



WPA Dolls — A Popular Exhibit

MSM visitors are fortunate to view a pristine and complete exhibit of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) “All Nations Figurines” dolls in the Doll Room on the first floor of the 1890/1910 building. The dolls were produced during the Great Depression of the 1930s as a relief program that was part of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal program. The aim of this program was to provide for the welfare of the American people by creating paid work for the needy. Thousands of men and women across the nation were sent to work building roads, bridges, parks, and even producing art such as these dolls.

The knowledge gained from learning skills and crafts such as doll making was meant to enable unemployed workers to secure employment in factories or to pursue a craft on an entrepreneurial basis. In Kansas, shops for production were located in Topeka, Kansas City, Emporia, Lawrence, Mayetta, Columbus, and Wichita. More than 126 tax-supported institutions in Kansas, such as schools and museums, acquired objects from the project to use in exhibits or as visual teaching aids. The dolls served an educational purpose to teach children and adults about different cultures and to promote cultural nationalism during a time of significant social and economic upheaval.

Specifications for the dolls required that they be made of a durable and practical medium, be produced in large quantities by workers with limited training (but who could learn good workmanship and produce an attractive visual aid), and lastly that each figure met the need for which it was designed. The 1939 catalog of the Kansas Museum Project included color wood cuts of the doll pairs.

In 1940, the Kansas Museum Project #6051 in Wichita employed sixty-three workers, most of whom were women, to make the paper mâché and cloth dolls. Each pair of dolls were dressed in costume clothing depicting twenty-six nations. The materials used were obtained locally and cost one dollar per pair. The finely detailed costumes are authentic, hand-sewn and inspired by artist’s drawings. Each pair (male and female) are mounted on a wooden platform displaying the name of the country they represent. Most of the men are holding their national flag.

The museum is open for visitors on Sundays from 2 to 5 pm and Wednesdays from 9 am to noon. Plan your next visit soon to see this exquisite and historic WPA Doll exhibit for yourself.



The WPA Kansas Museum Project in Wichita employed 63 people who made All Nation dolls dressed in native costume like this pair from Poland. Photographer: Cynthia Rhodes

OUR MISSION

The mission of the McCormick School Museum is to showcase and protect its historical and architectural importance while telling the story of Wichita Public Schools through artifacts and archives.

The mission of the Advisory Council is to guide and assist in long-range planning, marketing, and development of the McCormick School Museum, seeking opportunities for growth and recognition through increased educational opportunities and significant fundraising efforts.

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.

You may send your gift to
McCormick School Museum, Inc. at:

McCormick School Museum, Inc.
P.O. Box 12881
Wichita, Kansas 67277
savemccormick.com

Keep Our Bell Ringing!

School Museum Hosts Ice Cream Social

We invite the City of Wichita to an ice cream social fundraiser to culminate our summer fundraising campaign. Rain or shine, the event will take place at the museum on Saturday, September 20 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. The goal is to raise \$28,000 to pay for 2025-2026 operational expenses, including utilities, maintenance, and security. Cold ice cream and scrumptious toppings will be available for a donation to the museum. Entertainment will take place and tours of the building will be provided.

Donations for the currently ongoing summer fundraiser can be made in person, through the mail, or by visiting savemccormick.com. Located at 855 S. Martinson, the museum is open Wednesdays from 9 am to noon and 2 to 5 on Sundays. Tours outside of regular hours may be arranged by calling (316) 708-0676. For more information, visit mccormickschoolmuseuminc.com.

Whether you are an alumnus of USD 259 or not, you and your friends and family are welcome to visit the museum and enjoy a scoop of delicious ice cream to help "Keep Our Bell Ringing!"

Online donations: www.savemccormick.com

Postal mail and in-person donations:

855 S. Martinson, Wichita, Kansas, 67213



Join us for the ice cream social fundraiser on Sept. 20 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. and help "Keep Our Bell Ringing". Staff Photo

EVENTS & MUSEUM HOURS

The McCormick School Museum is open Wednesday from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm 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.

The Museum complex is located at 855 S. Martinson in Wichita. Currently, the stairway to the multipurpose room is handicap-accessible for events. Admission is by donation; your support is always appreciated.

SAVE THE DATES

SEPTEMBER 20

End-of-Summer Ice Cream Fundraiser: 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Rain or shine, come and enjoy a scoop of cold ice cream with toppings and support MSM. Live entertainment and tours of the school will be provided. Suggested donation: \$10; children under 12 are \$5. Watch social media sites for more information as the date approaches.

DECEMBER 5

Annual Holiday Open House: 9 am to 5 pm
Musical performances by USD259 students from 9:30 am to 3 pm.

DECEMBER 6 & 7

Holiday Open House Weekend: 12 pm to 5 pm
both days

See what it was like to experience an old-fashioned festive season in school.

DECEMBER 11 or 18 (TBA)

Carol Sing Around the Tree: 6:30 pm to 8 pm
Sing and be merry at this seasonal holiday evening event.

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

For more information and to contact the museum:

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)