

Vår Historia

SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



LESTER DAVIS AND KING OSCAR COFFEE



**PUBLISHED
BI-MONTHLY**

CONTENTS.

L.H. Davis	1
L.H. Davis	2
Davis Coffee	3
SVHA Programs	3
Donations	3
SVHA Info	4

Lester Henry Davis, better known as L.H. Davis became a household name not just in Lindsborg, but in Swedish communities all over the USA, all because of that beloved beverage called coffee. The road to getting there was a rocky one and it wasn't one free of hardship.

Lester was born in Salina July 8th, 1877, to Henry and Eliza Davis. He was the oldest of three, along with brother Rudolph and sister Mineola. Henry Clay Davis, a New Jersey boy, enlisted in the Civil War at it's beginning in 1861 and fought it out until the end in 1864. He moved to Kansas shortly after the war ended and opened a harness shop in Salina in the early 1870s, he was also one of the founders of the Baptist Church there. Eliza Ellen Milam, Lester's mother with maiden name, followed her widowed mother to Salina in 1867 while still a teenager. Henry and Eliza married in 1874.

The first hardship came in 1892 when his mother died of a long-term illness, Lester was 14, his siblings 8 and 6, leaving Henry to raise the three.

Lester was a talented musician, gaining 1st chair Alto (Tenor) Horn with the Salina Military Band, which became rated top three in the state during the mid 1890's. He continued with this band even after his father, Henry opened a harness store in

Lindsborg and moved the family there in 1897. A Bethany College student/ musician from Lindsborg named Rollin Wilber befriended Lester and took on an apprenticeship at Henry's Star Harness Shop that same year. Lester worked with his father, which at this time all harness' and saddles were custom made at their home or in back of the shop. In 1899 Lester got sick with Tuberculous and was instructed to quit working at the shop. At that time, Henry bought out Lander and Nelson's harness stock and expanded his store. Needless to say, Lester traveled to Texas to work a ranch and clear out his lungs for a month during that summer.

If you look at the King Oscar Coffee tin or bag, you will notice "established in 1899" printed on it, Lester realized he would not be taking up his father's trade, he also noticed how much coffee Swedes drank. By 1900 he listed his trade as "traveling salesman" delivering groceries and coffee to nearby towns. The next year another opportunity presented itself, getting in on the El Reno, Oklahoma land lottery. Lester, Ed Weddle, and another friend headed south July of 1901 and returned the following month. Only one claimed a lot. but

Have You Been To

The Star Harness Shop

South of Post Office, Lindsborg, Kansas

For a set of First-class Harness, Collars, Halters, Whips, Leather & Cotton Fly-Nets, Dusters, Saddles, or Anything in that Line. We will Give you Harness that will bear inspection and we

GUARANTEE ALL WORK.

Get your old harness repaired. Repairing Done Promptly.

We Want Your Trade

STAR HARNESS CO.
H. C. DAVIS, Manager.

LESTER DAVIS AND KING OSCAR COFFEE {CON'T}

Weddle had his camera and it seemed very few others did. Davis and Weddle made enough money selling photographs for Davis to buy a lot in Lindsborg when they returned. Davis was issued number 8,315 and Weddle 43,143 in line for a claim. Neither went back to wait in line.

October 1901 Henry sold Star Harness to S.E. Nelson, which Nelson then moved it to Lincoln St to a larger space. Henry retired and moved to Colorado, taking his daughter Mineola with him. The following year, Lester, Rollin, and Rudolph (*Lester's brother*) all moved to Pueblo, Colorado where his father and sister now lived. Lester continued his trade as a wholesale grocer there.

On August 7th, 1904 Mineola was traveling with a friend who was visiting from Lindsborg back to Pueblo while on a day trip to Colorado Springs. The train they were on, Mo-Pac "World's Fair Flyer", encountered a flash flood near Eden Station and a bridge gave out, causing what would become the 2nd deadliest train crash in U.S. history. Mineola was only nineteen years old.

Lester then moved to Denver, but after visiting friends in Kansas, decided to move back to Lindsborg December 1905. His friend, Rollin Wilber had came back to resume college, and the two decided to start a business, planting Lester firmly in Lindsborg in the coffee and grocery trade.

The name in this ad only lasted one year, possibly due to conflict with the Union Pacific RR. From there, it became "*Wilber & Davis—The Coffee Men*". This first location was on south Main in the Lindquist building.

February 20th, 1907 Lester married Nellie Darnell of Wichita. Nellie had been a student at Bethany College so was well acquainted with Lindsborg.

Rollin, still in the Bethany band, married the violin teacher at Bethany College, Vendla Wetterstrom July of 1908. Vendla was also concert master of the Oratorio Society and 1st violin in Bethany Symphony Orchestra.

Marriage didn't stop growth, in 1909, Wilber and Davis bought a lot on north Main and built a brick building for the business, now 132 N. Main. By 1911, Rollin and Vendla decided to move to

Wichita so he sold his share solely to Lester. The business name changed to "*Davis Grocery*" and this is when the first use of King Oscar Coffee was used in ads. August 1913 the name changed once again, to "*Davis Economy Store*". Lester was focusing on bulk sales at lower prices.

His father, Henry (H.C.) Davis died April 1914, and as a pioneer of Salina was given more than one service. Henry had been living in a veteran's retirement home in California at the time of his death.

After breaking his arm trying to crank start his car in 1915, Lester rented out the south half of his store to Johnson Meat Market and advertised a poem written about his coffee. It was around 1919 when he started using "*L.H. Davis - the Coffee Man*", and July 6th, 1920 his brand was officially patented. Lester was also involved with the start of the Lindsborg Historical Society and was placed on the membership committee.

In 1923 Davis moved his economy store to the new Hjerpe building, or 110 N. Main St. Then in 1938 he moved to the Sundstrom building, where so many have memories of seeing the King Oscar Coffee sign being displayed.

Lester had a vision, to make a blend of coffee that everyone would like, and then sell it all over the world. It wouldn't be until March of 1957 before his vision was fully realized and his coffee was distributed in one pound vacuum-sealed tins.

May 1st, 1959 Lester died after an illness in the Lindsborg Hospital, he was 81 years old. A few months after, Davis Coffee House sold to Titus Fredrickson, who had been employed there for the past six years. He changed the name to "*King Oscar Coffee House*" until it permanently closed in 1964.

The trademark, logo, and coffee blend carried on, Leland and Glendora Elvin of Lee's Grocery were the final owners. Today, King Oscar Swedish Blend Coffee continues to be packaged under the direction of their daughter, LeAnn.

"No Meal Is Better Than Its Coffee"

KING OSCAR COFFEE.

KingOscar was a monarch grand,
Of recent worldly fame
And now we have a coffee brand
That bears his royal name.

And as a monarch, from the rest,
May shine out like a star,
So a coffee brand, that's stood
the test,
May be the best by far.

KingOscar brand, in fame secure,
Well known throughout our
state,
By many a coffee connoisseur
Has been pronounced as great.

So perfect blend, so perfect
roast,
No better e'er is seen
A reward you'll get, this is no
boast,
For just one faulty bean.

For sale at the Economy store
Call and bring your ladies
Buy it, and you'll call for more.
Yours truly, Lester Davis.
Adv.

New Store
New Store

The Union Pacific Coffee Co.

Will be open for business on
Saturday, February 17, 1906

With a complete line of Coffees, Teas, Extracts, Spices, Cocoa,
Cocoanut, Sugar, Dried Fruits, Etc.

See Our Premiums We give a Handsome Premium with
every pound of our goods Special Premiums on our Opening Day.

Produce Taken in Exchange
You are especially invited to call and see us Saturday

The Union Pacific Coffee Co.

Tel 443 Lindquist Bldg., South Main Street

Our Store Has Been Enlarged

We now occupy the entire first floor of the Lindquist building. We carry a full line of FANCY and STANDARD GROCERIES, also the very best there is in Coffees, Teas, Spices and Extracts, with which we give beautiful presents.

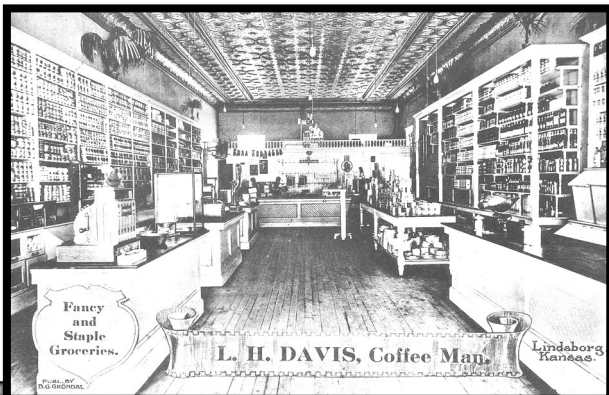
We guarantee our goods to be just as reported. If they are not, we will consider it a favor if they are returned.

Hot Coffee with Cake served free every Saturday.

Wilber & Davis
The Coffee Men.

South Main St.

Phone 139



Upcoming SVHA Programs

Sept. 10th, 2024

G.N. Malm Stencils

Brian Freeman

Nov. 12th, 2024

Handel's Messiah

Dr. Mark Lucas

Jan. 14th, 2025

Swedish Kurbit Painting

Carla Wilson

All programs
start at:
7:30 pm

Location:

Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall
402 N. 1st 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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tim Stewart - *President, Newsletter*
 Vince Rocco - *Vice President*
 Julie-Ann Neywick - *Secretary*
 Lenora Lynam - *Treasurer*
 Elly Ostlind - *Program Chair*
 Leland Nelson - *Property Manager*
 Christine Rocco
 Cathy Ahlstedt
 Betty Amos



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, 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 us at:
smokyvalleyhistory@gmail.com

or mail to:

Smoky Valley Historical Association
 PO Box 255
 Lindsborg, KS 67456

"History preservation and education"

Coronado Heights
 Smoky Valley Historical Association Lindsborg, KS

Any Time is Coffee Time

Ask for a Cup of
 King Oscar

TACK SÅ MYCKET!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
 LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456

Meetings/Programs

Smoky Valley Historical Association hosts bi-monthly meetings on the odd months, held on the second Tuesday, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 7:30 pm with topics of local historical interest. Location is listed on page three along with schedule.

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 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.

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



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