



# Harvey County News

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

FALL 2012

## UPCOMING DATES

- **Courthouse Closed:**  
Oct. 8, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Nov. 12, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Nov. 22, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Nov. 23, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Dec. 3, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Dec. 24, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Dec. 25, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- **General Election**  
Nov. 6, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

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## Registering Deeds

The Harvey County Register of Deeds office has three full-time employees. The office is not only a recording office but our duties include preserving and maintaining records recorded in the office. Our records are maintained and archived from 1872 to present; as 1872 is the founding of our county. Even though some may think all the office does is record deeds, that is only a small portion of our work.

Currently, the oil and gas industry keeps us super busy with the push for our country to find new sources of energy. We have had numerous people researching in the office as well as recording leases and assignments.

Mortgages bring in not only recording fees but also a mortgage tax for the county. Other documents we record are attorney general liens, IRS and state liens, water permits, easements, rights of way, plats, surveys and uniform commercial code filings and various other documents. We are able to help provide our veterans with copies of their military discharge for benefits as they are recorded in our office as well.

When the schools went through consolidation, the Register of Deeds office became custodian of the one room school records as well as the teacher records. We are in the process of digitizing those records to not only preserve but to help utilize them for our museums and libraries. The school records,

along with other records from our office, are used in history research as well as for genealogy.

One of the most fun parts of our job is as passport agents. It is exciting to hear about people's trips and plans for their passport use. That part of our job came to being when Margaret first became the Register of Deeds. It provides customer service as well as brings in extra revenue



**Lori Tedder, Margaret Hermstein and Lisa Schmidt thoroughly enjoy working as a team in the Register of Deeds office.**

for the county. We see people coming to us from Sedgwick County for their passports as the lines in Wichita are so much longer. Since Marion County does not have a passport agent in their county, we also handle a lot of people coming in from several other locations. This July we are hosting a statewide passport agent class for the New Orleans agency which we are assigned under by the federal government.

In February 2013 we are proud to be hosting in Newton a four-

day Register of Deeds Education Conference for the Kansas Register of Deeds association. Education is very important for us in order to keep up with new technology in preserving and recording areas as well as changing statutes which govern the Register of Deeds office.

The recording fees the Register of Deeds collects are a split fee with part going to county general and part placed into a technology fund. The primary purpose of the technology fund is for archiving and maintaining Register of Deeds records. The secondary purpose is for acquiring equipment and software to update the handling and archiving of land use records. Several Harvey County offices have benefited from this fund. Items such as the Lidlar maps for the Appraiser's office, a new Sans unit for the county servers, along with computer updates, have been purchased from this fund.

The Register of Deeds is the start of the county tax roll. Our real estate ownership records are forwarded to the Appraiser's office who make changes as needed, then on to the Clerk's which in turn prepares the tax roll for the Treasurer's who collect the taxes. In other words, we are the foundation of the tax system.

Even though we have no windows in our basement office, we have plenty of smiles, so stop in and see us sometime. We welcome you any time.

# Harvey's Poor House



By Debra Hiebert  
Harvey County Historical Society

"I'm old, I'm helpless and feeble; and the days of my youth have gone by; and it's over the hill to the poor house I must wander alone there to die." The chorus of *Over the Hill to the Poor House*, written by bluegrass artists Flatt and Scruggs, refers to the by-gone institution of the county poor house or farm. Prior to the federal Social Security System's creation in the early 1930s, the care of economically disadvantaged citizens, as well as those with mental or physical challenges, fell to individual county governments. If the county was well-populated, a poor house was established. These were the precursors of hospitals and "insane asylums." Poor farm legislation is included in the original state constitution and most counties offered relief for the poor by the mid-1870s.

Such was the case in Harvey County. The Nov. 4, 1873, election resulted in \$3,000 in bonds approved to establish a county poor farm. Only \$2,000 in bonds were needed to purchase the Macon Township property in August 1874. At this point, the poor house was leased to a tenant, who would work the farm for personal profit (or loss) and provide housing, food and care to the residents, commonly referred to across the country as "inmates," who were expected

to help with the farm duties. The challenge in this system was that many of the residents were at the farm due to their inability to support themselves, which led to incidents of forced labor and abuse across the U.S.

Fortunately, soon after the Harvey County poor farm was opened, a new system was established in which the county commission would appoint and hire a poor farm superintendent, who was paid to provide care for residents. The superintendent maintained the livestock, gardens and cropland which were all county property, and any profits from the sale of commodities was returned to the county. In 1877, the Harvey County farm was rented to Mr. James Finch for \$20, but by 1888, the county apparently owned not only the land and house, but the equipment. A March 1, 1888, poor farm inventory of property by H.T. Jackson starts with "10 cows" and goes all the way through "5 stone jars, 2 meat barrels and 3 milk cans." Although the commission may have intended the farm to make a profit, breaking even was more realistic. An 1891 annual statement from the superintendent shows a net profit of \$13.41, and is accompanied by the statement that "we are paying expenses." In 1907, the superintendent's contract shows an annual payment of \$500 for care of the farm, with an additional \$264 "for help with the household duties, and in caring for the inmates of said Asylum." The superintendent and his family were also provided with groceries, fuel and telephone service. In addition, the county commissioners would annually appoint a county physician. In 1911, five physicians from across the county were appointed to assist Dr. I.T. Smith to "look after the sick paupers in the districts assigned to them," thereby providing medical care to the indigent in each township, not just those residing at the

farm.

In 1924, the existing wood frame poor house was demolished and a new brick home was erected, which is today a private residence. The building was 68 feet long by 33 feet wide, with two stories and a half-basement, and cost \$18,021.30, plus plumbing (\$3,898) and electrical (\$425). It provided accommodations for up to 30 "inmates," some on the ground floor, plus the supervisor and his family.

The March 12, 1924, *Newton Evening Kansan-Republican* featured a sketch of the proposed building, along with strong comments on the need for one: "The house on the farm consists of the original house erected nearly fifty years ago with several additions made in later years and is entirely unsuited to the use for which it is intended. There are no bedrooms for inmates on the first floor, the house has no toilet facilities, and the fire hazard is very great on account of the general construction of the building, and the fact that all lighting is done with coal oil lamps. It is almost impossible to care for sick persons, and no inmates can now be taken in at the farm unless they are able to go up and down stairs." The county was incurring hospital expenses and other bills for care of indigent patients who could have been cared for at the poor farm, if more suitable. The article concludes, "The building will be adequate for the needs of Harvey County for many years and . . . every one . . . will experience a sense of satisfaction to know that conditions at the county farm are to be improved before Harvey County develops a poor farm scandal such as some of our neighboring county have had in recent years."

Not all of the disadvantaged of Harvey County in the early 1900s congregated at the poor farm. Many had a rural or town home, but could not earn enough to support themselves

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# Horticulture Award



By Scott Eckert  
Harvey County Extension Office

Hard work pays off! Each year I coach our 4-H Horticulture Judging team for Harvey County. This year I have great news: The team of Josiah Schurter, Titus Schurter and Haly Hendricks, all members of the East Lakers 4-H Club, won the state 4-H Horticulture Judging Contest held at Kansas State University on Aug. 25.

Individually, Schurter placed second and Hendricks was 10th. Jenna Baldwin competed

in the intermediate division, as well. Members compete in tree, shrub, flower and vegetable identification, quality placing and take a horticulture exam.

With the first-place win this team has earned the right to represent Kansas at the national contest during the National Junior Horticulture Association Convention. This year the convention will be Oct. 5 - 8 in Wisconsin Dells, Wis. NJHA holds its convention during the first weekend of October at a different host city each year. A diverse group of projects and activities covering all areas of horticulture are offered at the annual meet-

ing.

Convention events include contests in the horticultural demonstrations, public and extemporaneous speaking, and horticulture judging and identification; photography exhibition; and evaluation of projects in environmental awareness, experimental horticulture and marketing.

Additionally, workshops and tours of local horticulture industries and local points of interest are scheduled. In 2007, the first year a Harvey County team represented Kansas, they took home the national championship.

The team will be raising funds for the trip through fundraisers and donations. If you are interested in making a tax-deductible donation to help send the team to the national convention, please call the extension office at 316-284-6930.



# Harvey's Poor House, cont.'d

and their family. Harvey County provided resources for these folks, also. A September 1918 edition of the *Newton Evening Kansan-Republican* includes county commission minutes in which not only are the poor farm bills paid, but local merchants are reimbursed for "pauper bills" for groceries, clothing and coal. In addition, the county provided medical services to the county poor residing at the poor farm or their own residences with the annual appointment of a county physician. In 1911, Dr. Smith was appointed county physician and health officer to provide care to the poor farm residents, with five other physicians from across the county appointed to assist him to "look

after the sick paupers in the districts assigned to them." And when illness, accident or advanced age claimed an indigent resident, the county provided for their burial. County commission notes from July of 1900 lists undertakers C.H. Northfoss, Duff & Duff and L.F. Schumacher and Company to "have charge of the work of burying the pauper dead in the city of Newton," taking that responsibility in the order so listed (*Newton Evening Kansan-Republican*). Deceased "paupers" in other cities in Harvey County were taken care of by the undertakers of those cities. However, many poor, ill and homeless residents were served by the county

poor farm.

But change was on the horizon, and the poor farm would exist under county supervision for less than another 20 years. The formation of the New Deal policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the early 1930s combined with the rise of health care institutions to eliminate poor farms and homes across the U.S. Records show between 14 and 20 residents at the county farm from each year 1924 through 1932, illustrating its necessity through that decade. But by 1941, the county commission decided to "no longer maintain it as a refuge" and leased the property for private use (later selling it), thus ending the era of the poor farm in Harvey County.

## October

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Commission Meeting	2 Hesston College Vaccination 11:30 a.m.	3	4	5 South Breeze School Vaccination 8:15 a.m.	6
7	8 Commission Meeting <i>Courthouse Closed</i>	9 Kidron Bethel Vaccination 10:00 a.m.	10 Walton Vaccination 8:15 a.m.	11	12 Sedgwick Schools Vaccination 8:15 a.m.	13
14	15 Commission Meeting	16	17 Newton Vaccination 9:30 a.m.	18	19 Newton Vaccination 10:00 a.m.	20
21	22 Commission Meeting	23	24 Slate Creek Vaccination 8:30 a.m.	25	26 Sunset Vacc. 8:15 a.m. Hesston Vacc. 8:15 a.m.	27
28	29 Commission Meeting	30	31			

## November

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5 Commission Meeting	6 <b>General Election</b> 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. Vote & Vax 8 a.m.-5 p.m.	7	8	9	10
11	12 <i>Courthouse Closed</i>	13 No Commission Meeting	14	15	16	17
18	19 Commission Meeting	20	21	22 <i>Courthouse Closed</i>	23 <i>Courthouse Closed</i>	24
25	26 Commission Meeting	27	28	29	30	

## December

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3 Commission Meeting <i>Courthouse Closed</i> 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Commission Meeting	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Commission Meeting	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 <i>Courthouse Closed</i>	25 <i>Courthouse Closed</i>	26	27	28	29
30	31 Commission Meeting					