

June 2007

THE TOP 70 MILES OF



COLBY
FREE PRESS

The
Goodland Star-News

Post office displays New Deal artwork

The bold brush strokes and rich colors on the post office wall illustrate the saga of a Kansas rural farm family getting their mail delivered.

It's a mural that's been on the wall since 1937, but often unnoticed by those who enter the post office lobby to mail letters or buy stamps.

Titled "Rural Free Delivery," the mural has decorated the lobby of Goodland's post office, 124 E. 11th, for 80 years and shows a rural farm family gathering around a mail man sitting in a buggy pulled by a horse. It was painted by Kenneth Adams, a Topeka native born in 1897, and was restored in July 1989.

The mural was part of the U.S. Treasury Department's Section on Fine Arts project that ran from 1936-1942 to provide work for Depression-era artists.

At least 26 Kansas post offices received such artwork and 22 still function with the artwork intact.

Nationally, more than 1,300 post office commissions were awarded.

"They collectively occupy a distinctive position in our cultural history with the unprecedented outlay of public funding for decorative art projects," said Charles Eldredge, University of Kansas professor of art history and American studies.

"I don't know if the idea was so much on pos-



Shown is a mural that has decorated the lobby of Goodland's post office since 1937. Painted by Topeka native Kenneth Adams, it was part of a U.S. Treasury Department fine arts project that ran from 1936-1942 to provide work for Depression-era artists.

The Goodland Star-News

terity as it was the immediate crisis. The effort was to keep cultural workers alive and productive," he said.

Of the 22 active post offices, all but one — Fort Scott — are listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of the artwork. The office in Goodland was registered on Oct. 17, 1989.

The Top 70 miles of I-70

The stories and photos in this section highlight the top 70 miles of I-70 from the Colorado stateline east to Oakley, which is the highest part of I-70 through the state.

The Eisenhower National Defense High-

way system turned 50 last year, and the section of I-70 from the state line east was the last section completed in Kansas.

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Rock Island machinists patent first helicopter

By Tom Betz

ntbetz@nwkansas.com

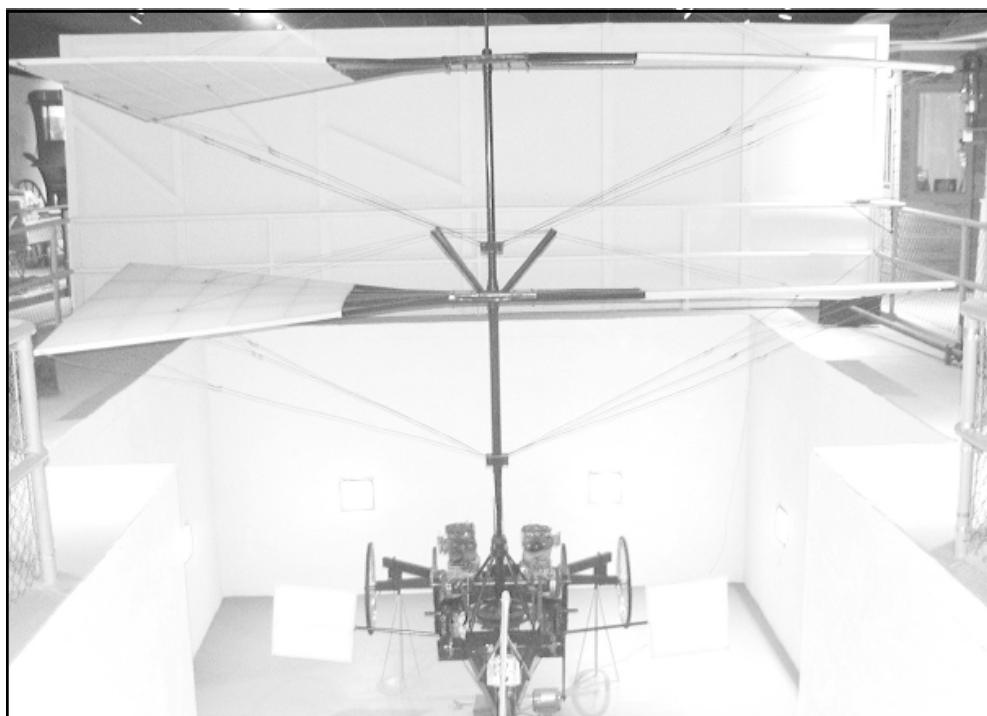
Today helicopters fly everywhere and carry critical patients to hospitals, tell commuters where the accident and slowdowns are and all branches of the military use them to haul soldiers and protect naval ships.

That was not true about 100 years ago as man was making his first attempts at powered flight. The Wright brothers' historic flight at Kitty Hawk was big news when two machinists from the Chicago Rock Island Railroad shops in Goodland decided to build a "gyrocopter."

A replica of the first helicopter can be seen at the High Plains Museum in Goodland, and is the earliest patented helicopter, but never went beyond the testing stage after a failed attempt at flight in 1910. The High Plains Museum is located at 1717 Cherry in Goodland, and is two blocks north of the Big Easel with the Van Gogh sunflower painting north of business U.S. 24, that connects with I-70 about a mile east and about a mile west where it ties to K-27.

William J. Purvis and Charles A. Wilson began building their new kind of flying machine in 1909 south of the Rock Island shops in Goodland.

William "Bill" J. Purvis, Jr., 81, visited Goodland in June 1998, and for the first time and saw firsthand the replica of the helicopter his father "Willie" built in 1909. He remembered his father saying the idea for the helicopter came from



The replica of the Purvis-Wilson helicopter can be seen at the High Plains Museum in Goodland, and visitors can test the rotors with a remote switch to see how the flying machine worked.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

the "whirligigs" which youngsters played with. These were a small propeller positioned on top of a pencil-shaped piece which when whirled between the hands produced enough lift to carry

the whirligig into the air for a short flight.

From this idea William J. Purvis, Sr., and his partner Charles A. Wilson designed a flying machine which they believed would "become

the prevailing method of applying power to aerial flight, or at least that it will be adapted for suspending, if not propelling, bodies in the air," according to a story in the Kansas City Star, Dec. 31, 1909.

The power for the craft would be two seven-horsepower, aluminum gasoline engines to lift it off the ground. These would cost \$800 and the struggling inventors were nearly broke. Purvis and Wilson staged a demonstration on Thanksgiving Day, 1909. They intended to attract potential investors, creating the Goodland Aviation company and selling stock to raise money.

Nearly the whole town turned out to watch. Tethered to the earth by a long belt and powered by a stationary six-horsepower gasoline motor, the machine's blades began to run, spewing clouds of dust over the spectators and creating a loud roar. People were impressed, and the crowd rushed to buy the shares of stock.

Purvis and Wilson bought the engines and began to work out the 'bugs' in their flying machine. The venture fell on hard times after a disappointing demonstration for the Army brass on July 4th, 1910.

The machine was readied for flight, but it was too heavy. In the attempt to raise the machine off the ground, the machine tipped over, the 20-foot wide rotors smashing into the ground, causing the almost total destruction on the spot. Needless to say the Goodland Aviation Company was bankrupt.

Art center a great bargain to visit

It could be the best bargain on your trip — there is no charge to view art exhibits in a historic building in Goodland.

The 94-year-old Carnegie Library Building, which is on the State and National Historic Registries, houses a different art exhibit each month at 120 W. 12th in Goodland.

The building, which marked its 90th birthday in March 2003, has been the Carnegie Arts Center since June 10, 1984.

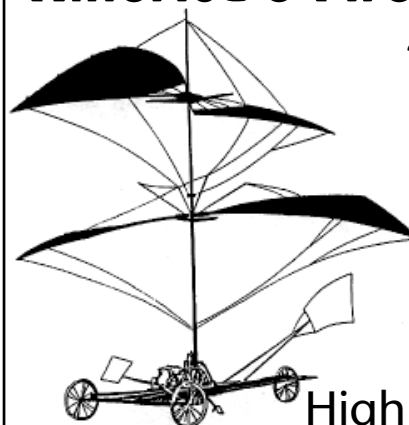
Each month brings a different exhibit. Exhibits scheduled for the rest of this year are: June, photography by Nancy Besa of Overland Park, a freelance public relations specialist; July, the Relay for Life Art Show, mixed media by cancer survivors along with a quilt made

from T-shirts of past events; August, the Goodland Model Club Show; September, local photography show; October, watercolors by Laurie Albin of WaKeeney; November, sculptures by George Phillippy; and December, local art show, mixed media.

The Goodland Arts Council holds special events to raise money throughout the year. They will hold a spaghetti dinner with singer and songwriter Ann Zimmerman entertaining in October. Call the center at (785) 890-6442 for information.

The annual Holiday Home Tour will be in December. It includes tours of local homes decorated for Christmas and an open house and gingerbread house contest at the center.

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Cleaning Kansas rest areas a family affair

By Patty Decker

Colby Free Press

Ever wonder who cleans the rest areas along Interstate 70 in Kansas?

For those who guessed it's the job of state employees, that was true until about 10 years ago when the Kansas Department of Transportation decided to contract the task to small private business owners.

One of those contractors handles the rest areas from Russell west to the Colorado line and has made it a family affair.

Sneath's Enterprises includes parents Virgil and Joyce of Quinter and their son, Jody of Colby.

"It's a great job," Jody said. "It gets me out and I meet all kinds of different people."

Although Jody's parents, with help from

other employees, have been handling the 10 parks and five rest areas that make up both sides of the 180-mile stretch of I-70 in their contracts, Jody said he has been employed most of that time for them.

The rest areas along the interstate are located outside Russell, WaKeeney, Grainfield, Colby and Goodland.

"Our primary focus," he said, "is the bathrooms and trash, with the added chore of mowing in the summer and shoveling snow off sidewalks in the winter."

While some people might take for granted the work involved in keeping rest areas clean, Jody said the days are long.

"It's about a 12-hour day, starting at 7 a.m. (6 a.m. MT) and ending at 6:30 p.m., seven days a week."

During the winter months, the employees work split shifts since traffic is slower.

When the state considered bidding out the rest area work, Jody said it saved the taxpayers money since the state wouldn't be paying benefits to employees.

It's also something the Sneath's take pride in. "We have been told by a lot of travelers that the rest areas in Kansas are the cleanest in the country," Jody said.

Travelers should feel safer at rest areas, he said, since someone is there most of the day and the Kansas Highway Patrol routinely drives through.

Jody said he can't count the number of times he has helped travelers with blown tires or other mechanical problems where he has offered to drive someone into town.

As for transients, stranded motorists, or people down on their luck, Jody said he either calls the sheriff for assistance or offers other information.

As for famous people driving through, Jody said the only person he could consider in that classification is the "Lizard Man," who has appeared on *Ripley's Believe It or Not*.

Jody lightheartedly talked about how the Lizard Man is covered in tattoos and has horn implants and how his girlfriend also has many tattoos and implanted whiskers.

"They were friendly," he said.

Jody said he spends most of his time at the rest area between Colby and Levant and in the summer said about 500 vehicles each day will stop on one or the other side.

Kansas rest areas offer a feature other states don't — a dump station for recreational vehicles.

"We have heard a lot of travelers say they appreciate being able to dispose of waste and do so free of charge."

Most of the rest areas have maps displayed and weather updates, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio is constantly broadcasting.

"We want travelers to feel safe on Kansas roads, and that when they stop at a rest area, the experience will be a good one," he said.



The 1907 Ennis-Handy House in Goodland is an example of Queen Ann architecture.

Century-old home open to tours

The 100-year-old historic home at 13th and Center, also known as the Handy House for its last owners, has been open to tours and the site of events including Flag Day cookouts, Victorian high teas and private parties. The house is used to display and preserve Sherman County History.

The house, built in 1907, is an example of Queen Anne architecture, says the brochure from the Sherman County Historical Society, and the work of prominent local builder Fred Hunt and its importance to the growth and development of Goodland. The house's construction signaled the advent of an era of stability and

prosperity in Goodland, the brochure says. The house is on the state and national historic registers.

Mary Seaman Ennis was one of the owners of the house. The house also served as a mortuary and was later purchased by the Handy family. The society bought the house in the spring of 2001. On July 4, 2004, they burned the mortgage.

The society raised money and restored the ornamental woodwork on the outside of the house and painted it in Victorian colors in 2005.

The house is open from 1 - 5 p.m. everyday except Tuesday.



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The Big Easel with a replica of a Van Gogh sunflower painting can be seen in Goodland on Business U.S. 24 east of Cherry Ave. In the past year the Goodland Rotary club has helped install a light to illuminate the painting at night, brick paths to the painting, benches and a sign to help visitors find the viewing area. A handicap ramp is available on the north side of the painting near a paved parking area.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News



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Can't miss Van Gogh

You can't miss it — it's 24 by 32 feet and rests on an 80-foot easel that weighs about 40,000 pounds.

It is the reproduction of a Van Gogh sunflower painting which was erected six years ago in Goodland.

The Van Gogh replica was painted by Canadian artist Cameron Cross as part of his Van Gogh Project, a series of Big Easel paintings based on Vincent van Gogh's series of sunflower paintings.

Sunflowers USA, a local nonprofit group, raised money and received a state grant for the painting and the 80-foot easel that stands facing I-70 east of Cherry Ave. and north of Business U.S. 24.

West of Cherry Ave. is Pioneer Park, a project that began in 1998 as a drainage and flood control project but now is an attractive entrance to the city and a place where visitors can rest up on the benches, picnic in the gazebo or stretch their legs and walk their dogs on the hike and bike trail.

A citizens group felt it should be an attractive entrance to the city and proposed adding grass, trees, shrubs, sidewalks, the hike and bike trail, gazebo and decorative lighting to beautify the area.

The giant painting has been getting noticed — people pull off the Interstate to look at the giant easel and to take photos. The painting has

appeared in guide books, magazines, newspapers, on television and the cover of an area phone book.

Each sculpture in the Van Gogh Project consists of a colossal hand-painted reproduction of one of his paintings by Cross, an artist and former high school art teacher from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

The first Easel was erected in Altona, Canada on Oct. 17, 1998. The second was finished and erected on Nov. 8, 1999, in Emerald, Australia. Goodland's was the third and was erected June 19, 2001.

Amsterdam, Argentina, France, South Africa and Japan have been considered as possible sites. The intent of this project is to reproduce all seven of Vincent van Gogh's sunflower paintings in seven different countries spanning the globe.

The seven sites selected by Cross have a connection to sunflower agriculture or to Van Gogh himself. He chose Goodland because of its reputation as the "Sunflower Capital of the High Plains."

Each painting takes about a month and a half to complete, which involves 10 to 12 hour work days. The project was started in the spring of 1997 and when complete is expected to be included in the Guinness Book of World Records. More information on Cross' projects is available at www.thebigeasel.com.

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Standpipe continues to serve citizens

By Pat Schiefen

pjschiefen@nwkansas.com

Goodland's historic standpipe, Ninth and Center, was built by men and horses in an effort, which is almost awe inspiring more than a 100 years later.

The standpipe was finished around Dec. 22, 1905, and is in continuous use as part of the city water system.

The Republic on Nov. 10, 1905, said the standpipe was almost done. Water had been pumped in on Wednesday, Nov. 1, to support a raft on which the workmen could stand to finish the upper courses. The standpipe holds 211,400 gallons, or 6,711 barrels, of water.

"It was the best standpipe of its size in Kansas," said Fred G. Palmer of Palmer and Gilbert of Kansas City, Kans., contractors.

The steel weighed 65 tons. There were six sheets in each of the 118 sections, each five feet tall. The ornamental crest measured 20 inches. The steel plates were overlapped and riveted together.

The foundation cost \$3,000 and the total cost was \$8,600, reported *The Goodland Republic*.

The foundation was solid concrete 30 feet in diameter and 12 inches thick. The standpipe has a concrete apron as a brace and to contain spills. The apron was 15 inches thick and five feet wide. Cement had only been used for a short

time in Goodland, according to *The Republic*, though it was widely used in the cities.

The in and out pipes for the standpipe were 10 inches in diameter. The pipes from the pumps to the main are six inches in diameter, housed in a concrete cellar near the base. The gates on the pipes were of the latest design, *The Republic* said.

The standpipe was renovated as part of a city water project in 1999. It still supplies water to the surrounding area.

The standpipe it was modeled after for the Rock Island Railroad is still being used for diesel storage at the railroad yard at the south end of Main.



The historic standpipe at Ninth and Center in Goodland was completed in December 1905, and is in use today.

Third-year corn maze to open in mid-September

By Pat Schiefen

pjschiefen@nwkansas.com

The Cole Family Farms corn maze in its third year will open in mid September for adventurers to wander through.

The shape of the maze for this year hasn't been announced yet.

The maze is located at Eighth and Eustis, on the northeast side of Goodland.

The maze for the first year was in the shape of the Van Gogh Sunflower Painting. The second year's maze was in the shape of a cowboy, the Goodland High School mascot.

"It will take about an hour to go through the three miles of twists and turns," said co-owner Jessica Cole. The maze is carved into 10 acres of corn.

Besides the 10-acre corn maze, there is a mini maze for preschoolers where parents will be able to watch their kids going through, Cole said. And there will be a corn box (like a sandbox but with corn), she said, and a castle.

New last year was a corn gun, which shoots ears of corn at a target with compressed air.

There will be "corn cops" in the maze, Cole said, who will help people who need a hint.

Cole's mazes have been designed by Brett Herbst of American Fork, Utah, owner of The Maize, which he bills as the largest maze consulting company in the world. Herbst opened his first maze in 1996 in Utah, and says he has designed a thousand mazes since then.

In October there will a special treat the maze is turned into a field of screams for a truly spooky experience.

There are nighttime hours for people to navigate the maze by flash lights.

The Coles also sell several varieties and sizes of pumpkins from their pumpkin patch.

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