

# Vår Historia

SMOKY VALLEY  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER



PUBLISHED

BI-MONTHLY



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## SURVIVAL AT IT'S FINEST – THE FARMERS STATE BANK

This year marks the 130th anniversary of the brick two-story structure that now houses Lindsborg City Hall and Convention Visitor's Bureau. Its first 68 years, however, belonged to the Farmers State Bank.

The bank though, goes back one more year, to 1886, when stockholders purchased The Corner Drug Store and 50' lot from Eben Carlsson, son of Pioneer Pastor Erhland Carlsson for \$2000.00. One of the pioneers of Lindsborg, after evaluating the property, remarked, "Oh man, if that building could talk what a story it could tell". The 25' X 30' wood structure was built by Dr. J. B. Curtis in 1872, making it one of the earliest businesses. Dr. Curtis occupied the building at the time the bank bought it, as Physician/Druggist, but had sold it to George Carbaugh in 1882, while in 1884 Carbaugh sold it to Carlsson.

September 1st, 1886 five stockholders applied for a charter worth \$30,000 divided in to 300 shares. It was granted on the 4th and Farmers State Bank was a reality. Lindsborg had a population of

1000 in 1886, and both farming and property value was booming. Lindsborg already had one bank, which started in 1882. The Bank of Lindsborg would later become the First National Bank of Lindsborg, but would not survive through the depression. A third bank in town also didn't make it.

It was this perseverance that makes Farmers State Bank stand out above the rest. Two times of struggle, 1893 and 1907 both created a few years of depression, but it was the crash of 1929 that ultimately killed banks nationwide. One remarkable woman, Ebba Fornberg, was hired as bookkeeper in 1906, became a director 1915, and President 1923. She remained with the bank until her death in 1950. Her actions during the troubling

times of the 1930s saved not only the bank, but Lindsborg businesses and people as well. Miss Fornberg had already proven herself many times before the Great Depression, one example was during World War I; where money was flowing and credit was easy. Farmers State Bank even offered to approve any loan over the phone and deposit it right in there account. Unfortunately after the war ended the government's need for crops and surplus ended, so prices dropped, leaving farmers over-extended and cash poor. In 1925 when the bank was being investigated by the examiner, bank officers put in \$30,000 of their own money to protect stock holders. Late 1930, two of Lindsborg's banks, Commercial State and First National, failed. Anticipating a run on the

only bank left, Fornberg had a better idea. She drove to McPherson to borrow money, then called Kansas City for more. As expected, the next



Ethel Hagstrand, C. A. Abernombie, Geneva Stromquist, Don A. Perkins, Ethel Norberg, Ebba Fornberg, Elmer S. Petersen

FARMER'S STATE BANK CON'T.

morning depositors rushed to pull their money out. Throughout the day one local merchant made six trips to deposit money, and soon others started following suit. By the end of the day the bank actually had \$1800 more in reserve than it started with. Trouble didn't end there though, Miss Fornberg put another \$10,000 of her own money throughout the 1930s to defray losses. Her response at the end of the decade summed it up:

*"I've been criticized by bankers for being too big-hearted," she says with a defiant lift of her head. "But regardless of that I know my note case is absolutely sound. This bank kept Main Street open during the darkest days of the depression. We risked money to do it – but I knew these people. Of course, the problem is a different problem here from what it is in some communities. There is a sound, basic honesty in a Swedish com-*

*munity which is something strong and fundamental that you can tie to. We won't lose a thousand dollars of all we loaned to Main Street in those hard days. And it was many times worth it to keep the people working, hopeful, happy and achieving." Ebba Fornberg from The Kansas City Star, July 23, 1939.*

Miss Fornberg stayed with the bank until her death in 1950. Under Chet Abercrombie's direction, Farmers State Bank hired architects from Kansas City to design a modern bank building in 1954, a half block to the north. They sold the original building to Lindsborg city for \$9,000, and it still stands with city offices in it.

Farmers State Bank ended its local stature in the early 1990s, and no connection to the original bank remains today.



IT'S "MESSIAH" TIME

There is something about spring that brings a smile to almost everyone, but here in Lindsborg it also brings out the best singing voices.

Just two months after forming Bethany Academy, Pastor Carl A. Swensson and wife, Alma brought forty church parishioners together to learn the words of Handel's Messiah. Almost all were from Sweden and spoke little to no English. This was the start of the Bethany Oratorio Society. The first performance was March 15th, 1881 held in the church. Today, more than three hundred local citizens, farmers, students, teachers, and anyone that can carry a tune joins together for this annual experience. It remains the longest running annual performance of the "Messiah" in the United States!

In 1895 Ling Auditorium was built and designed to hold 4000 people. It might have named after Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) who pioneered the teaching of Physical Education, but clearly designed for the Messiah performances. In fact, it was built between the railroad tracks and college, so a depot could be placed just for these performances. In the age of automobiles, Presser Hall was built 1929 to take over hosting the Messiah and other music or theater performances. Unfort-

unately Ling met its match with lightning 1946 and burned down. A little trivia for you now:

How many Messiah Conductors have there been since it started? **Answer - 28**

Which Conductor holds the record for longest reign? **Answer - Elmer Copley with 28 years (1960-1988).**

I wish I could keep going with "28" trivia, but nothing else matches.



For the 26th successive year, the solid Swedish citizens of Lindsborg, Kan., came together on Palm and Easter Sundays to hear their neighbors and their neighbors' children sing the choruses and the repeated *Hallelujahs* of Handel's *Messiah*. Though Lindsborg has a population of only 1,000, there were 2,400 people in the audience and 450 in the chorus—people of Lindsborg, farmers, students of Lindsborg's Bethany College. Conductor was Haglund (below), leader of the chorus for quarter of a century. First sung in 1881, Lindsborg's *Messiah* has become so famed throughout the Midwest that the town calls itself the "Oberammergau of the Plains."

1939 Life Magazine



**Bethany College.**  
Bethany College for Young Ladies.  
Bethany College of Music, Fine Arts.

*Three Chartered Institutions of Learning all in one:*

Eight Departments, College, Chemical and Scientific, Diploma, recognized by leading universities in this country, and Eastern Academy, preparing for College; Manual, necessitating manual labor of female students; Musical College, with vocal and instrumental and Typewriting; the Modern, contemporary, the best equipped; largest and most complete in the state; the Art Department, equipped for an European standard of instruction; the Department of Agriculture, the best equipped for graduation; the Model School, for young scholars.

*Students Receive at any Time.*  
Summer school open Sept. 21st. Next Academic year begins Sept. 21st. One term closes in the fall; the second year ends in the Spring; the third term closes in the fall; the fourth term closes in the Spring. Bethany College gives extensive advantages to students possible at other places.

The Art Department invites orders for All-in-Frames, Landscapes and Portraits and executes them at reasonable prices.

**The Messiah.**

In the greatest and most enduring of all traditions, it is unexcelled. It will move you, Bethany College, a nation of students, by its stirring and dramatic music, the music of the great victory on Calvary, the music which the powerful words of the great composer, whose last wish was to die on the cross, has written and to move him to glory. The Messiah Festival of next year will be held Wednesday, March 28th, at 7:30 p.m. You are welcome to visit us again at Bethany.

**What is Bethany?**

In spite of the name, Bethany without years, is not in the Bible, and the Constitution of the United States, the only one of its kind, is not in the Bible. Bethany is a young and modern institution, the product of modern and scientific methods of instruction. Its design is to give to the young people of Kansas the best of the physical, mental and Christian education of today. The education of each of our eight departments receives, in a measure, the benefit of all the other departments, and is supervised by the faculty, directly and indirectly, by the Board of Trustees, which in turn is supervised, managed and controlled by the Board of Trustees. The education of each of our eight departments receives, in a measure, the benefit of all the other departments, and is supervised by the faculty, directly and indirectly, by the Board of Trustees, which in turn is supervised, managed and controlled by the Board of Trustees. The education of each of our eight departments receives, in a measure, the benefit of all the other departments, and is supervised by the faculty, directly and indirectly, by the Board of Trustees, which in turn is supervised, managed and controlled by the Board of Trustees.

**SOLOISTS:**  
MISS ERNESTINE COTTON.  
MRS. ALMA SWENSSON.  
MISS CONA KRANTZ.  
MISS MARY GOODRICH.  
PROF. GEO. HAPPOD.  
PROF. SAMUEL THORSTENBERG.  
PROF. BIRGER SARDEN.

BETHANY uses and requires the M. P. HOLLER PIPE ORGANS (Mogensen, M.) and the NEW KIMBALL PIANO. The President will be glad to give literature as to these.

1892-1898.

**The Messiah...**

Bethany College...  
Lindsborg, Kansas...

22nd and 23rd RENDITIONS.

IN THE AUDITORIUM

April 6th and 8th, 7:30 p. m.



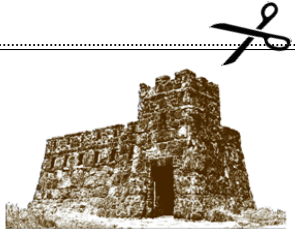
**SVHA 2016 - 2017 Program Schedule**

Once again the Program Chair, Elly Ostlind, has put together a spectacular and informative schedule this cycle. We have one left so please join us 7:30 pm on the following date at:  
**Bethany Home Activity Room, 321 N. Chestnut, Lindsborg.**  
*Refreshments will be served after the presentations. Hope you can join us!*

May 9th, 2017—**McPherson History**  
 Presented by Jinny Hall, Head, Adult Services  
 Steve Read, Head Librarian, McPherson Public Library

Please cut along the dotted line

**Smoky Valley Historical Association**  
**P.O. Box 255**  
**Lindsborg, KS. 67456**

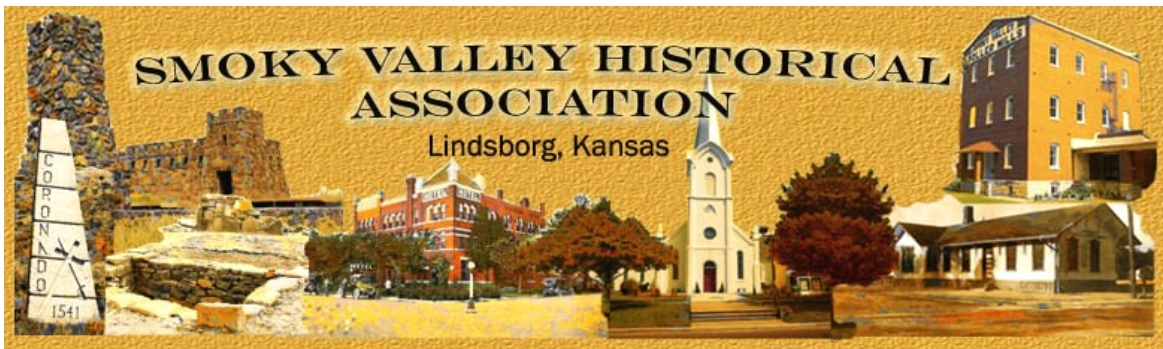


\$25    \$50    \$100    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.  
 Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.  
**Thank You!**

Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year



**The Smoky Valley Historical Association**

**Board of Directors**

- Chris Abercrombie - President
- Tim Stewart - Vice President
- Julie-Ann Neywick - Secretary
- Lenora Lynam - Treasurer
- Elly Ostlind - Program Chair
- Marvin Johnson
- Chester G. Peterson
- Dr. Duane Fredrickson - Emeritus

**Interested?**

*We have two BOD positions open. Email to [info@lindsborghistory.org](mailto:info@lindsborghistory.org)*

**Smoky Valley Historical Mission**

*The purpose of this association shall be to collect, arrange and preserve historical data, books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city and its vicinity; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.*

**Meetings**

We have bi-monthly meetings (excluding July) held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Bethany Home in the Activities Room. Program starts at 7:30 p.m. with topics of local historical interest. Come join us!



**Funding**

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year. Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year.

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of the SVHA.

**Contact Us**

You can e-mail us at: [info@lindsborghistory.org](mailto:info@lindsborghistory.org)

**mailing address:**

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PO Box 255  
Lindsborg, KS 67456

Check our Facebook page for the most up-to-date information concerning the Smoky Valley Historical Association.



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*Reminiscent Antiques*  
105 North Main Lindsborg  
*Old Mill Museum*  
120 E. Mill St. Lindsborg

*Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of central Kansas.*

*Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.*