



A Morning of School at McCormick

On a chilly day in early April, children’s voices could be heard, and classes were in session once again at McCormick School. Fifty-three Kelly Elementary School second graders and their teachers spent the morning learning about what school was like at the turn of the 19th Century. Their experiences included reading and spelling lessons in the 1890s classroom, listening games and making toys during recess, and a grand tour of three floors of museum exhibits. Their day was capped by lunch in the school multipurpose room before returning to their present-day school. For more details to fill out the McCormick School Museum experience, keep reading.

Second grade teachers, Kara Knudson, Courtney Bell, and colleagues, developed the idea for the field trip to McCormick School Museum as a hands-on learning experience to reinforce concepts the children are learning in their second-grade classrooms. As part of the district’s “Then and Now” unit, students learn to compare and contrast using topics such as schools, homes, farms, clothing, communication methods, games, and so on. Students are taught to use Pebble Go, an elementary digital research platform available on their school-assigned iPads. Once a topic is assigned, and using Pebble Go to research, the students are provided with graphic organizers and instruction on how to record their observations into a summary format. Each student illustrates research findings on a poster board and gives a short explanatory presentation to the class. Through a big-picture experience at McCormick School Museum, the teachers wanted students to apply classroom lessons to make concepts come alive with actual hands-on learning.

School Master, Dee Starkey, welcomed students into the 1890s classroom when the school bell rang out to call them in from “recess.” He gave a short history of the classroom pointing out features of



Kelly Elementary students enjoy making and playing with the whirly-gig toys.
Photographer: Dennis Duty

the room that are different than those in modern classrooms (black chalkboards, gas lamps, and wooden desks as examples). School Master Starkey had the students read a lesson from the McGuffey’s Reader for a taste of the morals and life skills as presented in the curriculum of the time period. Using individual slates and slate pencils, students were presented with a spelling lesson using words from the McGuffey Readers. Learning to read Roman Numerals for a Math lesson was the final subject taught by the School Master before the bell rang out signaling the time for students to move to their next session.

As the weather that day was chilly and windy, it was decided to hold recess indoors. Students were led in listening games by Kathleen Oster and Cynthia Davie, museum volunteers. Games of “Squirrel and Nut” and “Hide the Thimble” were enjoyed by the children. To cap the indoor recess session, each child was presented with a small wooden disc and a piece of string and given directions to make a whirly-gig toy. The children left twirling their toys when the bell rang, ending the session.

The grand, three floor museum tour was led by McCormick School Museum Curator, Paul Oberg, with Printer, Dennis Duty, giving a

— Continued on page 2



School Master Starkey presents a spelling lesson in the 1890s classroom to Kelly Elementary second graders.
Photographer: Cynthia Rhodes

The Newsletter of the McCormick School Museum, Inc. is published six times per year to inform constituents of the Wichita Public Schools and other interested patrons of activities and events taking place at the museum. Contributions help us to produce this publication.

Editor: Cynthia Rhodes

Art Director: Brian L. Martin

— Continued from page 1

short presentation in the Print Shop about the old printing press and the typesetting process. The second graders listened carefully and asked thoughtful questions as artifacts were presented that provoked their curiosities. Students, Daisy and Luna, were interviewed about their experiences for this article. Both remarked their favorite activity for the day was the games and making the whirly-gig toys (Daisy said hers worked!). They both liked writing on the slates with the slate pencils in the 1890s classroom. As for differences between past and present, Luna commented about noticing the cursive writing on the chalkboards in the classroom. She also liked watching the 16mm film about the Driver's Ed lesson explaining "The ABCs of Driving" (Accelerator, Brake, and Choke pedals).

After eating lunch in the multipurpose room, the second graders and their teachers gave a round of applause expressing their appreciation for a morning that was well-spent and boarded their modern school bus for a trip back to the present at Kelly Elementary School. We invite teachers and staff of public, private, and homeschools to call or stop by to learn more about what McCormick School Museum has to offer to enhance their classroom curriculum and learning goals. The museum is located at 855 S. Martinson in Wichita. Museum hours of operation and contact information can be found in this *Bellringer Newsletter*.

Keep Our Bell Ringing 2026

Increasing momentum for building renovations and improvements has been made easier with the funds raised from our recently completed 2025 Keep Our Bell Ringing campaign. Money raised during this campaign pays for 2026 museum operating expenses; we are truly appreciative for our generous supporters and friends. Thank you once again!

To keep the construction progress moving forward, the museum board and staff have decided to announce a new fundraising campaign. The 2026 Keep Our Bell Ringing campaign will open July 1 and run through December 31. Funds raised will be dedicated to funding operating expenses incurred during 2027. Watch the museum social media accounts for the official kickoff event and latest announcements. Donation information and site may be found in this *Bellringer Newsletter*.

We are setting up an air-conditioned room with two scanners to begin digitizing our school scrapbook and photo collections. We are always on the lookout for enthusiastic volunteers and could use two interested people who want to help us with this digital project. If interested, contact a staff member for more information, meet new friends, and get involved. Better yet, come by soon and see what we are working on! The museum is located at 855 S. Martinson in Wichita. Museum hours of operation and contact information can be found in this *Bellringer Newsletter*.

EVENTS & MUSEUM HOURS

The McCormick School Museum is open Wednesday from 9:00 am to noon and Sunday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm. Park to the north of the building; enter through door #4 (closest entrance to the parking lot). Ring the doorbell if needed. You may call 316-708-0676 to confirm museum hours before your visit or to schedule tours outside regular hours.

Currently, the stairway to the multipurpose room is handicap-accessible for events. Admission is by donation; your support is always appreciated.

SAVE THE DATES

JUNE 6

16mm Film Fest: 5:00 to 7:00 pm

Come and watch entertaining and educational 16mm films from the McCormick School Museum film archives. This year, brush up your driving skills by watching films from the WPS Driver's Ed curriculum, and then put those skills to use as you cruise through a short historical documentary and a cartoon or two about cars in celebration of the Centennial of the famous US Highway Route 66 (13 miles are located in southeast Kansas). Fun for all ages; families are invited. Hot buttered popcorn and ice-cold lemonade will be served. Adults \$10; kids under 12 are \$5. Watch social media sites for more information as the date approaches.

JULY 5

McCormick Elementary School Alumni Reunion:
2:00 to 5:00 pm

You are invited to join McCormick School Alumni students, teachers, and staff for this reunion homecoming afternoon. The school will be open for research and browsing, and staff will be on hand to answer questions. Relive the past with those who were there; see what is planned for McCormick's future. For more information contact Rachel Vogt, reunion host, at Rachel Smith Vogt on Facebook, or Cynthia Davie, MSM Operations Manager, at 316-708-0676.

To reserve a room for your meeting or event, contact the museum office for reservation information and availability.

For more information and to contact the museum:

Bldg. Address: 855 S. Martinson, Wichita

Postal Mail: P.O. Box 12881, Wichita, KS 67277

Website: www.mccormickschoolmuseuminc.com

Donations: www.savemccormick.com

Facebook: McCormick School Museum

Gmail: mccormickschoolmuseum@gmail.com

Telephone: 316-708-0676 (call or text)

MSM Office: 316-558-5804 (leave a message)