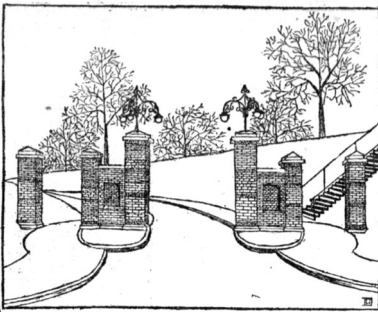


# Vår Historia

## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

### DOLORES GASTON-RUNBECK

The Globe's Drawing School



PUBLISHED  
BI-MONTHLY

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Dolores was the type of person that didn't quite know what she wanted to do after high school, and ended up doing it all.

Born September 1st, 1898 to Edward Samuel and Ida May Boyle Gaston of Atchinson, KS., Dolores had natural talent as an artist. At thirteen years old, she entered a contest the Atchinson Globe newspaper sponsored, for kids to draw the newly built entrance to their city park, Dolores took first place, winning \$2.50 and her drawing in the paper, shown to the left. She also took piano lessons, and was quite talented at that as well. All through high school, Dolores was in the Luther League, served on the newsletter staff, and in her junior year enrolled in manual training classes.

Upon graduating May 1916, she got a job at the Dentist, Dr. Beitzel's office, building up enough money to take classes at Midland College in Atchinson. June of '17 she received a diploma in the piano teacher's certificate class and gave a recital during the ceremony.

Her art stayed with her though, in 1919 her only sister, Dorothy, got engaged so Dolores designed and printed her announcements.

November 1919 Dolores purchased the Art and Needlework Store, 610 Commercial St. in Atchinson. The store was well estab-

lished, having been in business for nearly twenty-seven years already. Dolores' youthfulness and creativity gave the store a fresh look and it served her well. By this time, Dolores had a mission, she had her sights set on this college in Lindsborg that was famous for music, and she wanted to raise enough money to cover four years expenses for voice and piano courses. She accomplished that in just under three years and August 1922 sold the store and bought a one-way ticket to Lindsborg.

New town, new college, and in November she was invited to sing with the Oratorio Society in Kansas City! Dolores was one of 602 voices in this special Messiah performance that was being broadcast on the radio. Her parents and friends back in Atchinson were excited and gathered for the broadcast.

Her sophomore year Dolores proved she was no introvert, elected secretary of the Student Council, helped organize the Girls Rooter's Club and elected secretary/treasurer, and was a member of Sigma Phi Omega, simply known as the Omega Club. It was written in past bios that Dolores first met her future husband, Ridge Runbeck, as part of an initiation that sent Dolores to Runbeck Grocery and to ask the first person waiting on her if they had any "dry fish" (lutefisk) where she was to reply, "Why don't you give them a drink?"

#### Business Change! The Art Needlework Store

has been sold to Miss Delores Gaston by Mrs. William Gerhardt. Mrs. Gerhardt desires to thank the Atchinson people for the patronage they have given her. She asks that her old customers continue their patronage, and hopes many new ones will give the Art Needlework store their trade.

**DOLORES GASTON-RUNBECK {CON'T}**

That person was Reginald, or Ridge as he was known.

Another group she was elected to was the Pep Club, which was named "Pi Epsilon Pi" to match the letters of "pep". Although she was majoring in voice and piano, Dolores' art did not go unnoticed. One section of the 1923 Messiah Festival Art exhibit was turned over to Bethany students, which Dolores contributed to it.

In 1924 Delores received a teaching certificate for public school music, but her interest and passion was leaning more to art, so she changed her course of study. That spring she was elected to represent the Fine Art's Dept. for the Student Council. She was also elected president of the Rooters Club and treasurer of the Conservatory Dept.

October 1924 Delores helped organize the School Arts Society and was elected president. They adopted the name "The Sketchin' Kats". This club was for students majoring in Normal (teaching) Art.



School Arts Society  
"The Sketchin' Kats"

May of 1925 Dolores received certificates in both Normal Art and Public School Music, and whether for experience or dwindling funds, she sought out a teaching job in Beloit as their school's art teacher for the upcoming year. The next spring 1926, Dolores was hired to come back to Bethany College and then traveled to Chicago to further her art studies at the Chicago Art Institute for the summer. That fall, she was in charge of the Normal Art Dept. at Bethany College and soon became Birger Sandzen's assistant.

1927 started off with the reinstatement of the Delta Phi Delta fraternity, where Dolores was elected President. This chapter originally formed in 1920 but had become inactive. This was a national honorary art fraternity and required members from another chapter to make them official again. That March Dolores received her certificate in Professional Art, and one month lat-

er received her BA in painting.

August 21st, 1929 Delores married Reginald "Ridge" Runbeck and chose not to return to Bethany as an art teacher. She did, however, build an art studio at her new home on Mill St., known as the Runbeck House. Ridge managed the Runbeck Bros. grocery store so Delores helped out when not doing art.

June 25th, 1932 their only daughter, Dorothy, was born. April 4th, 1933 Delores was invited to help organize the Prairie Water Colour Club with Berger Sandzen and other artists. The name would change to "Prairie Water Color Painters" soon after. Delores was elected Vice-President and Sandzen President. Their first showing was during the Messiah Festival Art Exhibition, though a more organized exhibition was established at Kansas State College in Manhattan the next January, inviting many more artists to participate. Delores participated with this club for many years.

March of 1946 Delores' husband, Ridge, suddenly died of a heart attack. After forty years, the Runbeck store was sold to a man from Clyde, KS. Deloras decided to return to Bethany College, completing her Bachelor of Music degree, with honors.

In 1956 Delores was offered the position Director of Promotion in the national office of the Augustana Lutheran Church Women in Chicago and accepted it. In 1959 the Runbeck estate donated the mill, excluding the house, to the McPherson Fish and Game Commission. When Delores decided to leave Chicago in 1961, she sold the Runbeck house to the Berg family.

Delores had always been heavily involved with the church, going back to her Luther League days as a child. Upon leaving Augustana, she moved to Columbia, MO where her daughter lived. Barely settled in, she made plans to travel Europe for one year and unexpectedly acquired a large collection (150+) of ancient Christian crosses. For many years she not only continued to paint and create art in other mediums, but gave illustrated lectures on phases of Christian Art. By 1968 she had created twelve different lectures, which she had hoped to develop into a book.

Delores was the first woman (*and non-Swede*) to be elected to the Bethany College Board of Directors. She was an organizer of the first tours of artist's studios in Lindsborg, and led the campaign to preserve Lane Hart Hall, the first building to be built on Bethany College campus, plus many more contributions.

Delores passed away September 13, 1994 at her home in Columbia, MO. and laid to rest in Lindsborg.



DOLORES GASTON  
INSTRUCTOR



## Upcoming SVHA Programs

Nov. 11th, 2025

### The Old Mill Museum Photo Project

*Lenora Lynam and Tim Stewart*



Jan. 13th, 2026

### An Immigrant Saga: The Robert Muir Journey

The founding of Salina

*Gavin Doughty*



March 10th, 2026

### The Connection Between Lindsborg and Bucklin, MO.

*Gretchen Esping*



All programs  
start at:  
**7:30 pm**

Location:

**Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall  
402 N. First Street—Lindsborg, KS.**

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: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year



Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.

**Thank You!**





## SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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### Vår Historia Features!

All previous newsletters are posted to our website in the "Newsletter" page. Also, the current issue features many photos and newspaper clippings pertinent to that issue, and sometimes the only place to see them.

[www.smokyvalley-history.org](http://www.smokyvalley-history.org)

### 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 Smoky Valley Historical Association.

### **Smoky Valley Historical Mission**

*The purpose of this association shall be to collect and preserve historical photographs, manuscripts, and other items 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, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.*

### Contact info:

Email or visit our website:

[smokyvalleyhistory@gmail.com](mailto:smokyvalleyhistory@gmail.com)  
[www.smokyvalley-history.org](http://www.smokyvalley-history.org)



Smoky Valley Historical Association  
 PO Box 255  
 Lindsborg, KS 67456

*"History preservation and education"*



TACK SÅ MYCKET!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
 LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456



*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.*

***All donations are tax exempt, we are a 501-(c)3 organization.***