

# The Old Cowtown Chronicle

WINTER 2023 VOL. 1 / NO. 1

The Cowtown Chronicle is a publication of the Historic Wichita Cowtown, Inc. Board of Trustees, a 501(c)(3) advisory board. Produced for the members and friends of  
**Old Cowtown Museum**  
1865 West Museum Blvd.  
Wichita, Kansas 67203  
(316) 350-3323

[www.oldcowtown.org](http://www.oldcowtown.org)

## Hours & Admission

**April - October**

Tuesday-Saturday

**10am to 5pm**

Sunday

**12pm to 5pm**

Monday

**Closed**

**November-March**

Tuesday-Saturday

**10am to 5pm**

Sunday & Monday

**Closed**

## Admission

Adults \$10.00

Seniors (62+) \$9.00

Youth (5-17) \$8.00

Kids (4 and under) FREE

Members FREE

*Taxes are already included in admission*

Contact Old Cowtown Museum  
(316) 350-3323  
for rates and reservations  
“year-round” for school  
classes and groups.

## Find Us Online

Facebook.com/OldCowtownMuseum  
Twitter.com/WichitaCowtown  
YouTube.com/WichitaCowtownMuseum  
Instagram.com/WichitaCowtown  
#oldcowtown



Old Cowtown Museum is owned and operated by the City of Wichita.

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I was a fish out of water. It was 2016 and our family had just moved to Wichita from the prairies of North Dakota. I looked forward to escaping the brutal winters but what I hadn’t anticipated was the hustle and bustle of the big city. Well, maybe Wichita isn’t all that big but one jaunt down Kellogg at 5 pm brought a heightened sense of anxiety that I hadn’t felt since I stepped off the bus for Marine Corps boot camp. I needed peace. I needed to get away from people, traffic, cell phones, and stress. I exited Kellogg and drove north on Seneca stumbling upon what I now know of as the Museum District. As I meandered down Museum Boulevard with my 3/4 ton pickup, which was just fine in North Dakota but a little awkward in Wichita, I noticed a weathered sign introducing me to Old Cowtown Museum. I pulled into the parking lot and decided to take a chance. I entered, paid next to nothing for admission, and walked through the double doors to Old Cowtown. The transformation was instant. I felt the stress drain out of me and I was taken back to another time. A time when my ears weren’t constantly accosted by the sounds of traffic, cell phones, and the hum of electronics. As I walked the dusty streets of Old Cowtown, I slowly fell in love. Yet, this newfound fondness was tempered by a sense of anxiety. As I looked around Old Cowtown, part of me saw the fragility of this museum. I felt a need to do whatever I could to preserve this space in perpetuity.

Shortly thereafter, I accepted an invitation to serve on the board of Old Cowtown. I knew that this was the best place to help ensure this spot of history and tranquility would always be there for people seeking solace from the daily demands of life. As I started my time of service with the dedicated staff at Old Cowtown, I learned how much help was needed to preserve this museum. Nearly every element of Old Cowtown is restored pursuant to what was “period correct” in the late 1800s. Subsequently, when something breaks, we cannot travel to the local hardware store for parts. It’s harder and significantly more expensive than that.

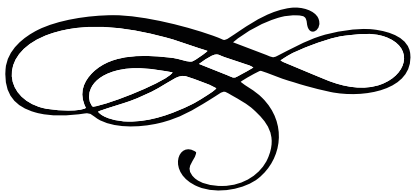
This is why your membership is so important. Every dollar the board of Old Cowtown raises either preserves historic artifacts, funds educational opportunities, or supports our dedicated volunteers. Nearly all of the money raised is through our very affordable (and tax deductible) membership packages. To be direct, Old Cowtown needs you to help it live on for our children to enjoy. As a member, you gain free admission to the museum and best of all, are a huge part of keeping our beloved museum alive for future generations. Please join me as a member of the largest open-air museum west of the Mississippi!

- Jim Long



## COME AND ATTEND OUR CHRISTMAS SOIREE

Did I hear you say you’ve been looking for a fun evening out? Well, do we have the evening for you. The Old Cowtown board is putting on a Christmas Soiree filled with a fabulous dinner and beverages fitting for the Christmas season. The divine Victorian dance troupe, Entre Nous will swirl and twirl to entertain the participants of the evening. There will also be a Vaudeville Comedy Show to keep you on the edge of your seat. We ask that you wear your formal western attire as you join us from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 14. Tickets are available online at [www.oldcowtown.org](http://www.oldcowtown.org). This is a special adults only event.



## WE LOVE OUR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS!

The Old Cowtown Museum staff have noticed an amazing amount of international guests visiting Old Cowtown this year. We have enjoyed the company of foreign visitors from Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, England, France, Georgia, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Japan, Nepal, Norway, Peru, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Let’s all get the word out to bring even MORE countries of the world to visit the old west experience right here in Wichita, Kansas.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name \_\_\_\_\_

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E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

☐ THIS IS A NEW MEMBERSHIP ☐ RENEWAL ☐ GIFT MEMBERSHIP

### MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- ☞ General admission for 1 full year from date of purchase
- ☞ Invitations to museum fundraising events
- ☞ Four complimentary issues of the Old Cowtown Chronicle
- ☞ 10% Discount in Fritz Snitzler’s Saloon
- ☞ 10% Discount in the S.G. Bastian & Sons Gift Shop

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

**Single Level** \$40. 1 Person

**Companion Level** \$60. 2 People

**Family Level** \$75. 2 Adults and all children under 18

♦♦Additional Benefits to Pioneer Society & Patron Society Levels ♦♦

**Pioneer Society Level** \$150.-\$499. 2 Adults and all children under 18

**Patron Society Level** \$500.+ 2 Adults and all children under 18

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: Historic Wichita Cowtown, Inc.:  
Membership • Old Cowtown Museum • 1865 W. Museum Blvd • Wichita, KS 67203  
OR JOIN ONLINE AT [WWW.OLDCOWTOWN.ORG](http://WWW.OLDCOWTOWN.ORG)





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## 2023 EVENTS SCHEDULE

Dec 1	Victorian Christmas	Dec 9	Breakfast with Santa*
6-9pm	\$10 per person	9-11am	Purchase tickets online
Dec 2	Breakfast with Santa*	Dec 9	Victorian Christmas
9-11am	Purchase tickets online	6-9pm	\$10 per person
Dec 2	Victorian Christmas	Dec 14	Christmas Soiree*
6-9pm	\$10 per person	6:30-9:30pm	Fundraiser Formal Dinner ~
Dec 8	Victorian Christmas		\$65 per person
6-9pm	\$10 per person		Purchase tickets online
Dec 8-10	Melodrama: What's in Store	Dec 15-17	Melodrama: What's in Store
Multiple	Purchase tickets at the door	Multiple	Purchase tickets at the door
dates/times	or online	dates/times	or online

Check the [www.oldcowtown.org](http://www.oldcowtown.org) website for the winter Old Cowtown Lecture Series.

You can get information on any of the above events by going to Old Cowtown's Facebook page and/or visit [www.oldcowtown.org](http://www.oldcowtown.org). Member Free Admission does not apply to events marked with\*.



This photo from the 1950's shows Old Cowtown's first entrance. At the official opening Old Cowtown's original name was "Cow-Town of 1872".

## OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM: TAKE A STEP BACK IN HISTORY

After World War II, many communities participated in urban renewal. This included modernizing cities by razing old buildings and constructing new businesses. Wichita jumped on board. However, a group of concerned citizens banded together to save some of Wichita's historical structure before they were all torn down. They started Historic Wichita Inc. in 1950. Historic Wichita Inc. struck a deal with the City of Wichita to lease water department land to house any acquired structures. The first building at Old Cowtown was the Church. The group soon added the Hodge House, Munger House, then the Jail. Within a short time the remaining buildings were as follows: The Drug Store (now our Music Store), the Sod School House was built (later St. John's Church, that building collapsed decades ago). Later came the Railroad Depot, and Boxcar. Then Baldwin's Photo Studio, old Fire Station (now a children's area), and finally the Post Office (now a Barbershop). By the time of its official opening in 1955, Cow-Town of 1872 (The original name of our now Old Cowtown Museum) contained the above listed eleven historic buildings.

- James Vannurden

## WATCH OUT, YOU MIGHT LEARN SOMETHING!

"Boy, hammering in this square nail is a lot of work!"  
"That lady just told us that in the parlor we had to sit perfectly still and mind our manners. I couldn't do that."  
"Joshua! Smell that bread baking in the oven! It was just like that when my grandmother was baking bread at her house."  
"That cowboy makes lassoing look really easy! When I tried, the rope fell on my head."  
"Look on that shelf. There's a bar of ivory soap! I didn't know it was around back then."  
"Dad! Look at that those cows in the livery pen. Look at how big they are!."

Look closely. Did you see people learning?  
As the person in charge of interpretation and education it is my job to provide the best education that we can at the museum.

Old Cowtown Museum has always been in the business of providing opportunities for people to learn. Like many museums Old Cowtown Museum provides many educational opportunities. Some of them are formal, such as lectures and traditional school programs. But one of the hallmarks of an open air living history museum is that it provides experiential and incidental opportunities based on the discoveries people make while touring. This method of education has the potential to offer a great learning opportunity because it lets the person use their preferred learning style and structure.

While living history is our main focus, it is not our only method of teaching. We provide labels in some exhibits, information on the site maps and a few case exhibits to round out the offerings. So whether it is talking to the cowboy, reading the McGuffey's Reader, listening to a speaker talk about details of the historical time period, or looking at a static display, guests are guaranteed to find a method that meets with their preferences.

Old Cowtown Museum also offers guests the opportunity to be immersed in the past that they can find no other place in Kansas. While we can't control the planes flying overhead, ambulance sirens from the nearby highway, nor the presence of electrical power lines, We do offer guests the chance to be surrounded by typical buildings filled with objects set as though their owners have just left, as well as the chance to speak with individuals and learn more about the people and the lifestyle of those who inhabited those buildings long ago. By providing sections of a growing Midwest town, guests can learn about the town's early beginnings, be a part of several residences of different economic level, see representative businesses, learn about several skilled crafts, and visit a typical farm in Sedgwick County,

Old Cowtown Museum is perfect for learners of all ages. In addition to providing the context for families and groups to talk about their varied life experiences, we provide opportunities to have new shared experiences. Whether it is following the plow, shaving wood, or stirring a batch of lye soap it seems there are always new things to try.

Whether guests come to a structured education program or learn on their own experientially, Old Cowtown Museum provides a safe and fun learning environment where students, individuals and families can immerse themselves in the past, and maybe learn by surprise.

- Anthony Horsch

## COME CELEBRATE A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS AT OLD COWTOWN

The Christmas season is always a special time of the year at Old Cowtown Museum. The Victorian Christmas has become a family tradition for many families, churches and social groups in and around the Wichita area.

Our four night event allows our visitors the opportunity to enjoy an old-fashioned Victorian Christmas experience. As you walk along the streets of Old Cowtown you feel as though you've stepped back in history. There will be old time festivities to enjoy with your family and friends, such as, popcorn stringing, cooking demonstrations, creating an orange pomander, and printing your very own souvenir bookmark. Victorian décor will be on display, old time artisans will be showing their crafts, visits with Santa will be popular with the children (and the kids at heart) and other wholesome activities that will be sure to delight every member of your group or family. There will be authentically costumed carolers singing those Christmas songs we all know and love by heart.

The Victorian Christmas at Old Cowtown will run December 1 & 2, and December 8 & 9 from 6pm to 9pm at a cost of \$10 per person. For more information, please visit Old Cowtown Museum's website at [www.oldcowtown.org](http://www.oldcowtown.org). We look forward to seeing you there along with the jingling of silver bells.



## MEET OUR OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM STAFF:

**Executive Director (Interim)**  
Elisa Accardi-Harrison

**Farm Manager**  
Greg Hunt

**Curator**  
James Vannurden

**Director of Volunteers**  
Angela West

**Education & Interpretation Director**  
Anthony Horsch

**Gift Shop Manager**  
Hanson Long

## Message of Thanks at this Thanksgiving Season

At this time of the year, we at Old Cowtown Museum want to share how very thankful we are for our volunteers, our donors, and our members. You are all so special to us.