

The Old Cowtown Chronicle

This issue of The Old Cowtown Chronicle has been underwritten by a Friend of Historic Wichita Cowtown, Inc.

SUMMER 2024 VOL. 2 / NO. 3

The Old 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

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
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Instagram.com/WichitaCowtown
#oldcowtown

NEW! HWCi Facebook: Historic Wichita
Cowtown Inc. - Board of Trustees



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

Cowtown Queens and Kazoos: The Daisy Longstem Saloon Girls

(Katherine Eppich-Catlin)

Inez Oppenheimer reigned as a notorious brothel owner in Wichita’s younger days. Newspapers at the time reported on her elegant upscale “parlors,” and her fame as “Dixie Lee” grew as large as her bank account. Years later, in 1978, Wilma Sehnert took on the stage name of Dixie Lee when she (and the Social Club) started a can-can dancing group in order to help refurbish Fritz Snitzler’s Saloon. They researched costumes, dance steps, and music, and although they didn’t have a piano player at first, they took out ads and managed to establish a troupe. The Dixie Lee Saloon Girls took to the stage!

One of those first dancers was Shelley McKinney (current HWCi Board Member), who in particular enjoyed the Christmas Through the Windows event, during which most of the buildings were closed, with the exception of the saloon, so that visitors could peek in to see lit-up Victorian displays. The saloon girls sang a few traditional songs and danced the can-can, and they began the tradition of performing their own skewered version of “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” Shelley explained, “At the start of each verse we would try to be prim and proper, but it just got funnier and funnier!”

Jeanne Thompson was 40 years old in 1990 when she auditioned for the Dixie Lees, and she made the cut because “I had the highest kick they had ever seen!” She danced until age 55 when “my old ankles and knees caught up with me” and has performed as hostess Miss Daisy Longstem ever since. She is also pleased to point out that she was crowned during the 4th of July 2016 event as the very first Queen of Cowtown. Not bad for someone who expected to dance for only ten years – she is now in her 34th season!

The Dixie Lees became the Daisy Longstem Saloon girls in 2021. Nowadays, they rehearse every Monday night during the regular season. All their custom costumes are usually personally handmade, and they strive to ensure that their clothes and accessories are time-period correct.

Like all of the groups at Old Cowtown Museum, the Daisy Longstem Saloon Girls are pleased to welcome new members – and piano players! Perspective performers are required to have a good sense of humor and a willingness to improv, whether due to wardrobe malfunctions, misbehaving feather headpieces (such as when Darlene “Amazing Grace” Jolly was hit in the eye and “I had to hold my contact in my hand for the rest of the show!”), or even musical mishaps, which once required the ladies to provide their own music with a collection of kazoos! “Luckily,” said Jeanne, “we had recently received our Degrees of Musicality in Kazooing for the Kalamazoo Kazooing Institute. The show would go on!”

Gill the Cat - Old Cowtown’s Favorite Ambassador

(Hanson Long)



Photo Credit: Nichole P. Conard

Old Cowtown Museum’s beloved ambassador is Gill the Cat, who was born on the grounds around 2017 and named after the Gill Family Mortuary. Regular visitors know to look for him at the SG Bastian and Son’s Gift shop in order to pay the REAL entry fee, and previous check-in books are filled with proclamations that he was the favorite part of the visit.

Gill’s days begin when he hears the jingling of shop manager Hanson Long’s keys. He awakes from his bed in the window (where he sees and judges all) and then politely yells for breakfast. After that, he performs his daily duty of distressing the rustic display boxes; luckily he has the right tools for the job, because he may be a little less spry but

the claws are still sharp!

Opening time coincides with his nap on the front desk, where he gets good scratches from his adoring public (and he gets upset on days when there are no visitors to scratch his ears and back). After that, he might take a quick lap around the grounds for some small game hunting. He’s proud to show off his quarry...like to the group of first graders who learned all about the circle of life one morning when they witnessed Gill catching a bird. After that, he’ll return to his spot in the window to enjoy a well-earned nap.

He has had many adventures over the years, like the time he disappeared for three months and then returned as though nothing had happened, or when he released a bird in the gift shop during Victorian Christmas. Hanson remembers one instance in particular when Gill was discovered on the Visitor Center’s roof: “After an hour of failing to coax him down, and receiving many lacerations for trying, I gave up. He then promptly walked to the dumpsters, gently hopped down, and decided he was ready for lunch. Which I gave him, once I was bandaged enough!”

Although Gill’s health is declining, he remains active and he still loves the attention he receives as the gift shop’s boss. Just don’t pet his belly, or he might demonstrate how he catches all those birds!



Photo Credit: Jay Stockhaus

MEMBERSHIP FORM



Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

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

HISTORIC WICHITA COWTOWN INC.
1865 WEST MUSEUM BOULEVARD
WICHITA, KANSAS 67203-3600

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
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2024 SCHEDULE of EVENTS

August 10 **Night at Cowboy Camp Fundraiser***
5:30-8:30pm
Tickets include all activities.
OCM Member: Adults \$22, Children \$20
Non-Members: Adults \$24, Children \$22

Aug 16-18 **Empire House Players**
Melodrama: How the West Was Worn
(or Black Hat Optional)
Fri & Sat: 7-8:30 pm; Sun 2-3:30 pm
Purchase Tickets at the door or online

Aug 23-25 **Empire House Players**
Melodrama: How the West Was Worn
(or Black Hat Optional)
Fri & Sat: 7-8:30 pm; Sun 2-3:30 pm
Purchase Tickets at the door or online

Sept 14 **Women of the West**
10am - 5pm
Adults \$10, Seniors \$9
Kids \$8 (4 & under free) Members Free

Oct 5 **County Fair**
10am - 5pm
General Admission

Oct 19-20 **Hay, Hooves, & Halloween**
2-8pm, \$5 Per Person; Members Free

Nov 15-17 **Empire House Players**
Melodrama: Christmas Castaways
Fri & Sat: 7-8:30 pm; Sun 2-3:30 pm
Purchase Tickets at the door or online

Nov 22-24 **Empire House Players**
Melodrama: Christmas Castaways
Fri & Sat: 7-8:30 pm; Sun 2-3:30 pm
Purchase Tickets at the door or online

Dec 7 **Breakfast with Santa**
9am - 11am
\$20 Non Members - Members Free

Dec 6-7 **Victorian Christmas**
6-9pm
\$10 Per Person - Members Free

Dec 13-14 **Victorian Christmas**
6-9pm
\$10 Per Person - Members Free

Dec 19 **HWCI Christmas Soiree Fundraiser***
6:30-9:30pm; \$65 Per Person - Or a table of 8 for \$500
Fundraiser Formal Dinner
Purchase tickets online thru HWCI link
Formal fundraising Victorian dinner, merriment,
entertaining melodies and Victorian dancers
Enter Nous and of Course Santa himself.

NOTE: Through the end of August 2024: Blue Star Museum, Active-Duty Military & Families get in free in Old Cowtown Museum (show your ID).

Check the www.oldcowtown.org website for updates to the above schedule at Old Cowtown Museum

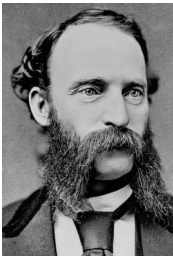
You can get information on any of the above events by going to Old Cowtown's Facebook page and/or by visiting www.oldcowtown.org. Historic Wichita Museum Inc. Member Free Admission does not apply to events marked with *

OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM: TAKE A STEP BACK IN HISTORY MARSHALL MURDOCK, EARLY WICHITA ENTREPRENEUR

(James Vannurden)

Having run a successful newspaper in Burlington, KS called the *Osage Weekly Chronicle*, Marshall Murdock was looking for a change. After much deliberation, and with his wife Victoria wanting to relocate to a more urban area, Marshall moved his family to the small town of Wichita in the Arkansas River junction. He would go on to become one of the most influential men of early Wichita. Using his newspaper *The Wichita City Eagle*, Murdock promoted the young city. Business was booming, the cattle trade brought in much needed money, farming was the best around....all of these statements were thrown around in his reporting to attract more people to the city.

Murdock was more than just the local newspaperman. He served as the city postmaster from 1874-1886 and again from 1898-1908. He joined Masonic lodge in 1878. Murdock lobbied for additional railroads; he later became director of Wichita and Southwest Railroad. Higher education was important to him; he was an incorporator of Wichita College in 1880 and later President of Trustees of Wichita Academy in 1882. Murdock's family residence, built in 1874, still exists today at Old Cowtown Museum. Come and visit his home which turns 150 years old this year!!



Marshall Murdock
Photo Credit: WSU Collection

Empire House Players Melodrama, How the West Was Worn (Or Black Hat Optional)

August 16-18 and August 23-25 ~ Fri & Sat: 7-8:30pm, Sun 2-3:30pm
Purchase tickets at the door or online
Things aren't as black and white as you'd think in this hysterical spoof of melodrama caricatures. With two villains working together and one of them putting on airs as a do-good sheriff, everything's turned inside out and kind of crazy! Double the bad guys means double the trouble, and our fashion designer heroine, Terry Robe, may lose her shop unless someone comes to her rescue. Plus, with all the dastardly deeds happening, the town council may lose their chance at impressing the railroad tycoon who wants to bring the tracks through Black Flatts. But who exactly is the real hero in town? Who will set it all right? With all these black hats, white hats, and plenty of colors in between, have fun figuring out just who is the bad guy, who's a good guy, and who is a great, great man. After all, if clothes make the man, then there is some serious trouble in Black Flatts. Please note: To those attending that parking is in the WEST parking lot 1/4 mile down from main entrance.

Characters:
William BoardSign Painter; Storyteller
Dusty RhodesThe Deputy
Penny AnteDusty's trusty sidekick
Terry Cloth Robe Ingenue fashion designer
Ward RobeTerry's Pa
Tumbleweed Kid In disguise as the heroic Sheriff
Helen Back.....Tumblweed's gal
Tim Gunn.....The Mayor
Slim ChanceNervous Banker
Nada Chance.....Slim's Wife
Hedda D'ClassOld-school Schoolmarm
Ricardo TycoonSpaghetti Western Rich Guy
Rusty Cattler.....Villain
Molly Coddle.....Rusty's gal

**We at Old Cowtown
Museum want to say
how proud we are to
be a part of such a
great nation. A nation
whose patriots stand
for democracy and
fight continually to
protect our freedoms.
God bless America!**

Night at Cowboy Camp

Sign up now for Night at Cowboy Camp, August 10! Join us for an exciting journey back to the late 1800s at Old Cowtown Museum's "Night at Cowboy Camp" from 5:30 to 8:30pm. Put on your best Cowboy/Cowgirl gear and immerse yourself in an evening filled with cowboy-themed games, activities and skill demonstrations like roping and branding. Gather around the campfire for a delicious dinner, sing-alongs and other surprises that bring the Wild West to life. This family-friendly fundraiser supports Old Cowtown Museum in preserving and celebrating local history.

CYBER ATTACK

Old Cowtown Museum was recently affected by the 21st-century problem of cyber-attacks which caused a number of issues for the City of Wichita. For a time, only cash and checks were accepted in the gift shop and saloon, but the museum is pleased to report that the credit/debit card system is back in order, plus all staff emails are functional and the official website of oldcowtown.org is up and running. But just in case another gang of ne'er-do-wells tries to create havoc in our town, be sure to follow the Old Cowtown Museum on Facebook to stay current on special events!

Cowboys & Cocktails...All the cowboys came out for this great fundraiser for HWCI

On June 22nd, our Historic Wichita Cowtown Inc., held our annual fundraising event called Cowboy's & Cocktails, and it was an amazing event. Guests enjoyed cowboy themed cocktails and delicious appetizers as they strolled along the streets of Old Cowtown. Special thanks to Mi Sueno, Sippy's Mobile Bar, Boot Hill Distillery, First Man Brewery, Little Busters Sports Bar, Georges French Bistro, Good Company Taps & Spirits, and Shaken or Stirred. And in true old time fashion everyone was entertained by Diamond W Wranglers, Wyatt's Whip Act, our own Daisy Longstem saloon girls, and the dime novel skits from our Old Cowtown Museum gunfighters. Thanks to our fabulously entertaining Old Cowtown Museums Volunteer Groups. Our guests were given wagon rides through Old Cowtown and raffles and games wrapped up the evening for this FUNdraising event. We want to give special thanks to our sponsors: Evergy, Kansas Star Casino, Auto House of Derby, Pickrell Drilling Company, InSite Real Estate Group, Old Cowtown Museum's Pioneer member Stev Overstreet, & Redrock Photography.

MEET OUR OLD COWTOWN MUSEUM STAFF:

Executive Director
James Quint

Curator
James Vannurden

Education & Interpretation Director
Anthony Horsch

Interpreters
Maria Lopez Galindo,
Ryan Ferguson, Mike Scheufler,
Crystal Socha, Tim McGill,
Hannah Rose, Elijah Turner,
Elizabeth Ernst-Miller

Farm Manager
Greg Hunt

Volunteer Director
Angela West

Gift Shop Manager
Hanson Long

Saloon Manager
Marty Deemer

HWCI Facebook Page

Historic Wichita Cowtown, Inc. has a brand new Facebook page. We invite you to scan the HWCI Facebook QR code shown below and join in on all of the festivities HWCI has to offer at the Old Cowtown Museum. Share and like us on Facebook, and help us grow our Facebook community. We will keep you up-to-date on any news of Old Cowtown, share its history, and add in fun facts for added enjoyment. We want to hear from you. Tell us your favorite Old Cowtown memories! Is there a special place at Old Cowtown you always enjoy visiting? Share your family photos with us as well. You can send these to board.hwci@gmail.com. We can't wait to hear from you!

We also have a QR code to begin a HWCI Old Cowtown Blog. You will enjoy the information we will share on our blog. This will be so much fun when we bring Old Cowtown of the 1870s into modern times.

