

# OUR LEGACY

‘Creating a future for our past’

1ST QUARTER 2024



VOL. 53, NO. 1



## LANDMARK ARTS PROJECT KICKOFF

The former City Hall building at the top of Boot Hill in Dodge City has been selected for the second annual Landmark Arts Project. Each year, a historic landmark in Ford County will be selected as the focus for the project. Area youth will be provided with historical information and tours of the location to educate and inspire the production of artwork.

Artwork created by students will provide an avenue for developing a connection with local history and art in the community and the potential to showcase their work.

The story of Boot Hill began with a cemetery in 1872, followed by two Third Ward School buildings, and the current structure, which was built to house all City departments. The City Hall building was completed in early 1930 and departments gradually moved to new

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## COMING EVENTS

### MONTHLY MEETING

**March 20, 2024**

4:00 p.m., Legacy Center,  
310 Gunsmoke

### SPECIAL EVENTS

**April 20 - May 11, 2024**

Landmark Arts Project Exhibition  
Boot Hill Distillery

**May 9, 2024**

Landmark Arts Project Reception  
5:30 p.m., Boot Hill Distillery

## COMMUNITIES

Bellefont  
Bloom  
Bucklin  
Dodge City  
Ford  
Fort Dodge  
Howell  
Kingsdown  
Spearville  
Wilroads Gardens  
Windthorst  
Wright

## OFFICERS

**Kent Stehlik**, president  
**Doug Austen**, vice-president  
**Sonya Hughes**, treasurer  
**Connie Penick**, secretary  
**George Laughead**, past-president  
**Aaron Fisher**, member at large

## Endowment: A Permanent Gift

A gift or endowment to the Ford County Historical Society ensures our community will have “a future for our past” for generations to come.

Established through the Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas, ours is arranged so the principle is forever untouched. Your gift remains exactly as you have made it, into perpetuity. The return on that gift helps provide funds as needed for special projects and exhibit expenses.

Our organization is a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit, and your gifts are tax deductible.

Help us create a secure future for our unique past for all our Ford County communities.

**For additional information, please contact Kent Stehlik, PO Box 131, Dodge City, KS 67801.**

## Did you know?

FCHS has a new website! Visit us at [fordcountyhistory.org](http://fordcountyhistory.org) to learn more about the people and communities of Ford County.

Be sure to check back regularly for updates about our projects, events, and collections.

## Share Your Story

Our yesterdays define our tomorrows differently when we understand the path that led us here...

- As a country
- As a community
- As a family
- As an individual

**We want to hear your story in your own words!**



## FORT DODGE'S FORGOTTEN TREASURE

by Kent Stehlik, President, Ford County Historical Society

How many times have you driven down Highway 400 east of Dodge and passed the impressive building sitting on the hill north of the roadway and wondered what it was? It is Walt Hall, built in 1928 as the hospital for Fort Dodge. Named after a life-long Marine, Four-Star General Lewis William Walt, it provided medical services for Fort Dodge Veterans until 1970.

The time has come when this stately structure can be given an appropriate reuse.

In America, 20% of our Veterans are homeless. This human crisis is nationwide, so much so, that the Tunnels to Towers non-profit organization has begun renovating abandoned hospitals and hotels to provide housing for our homeless military heroes. The Ford County Historical Society has contacted Tunnels to Towers and they have requested additional information regarding the use of Walt Hall for Veteran housing. Walt Hall, being historical, adds another positive for its renovation. Thanks to our State Representative, Jason Goetz, a bill is being introduced to place Fort Dodge on the National Register of Historic Places.

**'Fort' continued on Page 3**



## LEGACY CENTER UPDATE

The Ford County Legacy Center needs a new roof and then some. The good news is we have been awarded a grant to fund a new roof. The bad news is we have to wait for the owner of the building to approve the work.

As you can see, we have to be very careful about where we place artifacts with which we have been entrusted by Ford County families. We cannot, in good conscience, place these pieces of history in harm's way.

We are confident that Ford County is moving forward with this project expeditiously so we can have a functional museum for you to visit very soon.

## 'Fort' continued from Page 2

Upon this designation being completed, Walt Hall will be eligible for historic grants and State tax credits for its renovation costs. A Kansas State tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of State taxes owed.

As an example: If you contributed a thousand dollars to help house homeless Veterans, you would be reducing your State income taxes by that same thousand dollars. So instead of paying those funds to Topeka, you would be keeping them here by providing needed housing for our deserving military Veterans. These tax credits and grants have been used to restore the Dodge City Depot and former City Hall (Boot Hill Distillery).

After the successful renovation of Walt Hall, our Veterans will be living there and you will no longer have to wonder what that distinguished building up on the hill is. You will know that it is a residence for our heroic Veterans that you and others help provide. This wonderful reuse of Walt Hall is a positive in many ways: It saves our history while saving our homeless Veterans.

For further information, contact Kent Stehlik at 620-255-0380.

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## 'Landmark' continued from Page 1

quarters beginning in the 1960s. The Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau occupied the building until the mid-1990s followed by CASA until around 2001. Boot Hill Distillery began restorations in 2015.

Submissions will be on display at Boot Hill Distillery from April 20 through May 11. Participating schools will each receive \$500 for art supplies. In addition, FCHS has created a scholarship fund for full-time Ford County students attending Dodge City Community College to further their education in the arts. Funding for this project was provided by the Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas and the Community Facilities Advisory Board.

Boot Hill Distillery will host a reception for the exhibiting artists in partnership with FCHS on Thursday, May 9 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at 501 W Spruce Street. Awards will be presented at this time and the public is encouraged to attend.

**HOME OF STONE MUSEUM  
MUELLER-SCHMIDT HOUSE**

**SPRING 2024 HOURS**

**April** Sat – Sun 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**May** Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Memorial Day** 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



**CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS AND GRANTORS**

Ford County Commission & Administration

Kansas State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO)

“Why Not Dodge” (CFAB)

Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas

The Mariah Fund

Humanities Kansas

Main Street Dodge City

United Telephone and Communications

IdeaTek

Dave Snapp

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