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Traveling exhibit opens at museum

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The Smithsonian traveling exhibit “Journey Stories” opened Friday at the Prairie Museum of Art and History, continuing through Feb. 21 along with a companion show featuring photos and stories from the homestead era in Thomas County.

According to the materials posted with each display, Journey Stories includes tales of how our ancestors came to Kansas, once called “The Great Desert of the West,” and examines the intersection between modes of travel and Americans’ desire to be free to move from place to place.

The exhibit shows how immigrants came by boat, by rail and even in crates. Some were already here, some came for a better life and some came in chains.

It depicts the courage it took for people to come to America, often a one-way trip, and leave friends and families behind.



VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press
One display at the Journey Stories exhibit details the risks of the cross-Atlantic voyage. By choice, the journey to America was a one-way trip for many European settlers.

It is the story of American’s desire to be intensely mobile, one display says. To many, mobility offers a fresh start, and to quote John Steinbeck, “Nearly every American has a desire to move.”

How they made that move is captured in the traveling exhibit.

It is the history of towns, of the black man’s journey to freedom in Kansas in 1877, of the migration during the days of the Dust Bowl and much more.

Museum Director Sue Taylor and the crew at the museum have also been working hard to have a Thomas County exhibit, dubbed “High Plains Journeys,” ready to go with the Smithsonian show.

The Thomas County historical exhibit is nostalgic, and includes stories from the very first settlers and homesteaders. A history in photos is on exhibit in the education hall.

This is the second time the Prairie Museum has been selected for a Smithsonian traveling exhibit; the first was “Barn Again” in 1998.

The museum staff invites everyone to come enjoy not only the Smithsonian exhibit but the many memories of the past of Thomas County.

Hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Friday, and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The museum is closed Mondays. For information, call (785) 460-4590.

Exhibit features county settler stories

The Smithsonian traveling exhibit “Journey Stories” and its local companion, “High Plains Journeys,” feature many stories of settler’s journeys into Thomas County, including those of homesteaders Melissa Alger and Alice Williams.

The promise of land attracted many adventurous spirits to Kansas in the 1800s. Melissa Alger was one of them. Alger, a single school teacher, journeyed to Thomas County to claim a homestead and to build a future.

Her adventure west repre-

sents the American pioneer stories featured in the Smithsonian exhibit, on display through Sunday, Feb. 21, at the Prairie Museum of Art and History, 1905 S. Franklin Ave. in Colby.

Alger was 25 when she arrived in Thomas County in May 1885 from Kirksville, Mo., with the Williams family, whose members included her close friend Alice Williams. Williams, like Alger, sought a homestead in Thomas County.

Homesteading land required

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County clerk explains ‘intangibles’ tax forms

Many Thomas County taxpayers recently received a postcard from the state Department of Revenue on the intangibles tax, said Shelly Harms, Thomas County clerk.

The yellow postcard has caused a lot of confusion, she said, especially to taxpayers who are not required to file a return or pay this tax.

“I am disappointed that the explanation provided by the state was not clear and that it caused confusion to the taxpayers,” Harms said.

The intangibles tax is not new, she said. It is a local tax on savings accounts, stocks, bonds, accounts receivable and mortgages. Many taxpayers do not have such earnings and therefore are not required to pay an intangibles tax.

The intent of the postcard was to notify taxpayers of two changes, Harms said. First, the intangibles tax Form 200 will no longer be provided in your Kansas Income tax booklet. Second, those who are required to must file it with the county clerk by April 15.

As in the past, your Kansas Income Tax Return is still filed in Topeka either by mail or electronically. This has not changed.

In the past, Harms said, the state did nothing with the intangibles forms except sort them and mail them back to the county. This year, due to state budget cuts, the state was unable to hire anyone to process the forms.

If you need a blank Intangibles Tax Form 200, you may get it online at ksrevenue.org/formsint.htm or from the county clerk’s office, Harms said. Your income tax preparer should be aware of the changes and handle them for you.

If you prepare you own taxes and are required to file the intangibles form, Harms said, mail it to the Thomas County Clerk, 300 N. Court Ave., Colby, Kan., 67701.

“I hope the above information helps clarify the situation,” Harms said. “If not, please call your tax preparer.”

them. Cards will go to kids at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis for projects. For information, call Hazel Duffey at 462-3476.

Seniors plan potluck Tuesday

The group More Fun Together plans a potluck dinner for people 50 or older who are alone, widowed, divorced, separated or who have partners in nursing homes at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the First Presbyterian Church. Bring a dish to share. Table service and beverage will be provided. The building is handicapped accessible by an elevator by the east doors. For information, call the church at 462-6342.

Conservation meeting Jan. 25

The annual meeting of the Thomas County Conservation District will be at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Make



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press
City foreman Jim Helus and several others worked on a water main break in Fifth Street over the weekend. The main broke Saturday and flooded parts of the Colby Free Press office and Sunflower Bank.

Broken water main floods Free Press office

By Andy Heintz
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A four-inch water main burst in front of the Colby Free Press office Saturday, flooding the basement and soaking the back room of the building.

The paper was open today, with the staff working in the newsroom.

“We were lucky the water got to mostly storage areas,” said Steve Haynes, publisher of the Free Press, “but we have no heat or power in the front offices right now. We have contractors cleaning out the back area and basement.”

City workers dug up the street and tried to staunch the flow twice on Saturday, but the old cast-iron main burst again. The crew left the leak flowing Sunday and started looking for the new leak today.

Jim Helus, foreman at the



EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press
Crews worked late into the night with a back hoe, jackhammers and pumps, trying to repair the break. A large hole had to be dug in Fifth Street to get at the water main.

city wastewater treatment plant, said the cold weather apparently caused the ground to shift and one part of the main moved and the other part didn’t, shearing the pipe in two.

Evan Barnum, systems administrator for the Free Press, said he got a call from a police dispatcher alerting him to the leak

See “FLOOD,” Page 3

Governor to talk taxes tonight

TOPEKA (AP) — Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson is expected to ask legislators to raise tobacco taxes during tonight’s State of the State address.

Parkinson is scheduled to outline proposals this evening for balancing the budget. The state’s projected shortfall is approaching \$400 million for the fiscal year

that begins July 1.

The Democratic governor said last month that he’ll propose higher tobacco taxes.

His aides wouldn’t discuss the details this morning. The state’s current cigarette tax is 79 cents a pack, or 55 cents below the national average of \$1.34 for all states and the District of Columbia.

Parkinson has said he won’t propose deep cuts in education, social services and other programs to balance the budget. However, many members of the Republican-controlled Legislature don’t want to raise taxes.

KPTS, a Wichita Public Broad-

See “GOVERNOR,” Page 3

Hospital offers cut-rate tests

The Citizens Medical Center Laboratory, the Thomas County Wellness Committee and Thomas County Extension are offering blood draws for discounted lab tests from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday at the Citizens Medical Center Specialty Clinic. Tests will include comprehensive metabolic profile, thyroid stimulating hormone, prostate specific antigen and hemoglobin A1C for diabetics. Participants should fast for 10-12 hours. Results will be available at 5:30 and 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25. For information, call Jeanene Brown at 460-4850 or Diann Gerstner at 460-4582.

St. Jude’s needs used cards

Don’t throw those used Christmas cards away. The Colby Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary has a drop-off box at the Pioneer Memorial Library for

reservations by Friday with district manager Debbie Potter at 462-7482, extension 303.

Hearing set on emergency plan

Thomas County Emergency Management and E-Fm Consulting will hold the final public meeting for the Thomas County Hazard Mitigation Plan at 6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 21, at the Thomas County Office Complex. The plan, being developed by the county and its cities, aims to help reduce the damage done by disasters. A public comment period will run from Jan. 21 to Feb. 4. Drafts of the plan can be viewed at the emergency management office or the Pioneer Memorial Library. For information, call Director Susan McMahan at 460-4516.

For latest flu info, call 460-4599

A hot line for questions on seasonal influenza and

the H1N1 flu strain will be available throughout the flu season at (785) 460-4599. The Thomas County Health Department posts information about the status and availability of vaccines, priority groups and the like.

Medical class to begin in February

An Emergency Medical Technician class will begin Thursday, Feb. 4, and run Wednesdays and Thursdays plus two Saturdays each month until May 15. Registration is due by Thursday, Jan. 21. State grants cover the cost. For information, call Dawnelle Umberger at 460-4585.

