

MINUTES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

September 4-5, 2001
Tour of Southeastern Kansas

Members Present

Representative Jo Ann Pottorff, Chair
Senator Jean Schodorf, Vice Chair
Senator Les Donovan
Senator Paul Feleciano, Jr.
Senator Chris Steineger
Representative Ruby Gilbert
Representative Lana Gordon
Representative Deena Horst
Representative Candy Ruff

Members Absent

Senator Sandy Praeger

Staff

Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes Office
Bruce Kinzie, Revisor of Statutes Office
Hank Avila, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Audrey Nogle, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Nikki Feuerborn, Committee Secretary

**Tuesday, September 4
Morning Session
Independence**

The Joint Committee on Arts and Cultural Resources met in the auditorium of Independence Community College in Independence, Kansas. Representative Jo Ann Pottorff, Chairman, welcomed Committee members and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

The Committee was greeted by former State Senator Tim Emert who thanked members for coming to Southeastern Kansas. Mr. Emert reviewed the history and significance of the annual William Inge Festival and Conference. He noted that the three-day Festival is held each April on the campus of Independence Community College. The event provides students, area citizens, nationally known playwrights, actors, directors, and theater personalities a forum to celebrate the works of William Inge and other famous playwrights. It also offers seminars, workshops, lectures, panel discussions, and live performances on theater-related topics. Mr. Emert stated that the festival culminates in a multi-media evening of tribute to a playwright who receives the "Distinguished Achievement in the American Theatre Award."

The next presenter was Mike Woods, Director, Media Resource Center, Wichita State University. Mr. Woods stressed the importance of the William Inge Collection which is housed in the Independence Community College library. This collection is the most extensive exhibit of Inge's works in existence. Mr. Woods also stated that although the Award given at the festival is world-renown, it is not well known to many Kansans.

Peter Ellenstein, Director of the Inge Festival, was the next conferee. He outlined several possible additions to the festival (see Attachment 13). They include:

- Readings of both new and established plays;
- Providing residencies for playwrights at the Inge home where they can work on their plays;
- Developing university-level workshops;
- Providing links between playwrights and regional professional theaters;
- Staging playwrighting and performance contests culminating in awards, scholarships, and festival performances;
- Commissioning plays for world premiers at the festival;
- Developing a high school summer theater camp specializing in new plays; and

- Staging professional productions that will tour local communities.

The next conferee was Judy Carroll, member of the Kansas Humanities Council (KHC) Board of Directors. Ms. Carroll spoke on the impact of the humanities in southeast Kansas ([Attachment 1](#)). She noted, among other things, that:

- The KHC serves both rural and urban communities;
- In 2000, over 500,000 Kansans participated in 755 humanities programs and events;
- Fifty-eight percent of KHC programs occurred in communities with a population of less than 20,000;
- From the Spring of 1992 through the Summer of 2001, KHC presented 412 activities to 68,000 attendees of southeastern Kansas; and
- In Montgomery County, for that same time period, KHC held 82 activities for 10,400 people.

Ms. Carroll also described KHC activities such as the *Barn Again!*, *Yesterday's Tomorrows-Past Visions of the American Future*, *Buster Keaton-The 9th Celebration*, *Sunflower Journeys*, *ZaSu Pitts Festival*, the *Roots of the Kansas Balkans Lecture Series*, and other programs. She said the humanities' programs attract tourists to local communities and help Kansans understand their history. She said that KHC programs justify additional state funding.

April Nutt, Independence Public Library, described KHC community involvement through programs such as the *Talk About Literature in Kansas* program, *History Alive*, *Kites*, *Great Plains Chautauqua*, the *Kennedy Center Alliance for the Arts*, and the *Kansas Sampler Festival* ([Attachment 2](#)). She cited examples on the cost of hosting the programs and the amounts raised by the community to host some of these programs.

Afternoon Session Independence and Coffeyville

Following a luncheon at the Independence Community College, the Committee traveled to the historical site of Little House on the Prairie ([Attachment 3](#)). This reconstructed cabin is located on the site where Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family lived from 1869 to 1870. Laura Ingalls Wilder was the author of nine children's books referred to as the Little House Series. The television program "Little House on the Prairie" is based on her works.

The next tour site of the Committee was the Coffeyville Community College in Coffeyville, Kansas. The Committee was greeted by the president of the college, Dr. Sam Bass, who stressed the commitment of the College to the community, and the loyalty which has been demonstrated by the community to the college. Dr. Bass reviewed the various programs offered at the college. It was noted that the college, through the Children's Summer Theatre 2001, put on the production of *Alice in Wonderland* on July 26-28, 2001. Another conferee from the college, Mark Frank, Director of the Theatre, explained the importance of the arts to the community. He noted, among other things, that Coffeyville Community College is one of the few community colleges that offers an associate degree in comedy. Graduates include regular members of the Saturday Night Live show.

The Committee next listened to a presentation at the Coffeyville Center for the Arts. Kenneth Burchinal, Executive Director of the Coffeyville Cultural Arts Council, briefed the Committee on the upcoming *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, a Smithsonian Exhibit. He also spoke to the Committee on the economic impact of the arts in Coffeyville.

Following the presentation at the Center, the Committee was given a guided tour of the Old Condon Bank (now the Perkins Building), by Lance Alfred, Director of the Coffeyville Chamber of Commerce. The building was the site of a famous 1892 hold-up by the Dalton Gang. The exterior of the building was completed in 1992 and the interior in 1997. The project was funded in part by the Heritage Trust Fund of the Kansas State Historical Society.

A tour of the Midland Theater was the next tour site. Jeff Passantino, City of Coffeyville, informed the Committee that local citizens have created the Midland Theatre Project to restore the facility and use it for public events. Mr. Passantino said it will cost about \$2.4 million to restore the theatre. The city is also considering applying for a Heritage Trust Fund grant late this year or early next year.

Later that evening, dinner was hosted by the City of Coffeyville at the historic Brown Mansion. After the dinner, Cindy Price, City Clerk of Coffeyville, provided a slide presentation which highlighted the community's progress ([Attachment 4](#)). It was noted that the Heritage Trust Fund monies were used to repair the Mansion's columns, install air conditioning, restore the veranda, and replace the roof.

Wednesday, September 5 Independence and Fredonia

The Committee began its day by touring the Independence Historical Museum ([Attachment 5](#)). The museum is owned and operated by the Ladies Library and Arts Association, and stands as one of the city's prime cultural attractions. The structure has over 20 rooms containing valuable antiques and unique artwork, with each room focusing on a particular theme or culture.

Senator Schodorf then led the Committee through the newly created KIND 102.9 radio station which was purchased and renovated by television journalist, Bill Kurtis. Its growth and commitment to the community was explained by the station manager and staff.

The final destination of the Committee was the Stone House Gallery in Fredonia, Kansas. At the Gallery, the Committee heard from various members of the Board of Directors of the Fredonia Arts Council. Joyce Fulghum, board member, presented the Council's budget for 2001 of \$37,500. Of this amount, \$10,000 is for programs (Attachment 6). She also provided a description of community arts-related programs. Beverly J. Gaines, another board member, informed the Committee that the Council was a major sponsor of *Great Plains Chautauqua* in 1995 (Attachment 7.) She said Fredonia hosted the "*American Writers of the Gilded Age*", and provides activities and events throughout the year ranging from Gallery exhibits, children's summer arts programs, and programs for the public. Ms. Gaines noted that an outgrowth of *Barn Again!* was the Fredonia Alliance, a group of volunteers. The Alliance meets twice a year and selects a community theme and makes plans for the year. She said it would have been difficult for the Council to survive without funding from the Kansas Arts Commission. She expressed concern about decreases in state funding of the Kansas Arts Commission. Louise Holmes, board member, described the involvement of the local community in the *Barn Again!* exhibit (Attachment 8). She said the Council was the catalyst for the exhibit and that over 300 people attended the exhibit. Attendees came from 112 Kansas communities. She also said that 28 states besides Kansas were represented. Nancy Burns, board member, provided the Committee with benefits derived from gallery exhibits including (Attachment 9):

- Bringing exhibitors and visitors to Fredonia and acquainting them with the community;
- Providing gallery exhibitors and visitors an opportunity to spend money in Fredonia;
- Exposing area students to original art works; and
- Giving patrons an opportunity to purchase art works and providing artists a chance to earn compensation for his works.

Ms. Burns distributed a copy of the Fredonia Arts Council Newsletter which describes various community activities and programs (Attachment 10).

Dave Wilson distributed copies of a proposed bill concerning the funding of the arts (Attachment 11).

The final tour site of the Committee was the historic Gold Dust Hotel in Fredonia. Janice Elmore, Fredonia Chamber of Commerce, conducted a tour of the Hotel where the Chamber hosted a luncheon (Attachment 12). It was noted that the Hotel was the first, built in 1885. The structure was placed on the historical register in 1991. It is now the home of the Fredonia Chamber of Commerce.

Following the luncheon, Chairman Pottorff thanked staff for planning the tour and those hosting the events.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Prepared by Nikki Feuerborn
Edited by Hank Avila

Approved by Committee on:

November 26, 2001