



BANNER



SEM Makes New Sign

Be sure to watch for the new Dawson County Museum sign in front of our campus. Dietrich Meyer and his welding class at SEM High School created the sign in their classroom and museum volunteers laid the concrete for the base of the sign.

Now we have a place to advertise all the exciting events happening at the Dawson County Museum! And Kermit Smith (and others) will no longer drive past, because our sign is now closer to the street to let him know he's made it to the museum 😊

LEXINGTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



LINKING OUR COMMUNITY

give
BIG
Lexington
November 15, 2018

Give BIG Lexington 2018 is Thursday, November 15. This 24-hour day of giving showcases local causes that make this community a more vital place to live. You're encouraged to give to those that mean the most to you and your family. You can donate now. Go to www.givebiglexington.org to make your donation to the Dawson County Historical Museum. Or on Thursday you can walk into our headquarters at Dawson County Annex Building (200 West 7th Street).

This year the museum raising money for more preservation and conservation materials to keep our collections and archives safe. We are also replacing seven big light fixtures in the museum's main gallery. Each fixture costs around \$300 each! Please consider the Dawson County Museum when making your contributions to Give BIG Lexington.

Introducing Jim and Jill Williams

Jim and Jill Williams are the museum's newest acquisitions! From Moab, Utah they plan to stay here for about a year, not just because they think Dawson County is the coolest place ever, but because they are helping us digitize a large part of the museum's archives. They come to us from Family Search, a nonprofit organization sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Familysearch.org is the world's largest collection of family history and genealogy resources with billions of records and publications from over 100 countries. By the time Jim and Jill have completed their stay here, genealogists from around the globe will be able to access our information on www.familysearch.org We are excited to have them here.

Jim & Jill are both from Moab which is in southeast Utah and is the destination for mountain biking, jeeping, and river rafting. Moab is the home of two National Parks, Arches and Canyon Lands, and Dead Horse Point State Park, and the most beautiful red rocks you've ever seen.

They have 4 children and 11 grandchildren with number 12 on the way. They both love the outdoors. They spent the first 10 years of their marriage in a remote Ranger District on the Selway River in Idaho.

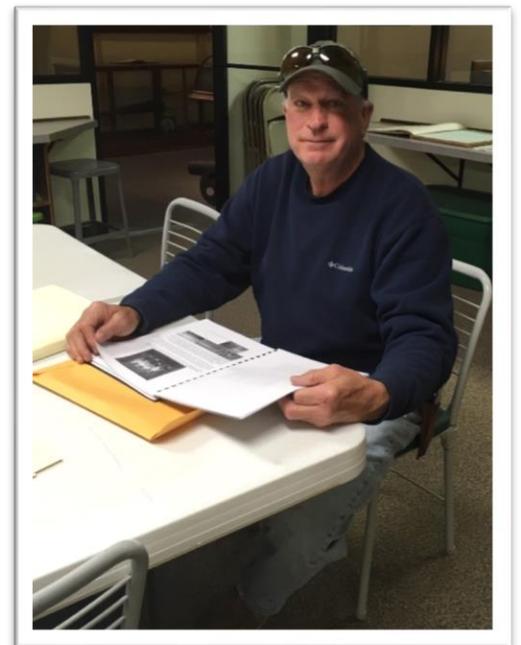
Jim is a retired forester and wildland firefighter who worked for the US Forest Service for 43 years. He is an avid hunter and fisherman who enjoys the outdoors, site seeing, hiking, and spending time with the grandkids. Jill has had her dream job, being a stay-at-home mom. She enjoys genealogy and research. She also enjoys crafts and quilting. She loves spending time with the kids and grandkids and can't wait for the birth of number 12. They are loving Nebraska but are not looking forward to the cold snowy winter!

During their time at the museum they will need help prepping some of the material they need to process. If anyone is interested in learning what they do please contact the museum and let Crystal know that you are interested in helping Jim and Jill. They would love your help and would love to get to know the great people here in Dawson County.

Can I Help for an Hour?

I love it when somebody comes to the museum and says, "I'm yours for an hour... what can I do?" Honestly, that's all it takes, just an hour, to complete some of the little projects we have here at the Dawson County Museum. Donn Newquist, one of our Board Members from Sumner, came in one afternoon because he couldn't be out in the field. I put him to work doing research. He had so much fun that he came back the following week for another hour and helped me file newspaper clippings in the museum's archives.

Many of the things we do here don't take long to do. It's just finding enough minutes in a day to get to every project. Some jobs, such as dusting, sweeping, and washing windows are done every week. Other jobs, like moving items from our attic to our main floor, happen once or twice a year. That is why volunteer help and community service hours are so vital to the running of our museum. If you have a moment in your day and you're looking for something to do, or if you know someone that needs to do some community service send them to the Dawson County Museum. It might just be an enjoyable experience!



Blazes by Crystal Werger

October is my favorite month. Everything it represents are things that I love. The changing of the season brings cooler weather (I love sweaters and boots), the beautiful blaze color (don't you just love mums?) and weenie roasts by a raging bon fire! I also love all things pumpkin and Halloween but we're not going to talk about that. When my boys were in preschool, they always made a trip to the Fire Department for Fire Prevention Month in October, and I got to go with them. So, this October when I caught myself reminiscing, I decided to research some of the famous fires of Dawson County.

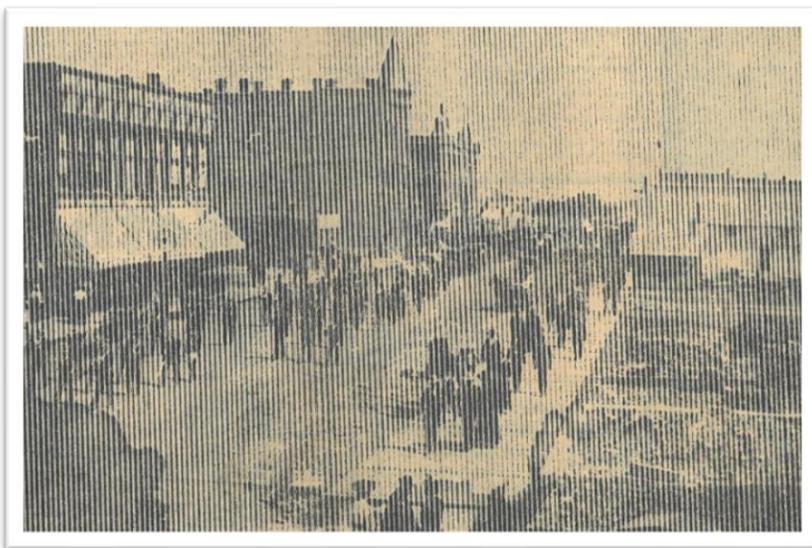
Surprisingly, the *Dawson County Disasters – Fire* file in our archives is pretty thick. Many devastating fires have attacked the county over the years. The two that stuck out to me occurred 56 years apart. Both occurred in downtown Lexington, on the east side of the 500 block of Washington Street. What newspapers called "the most devastating fire in Lexington's history"—twice—struck in the same place twice. Some of you may remember the horrible *Rosenberg Fire* that occurred the night of August 20, 1947, but do you recall the fire that occurred the night of November 14, 1891? Both were blamed on arson, but only the 1947 fire was proven so. It was rumored, not substantiated, that the oldest son of John Cozad started the fire of 1891.

In the early morning of August 26, 1891, a fire started in the old Nebraska Livery Stable in the **west** side of the 5th block of Washington Street. This fire destroyed all the buildings between the newly built First National Bank and the Carr & Fleming building. Most of the buildings were wooden structures that went up in flames so quickly little could be done to save them, especially since there was no fire department or water works at the time. The best Lexington citizens could do was throw buckets of water on the buildings that hadn't been consumed in hopes they could be saved. I imagine by morning the two corner brick buildings stood like book ends on the fire-ravaged city block.

Just three months later, November 14th, 3:00 AM, the same block on Washington street was in flames again, though this time it was the **east** side. By the time the call went out, the fire was too far gone and not much could be done to stop it. Little had been learned from the fire in August because once again it was left up to the bucket brigade to put out the flames.

The fire was originated in Filer's old stable behind the Penney's Store. Both were quickly engulfed in flames. Luckily Dr. Fletcher, who was sleeping in the rear of Filer's Store, was able to escape before the smoke

suffocated him. Businesses destroyed by this fire were Filer's Store, Penney's Store, the Pioneer Newspaper office, Hammond & Mackey's Barber Shop, James Warehouse, Shepherd & Andrews Harness Shop, Pioneer Hardware Store, the opera house on the second floor of James Hall, and one home owned by D.C. VanDorn which was located a few feet east of Filer's stable where the fire started. Again, the buildings were made of wood except for James Hall which had been one of the first three brick buildings in Lexington. And again, the Carr & Fleming building across the street from the horrible inferno was saved and still stands to this day as a testament to not 2 but 3 horrible fires since it was built in 1888.



July 4, 1892 Parade

*West side building with awnings had been rebuilt after August fire.
East side is still in ruins.*

After the November fire, *The Lexington Gazette* stated: "Lexington is the only city of its size in the state that can boast of no water works. It will soon be able to boast of no town." As early as 1888, after a fire consumed 2 homes and a wagon shop, the citizens of Lexington were calling for a fire department. What would it take to get one? In 1892 the city council approved 2 hose companies, 1 hook & ladder company, and the Fireman's Association was organized. In February 1893 a fire alarm bell arrived and was placed in a tower behind the First National Bank. They celebrated with the first Fireman's Ball.

By 1947 much had changed in downtown Lexington. Buildings and streets were mostly bricks. It had been a long time since fire ravaged the community. Lexington now had a very good volunteer fire department and reliable water works. The town had learned from its earlier mistakes and taken precautions to prevent such a horrific event from happening again. What it didn't plan on was one man passing through town who decided to rob a store and then set it on fire.

Around 11:45 PM of August 20, 1947 a woman awoke to a light shining into her apartment window. She thought it was a very bright street light, but when she got out of bed and went to her window, she discovered that the bedroom set in the Rosenberg window display across the street was in flames! In a matter of minutes small fires erupted in numerous parts of the three-story building and in various corners of the lumberyard east of the Rosenberg store. A heavy breeze that night fanned the flames. The Lexington Volunteer Fire Department responded immediately and called several fire departments to their aid. Kearney, Overton, Cozad, Gothenburg, and even North Platte responded and helped fight the blaze for four hours. But to no avail. Despite sufficient water supply and several capable fire departments, the flames spread rapidly. By morning, the east side of the 500 block of Washington had once again been destroyed by fire.



The lumberyard was demolished. Rosenberg's Store along with Evan's Dress Shop, Stewart's Drug Store, and Wisda's Hardware Store had lost most of their merchandise. Windows across the street had been cracked by the heat. Reutlinger's Store was filled with smoke but had not been damaged by the fire. No serious injuries were reported. Mr. & Mrs. Doty's apartment on the 2nd floor of the Rosenberg building was destroyed but they had not been at home. Just like they had done 56 years before the Lexington Community would rebuild and move on.

As for the cause of the fire, 23-year-old Harvey Carroll was caught in Kansas and later admitted to robbing the Rosenberg store and setting the fires. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. His story is quite interesting but there is not the space to tell it, so we will keep it in the Dawson County Historical Society's archives until someone else decides to research the sad history of Dawson County fires.

Now on autumn mornings I walk into Madeline's Café and Bakery to get my pumpkin spice coffee. I can't help but think how many times the beautiful old Carr & Fleming building could have been destroyed by fire. Walking back to my car I look around at the 500 block on Washington street in downtown Lexington and think about how lucky I am to work in a town so beautiful. The fires were a tragedy that almost destroyed an entire city block not once but three times! The buildings remind me not of the heartbreak, but of a community that fought back and rebuilt each time because they believed their town was worth it.

Cornland Hotel Bar and Billiard Room

By Todd Williams

After speaking with artist, Todd Williams, I recently found out that the Nebraska Sesquicentennial painting representing Dawson County is still available. This painting was displayed in our art gallery last November – December in the *Painting the Legacy of Nebraska* exhibit. If anyone is interested in purchasing this interesting historical painting, contact todd@toddwilliamsfineart.com.

Also, we are considering hosting a 3-day Painting Workshop with Todd Williams this coming spring. Todd would be teaching it as a discipline, not a specific technique. It would be open to all artists, beginners through advanced. The workshop would be open to any media—it doesn't have to be oil. We would need at least 10 people to commit to the workshop. Cost would be \$400 per person for the three days. Please spread the word to your artist friends and have them contact us if they are interested!

THE BACKYARD AT OUR HOUSE

Our House and Mainstreet exhibits have been a lot more work than I originally thought so every time we get one more area near completion, we get excited and want to show it off! At the beginning of all this I thought we could have the house and mainstreet displays done rather quickly. . . a year at most. But then we got started and I realized it was a much bigger project than anticipated. As I have learned, a well-done exhibit does not happen overnight, greatness takes time and when this is finished its going to be AWESOME!





....Calling All Corporate & Social Groups



Contact us if you want to decorate a tree for our

Christmas Tree Promenade

Trees to be decorated the week of November 26th.



Dawson County Championship Trivia Night

November 16th 7:00 Friday Night
Team Tables \$250
Teams: 8 Persons Maximum

Each year we try to come up with fun events to raise money for the Dawson County Historical Museum. This year we're holding a Team Trivia Competition. Categories will include but not be limited to sports, logos, Dawson County History, and movie trivia. There will be hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar.

Get together a business, social or family group.
Contact us to reserve a table.
Come have fun raising money for DCHS!

The winner of our Rifle Raffle will be drawn at the beginning of the event. We will auction a 1983-84 Nebraska Cornhusker signed football halfway through the trivia competition.

Dawson County Historical Museum 805 N Taft St, Lexington, NE 68850

Open 10am to 4pm, Tuesday-Saturday, Or By Appointment

308.324.5340

dchsociety@gmail.com

www.dchsmuseum.com or find us on facebook



Christmas Hat Decorating party

Saturday, December 1st

