dickinson County Clippings Volume 4*, Kansas State Historical Society.

--------------------------------------- *Volume 5*, Kansas State Historical Society.

*Dodge City Daily Globe* (Dodge City, Kansas)

*Halstead Independent* (Halstead, Kansas)

*High Plains Journal* (Dodge City, Kansas)

*Sedgwick County Clippings Volume 11*, Kansas State Historical Society

*Topeka Daily Capital*, (Topeka, Kansas)

*The Wichita Beacon* (Wichita, Kansas)

*The Wichita Beacon* Evening Edition (Wichita, Kansas)

*The Wichita City Eagle* (Wichita, Kansas)
Wichita Cow Town Vidette (Wichita, Kansas)

Wichita Cow Town Vidette Centennial Year Souvenir Edition (Wichita, Kansas)

The Wichita Cowtown Vidette Cowtown Edition

The Wichita Eagle (Wichita, Kansas)

The Wichita Eagle Evening Edition (Wichita, Kansas)

The Wichita Eagle Morning Edition (Wichita, Kansas)

The Wichita Eagle-Beacon (Wichita, Kansas)

Old Cowtown Museum Archives
Old Cowtown Museum Building Files.


----------------. The Use of the Name “Delmonico” in Wichita and a Short History of the Empire House. Wichita, Old Cowtown Museum, n.d. Old Cowtown Museum Building Files.


Old Cowtown Museum. *1870s Sedgwick County Farm*. Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, n.d.

---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.

*Cowtown History: Myth, Mystery and Reality*. Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, c.2010.

---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.

*Girl Scouts at Old Cowtown Museum Living History Program*. Wichita: Old Cowtown Museum, n.d.

---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.


---------------------------------------------.


St. John’s Episcopal Church Exhibit File, Old Cowtown Museum Building Archives.

See *Historic Wichita Cow Town* Promotional Flyer, c.1961.


Titles from advertisements in Old Cowtown Museum scrapbooks, Old Cowtown Museum Archives.

**Online Databases**


Shideler, Karen. “Santa Claus is Coming to Cowtown,” The Wichita Eagle (December 18, 2005, Newsbank).


------------------. “Changes will greet Cowtown visitors this Sunday,” The Wichita Eagle, (March 25, 2002, Newsbank).

------------------. “City: Cowtown’s here to stay,” The Wichita Eagle, (October 4, 2006, Newsbank).


------------------. “Cowtown Board will vote Monday,” The Wichita Eagle, September 10, 2006, Newsbank).


------------------. “Cowtown to retool mission, cut budget,” The Wichita Eagle, (September 12, 2006, Newsbank).

------------------. “Cowtown’s education day is appetizer this weekend’s Old Sedgwick County Fair and its education day spark curiosity about the 19th century,” The Wichita Eagle, (October 5, 1996, Newsbank).


Other Collections
Historic Wichita-Sedgwick County Board of Trustees August 28, 2006 Meeting Minutes.


-----------------------------.


“This is Wichita: Historic Wichita Cowtown,” *Wichita* 57 (January-February 1979): 17. Wichita State University Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives.


-----------------------------.


**Theses**


**Websites**


“History of Old Sturbridge Village: The Wells Family,”


South Park City. “History: A Town is Born-South Park City-Genesis,” http://www.fairy-

Stuhr Museum Foundation. “A National Treasure: A Nationally-Renowned Living History
APPENDICES
Figure 1: 1953 plan for Historic Wichita Cow Town. Courtesy The Wichita Eagle
Figure 2: Entrance to Historic Wichita Cow Town in the 1950s. Image shows the First Presbyterian Church in the center and the Hodge House (Parsonage) on the right. This would be the entrance until the opening of Lakeside on the west side of the museum in 1978. 
Courtesy Old Cowtown Museum.
Figure 3: 1961 promotional flyer for Historic Wichita Cow Town. The restored childhood home of Billy the Kid is known as the Story and-a-Half House.

Courtesy Old Cowtown Museum.
Figure 4: Sketch of future Historic Wichita Cow Town after its completion in 1961. Courtesy The Wichita Eagle
Figure 5: Hon-Pe-Aika Indian Dancers in front of the Munger House in 1963. They were a local dance group that performed for regional events in the 1960s. Courtesy Old Cowtown Museum
Figure 6: Carry Nation reenactment during the 1967 Chisholm Trail Centennial. Notice the Museum building on the right. Courtesy Old Cowtown Museum.
Figure 7: Keeping guard over a 1970s event with the Buckhorn Bar on the left. Courtesy Old Cowtown Museum.
Figure 8: Costumed interpreters and volunteers in front of the old Drugstore in 1990. Courtesy Old Cowtown Museum.
Figure 9: Stagecoach during 2014 Steampunk Day. Courtesy Keith Wondra.
Figure 10: Battle for the DeVore Farm during 2014 Civil War Day. Courtesy Keith Wondra
APPENDIX B

OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS & BUSINESS MANAGERS

Richard “Dick” Long*  1950-1961
Phil H. Manning#  1961-1973
Robert Goetschius#  1973-1976
Marjorie “Pat” Brooks#  1976-1983
Patricia Christgau#  1984-1985
Michael B. Husband  1985-1990
Hugh Gurney  1991-1994
Lyle Koerper+  1994-1995
Gloria Campbell  1999-2001
Stephanie Payton+  2001-2001
Jan McKay  2001-2006
Bob Garrett+  2006-2007
Amy Loch+  2007-2008
David Flask  2008-Present

# = Business Manager
+= Interim Director
*= President of Historic Wichita, Inc.

Source: Old Cowtown Museum Scrapbooks in museum archives.
# APPENDIX C

## OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM BUILDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Built</th>
<th>Moved to Site</th>
<th>Original Location</th>
<th>Former Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas Valley Grain Elevator</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Bentley, Kansas</td>
<td>Bentley Grain Elevator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin’s Photographic Studio</td>
<td>c.1910</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>The Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandstand</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbershop</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>404 N. Hydraulic</td>
<td>Old Township Hall Dress and Millinery Post Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith Shop</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood House</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>NE Corner of Broadway &amp; 63rd Street South</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Building</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter’s Shop</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Coop</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Corner Creative Emporium</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections Building</td>
<td>c.1885</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Caretaker’s House Register’s Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeVore Farm Barn</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Dugan Barn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Unless noted all buildings came from Wichita including the ones with addresses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year A</th>
<th>Year B</th>
<th>Address/Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeVore Farm</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Coop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeVore Farm House</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>15428 E. Central</td>
<td>Smith House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeVore Farm Hog Shelter</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaking and Millinery</td>
<td>c.1961</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Gunsmith Exhibit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Marshal’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Store</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Cornice Works</td>
<td>c.1890</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Potter’s &amp; Weaver’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Storage and Forwarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire Hall</td>
<td>1890s</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>816 E. Market</td>
<td>Delmonico’s Museum Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire House</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Variety Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chuckwagon Café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fechheimers Dry Goods and</td>
<td>c.1880</td>
<td>c.1961</td>
<td>900 Block of S. Broadway</td>
<td>Dorrthea’s Dress Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finlay Ross</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collection’s Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Arkansas Valley Bank</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2nd &amp; Wichita</td>
<td>St. Aloysius Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd &amp; St. Francis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>605-607 N. Main</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fritz Snitzler’s Saloon</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Derby, Kansas</td>
<td>Buckhorn Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner Coal</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1210-1245 N. Main</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Store</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Garden Plain, Kansas</td>
<td>A.K. Master’s General Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifford’s Store and Saloon</td>
<td>c.1865</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>South of the Ninnescah River, near the Chisholm Trail</td>
<td>Horse Thief Cabin Settler’s Cabin Sauffer Cabin Trader’s Cabin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gill Mortuary</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Undertaker’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harness and Saddlery</td>
<td>c.1910</td>
<td>c.1961</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Lawrence Thompson Exhibit, Harry Shepler Saddle Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heller Cabin</td>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Elmo, Dickinson County, Kansas</td>
<td>Hoffman Cabin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodge House</td>
<td>c.1880</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>605-607 N. Main</td>
<td>Parsonage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; Market 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; Market</td>
<td>Old Wyatt Earp Jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeside Administrative Offices</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Visitor Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Office</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Barber Shop, Gunfighter’s Hideout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Office</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livery Stable</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Red Barn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance Shop</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>c.1960</td>
<td>900 Block of Topeka, added on to after move to Cowtown</td>
<td>Yellow Barn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshal’s Office</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Indian Exhibit Land Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGinn’s Feed and Seed</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>717 N. Market</td>
<td>J.P. Allen Drug Store City Drug Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKenzie House</td>
<td>c.1880</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3rd &amp; Water</td>
<td>Kirby House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Market</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Whitewater, Kansas</td>
<td>Breising Meat Market, Whitewater Meat Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munger House</td>
<td>1868-1869</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>10th &amp; Waco 9th &amp; Waco 920 Back Bay Blvd.</td>
<td>The Munger Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murdock House</td>
<td>1874</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>4th &amp; Oak Streets (Now Murdock &amp; St. Francis Aves)</td>
<td>Eaglehurst Eagle’s Roost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Room School</td>
<td>c.1910</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>301 S. Meridian</td>
<td>Meridian School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation Building</td>
<td>c.1967</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>Fire Barn, Brown Barn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale House</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Hotel</td>
<td>c.1887</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1117 W. Douglas</td>
<td>Rooming House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story and a Half House</td>
<td>c.1888</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>900 Block of Fairview</td>
<td>McKenzie House, Billy The Kid Childhood Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnverein Hall</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Derby, Kansas</td>
<td>Keno Corner Community Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Center</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Built on site</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wichita City Eagle Print Shop</td>
<td>c.1890</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>9th &amp; Main</td>
<td>The Newspaper Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wichita and Southwestern Depot</td>
<td>1886-1887</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Anness, Kansas</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wulf House</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Galis Township</td>
<td>Henry Wulf House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

OUTDOOR MUSEUMS IN KANSAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany Museum</td>
<td>Sabetha, Nemaha County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barton County Historical Society Museum</td>
<td>Great Bend, Barton County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot Hill Museum</td>
<td>Dodge City, Ford County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson County Heritage Center</td>
<td>Abilene, Dickinson County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Bissell Museum</td>
<td>Phillipsburg, Phillips County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodgden House Museum Complex</td>
<td>Ellsworth, Ellsworth County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt Historical Museum</td>
<td>Humboldt, Allen County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kearny County Historical Museum</td>
<td>Lakin, Kearny County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln County Historical Museum</td>
<td>Lincoln, Lincoln County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mennonite Heritage &amp; Agricultural Museum</td>
<td>Goessel, Marion County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mound City Historic Park</td>
<td>Mound City, Linn County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Abilene Town</td>
<td>Abilene, Dickinson County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Cowtown Museum</td>
<td>Wichita, Sedgwick County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Jefferson Town</td>
<td>Oskaloosa, Jefferson County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Mill Museum</td>
<td>Lindsborg, McPherson County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Prairie Town at Ward Meade Park</td>
<td>Topeka, Shawnee County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onaga Historical Society Complex</td>
<td>Onaga, Pottawatomie County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairie Museum of Art &amp; History</td>
<td>Colby, Thomas County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic County Historical Society Museum</td>
<td>Belleville, Republic County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Creek Valley Historical Society Museum</td>
<td>Westmoreland, Pottawatomie County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe Trail Center</td>
<td>Larned, Pawnee County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawnee Town</td>
<td>Shawnee, Johnson County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souders Historical Museum</td>
<td>Cheney, Sedgwick County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wamego Historical Society &amp; Museum</td>
<td>Wamego, Wabaunsee County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
