

# Flint Hills Heritage Newsletter

The Flint Hills Tourism Coalition

Flint Hills Heritage Task Force

## Great Santa Fe Trail Horse Race Riders To Experience Kansas Beauty

The Great Santa Fe Trail Horse Race is an 800-mile endurance ride completed over a 13 day period. Of those 800 miles, over 500 miles are through Kansas. It is open to all breeds. The ride will start in Santa Fe, New Mexico on Sept. 3, 2007 and end in Missouri on Sept. 15, 2007.

The ride will go through New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri. One Hundred teams, with up to 1,000 horses, will spend each evening in the race village where over 100,000 spectators are expected to visit throughout the entire course of the event. The village will cover approximately 30 acres and will provide

Pony Express ride along the same route with many more stops than the race. The Postal Service will also be offering special cancellations at each of its Pony Express stops. The cancellation stamp was created by Lawrence

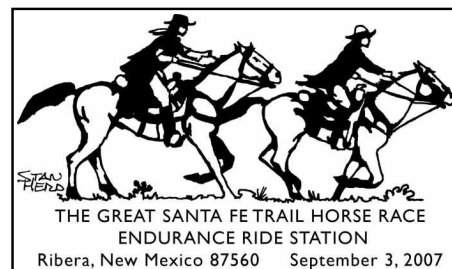


The above artist sketch depicts a race village. The Flint Hills will be featured during the two-night stay in Council Grove on Sept. 11-12. Courtesy Great Santa Fe Trail Horse Race

artist Stan Herd. Council Grove will have special cancellations on September 11 - 12.

The riders will complete the specified distance for the day then stop and spend the night at the race village. Each rider's time will be recorded and accumulated for end of the race. The rider with the shortest time overall will be declared the winner. In addition to an individual winner, team competitions will exist.

The two main objectives of the race are to educate the public about historic Santa Fe Trail as well as to introduce the sport of endurance riding to thousands.



Stan Herd of Lawrence, KS has designed the Pony Express cancellation stamp. Courtesy Great Santa Fe Trail Horse Race

a number of conveniences for the contestants.

There will be seven stops in Kansas, with 10 nights being slept under our heavens. Three Kansas towns will have a two-night stay - Dodge City on Sept. 7-8, Council Grove on Sept. 11-12 and Gardner on Sept. 14-15.

The US Postal Service will be recreating the

## Heritage Conference Slated for Oct. 19

Mark your calendars for the first annual Flint Hills Heritage Conference, Oct. 19 at the Chase County Community Building in Cottonwood Falls.

This is an opportunity to educate Flint Hills residents of the rich heritage we enjoy and energize all to support the idea of a Flint Hills National Heritage Area.

The conference will give

communities within the region an opportunity to share their Flint Hills heritage. Each county will be allotted time to offer an overview of their area.

Booth space will also be available to each of the 22 counties in the Coalition for \$35, to highlight their attractions, communities and organizations.

Speakers will include: Becky Blake, Director of

Kansas Travel & Tourism; Richard Smalley, Tourism Marketing Manager from the Kansas Department of Commerce; Senator Nick Jordan, 10th District; Dr. Jim Hoy, professor of English and the Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at Emporia State University; Dr. William Smith, Professor of Management and Director, Conference — continued on page 5

Summer 2007

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### QUICK LINKS:

- Flint Hills Tourism Coalition [www.kansasflinthills.travel](http://www.kansasflinthills.travel)
- Kansas Sampler Foundation [www.kansasampler.org](http://www.kansasampler.org)
- Kansas Historical Society [www.kshs.org](http://www.kshs.org)
- Kansas Department of Travel & Tourism [www.travelks.com](http://www.travelks.com)
- Kansas Nature Based Tourism [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us)



# Symphony in the Flint Hills Steals the Show — Encore!

*Wabaunsee County hosts over 6,800 concert goers.*

By Jim and Cathy Hoy

The first annual Symphony in the Flint Hills, held a year ago at the National Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Chase County, earned an award as the top tourist attraction in Kansas. Building on that momentum, the resounding success of the 2007 Symphony in the Flint Hills became nearly a foregone conclusion when the Kansas City Symphony reported that all 5,000 tickets were sold in less than one day.

The day of the concert was one of those rare days in June that poets have so famously celebrated and the music was every bit as rare and beautiful as the day.

Held in the Wade Pasture, a square mile of Wabaunsee County native bluestem grass owned by the Schwarting family, the event and its many satellite components exceeded expectations in every way. The weather was perfect — slightly overcast with a light

breeze and the temperature in the mid-80s.

Despite being hampered by wet ground, the various crews had everything in place and ready to go when the first concert goers began to arrive in early afternoon. The view was spectacular, with rolling hills on all sides and Lake Wabaunsee visible a mile to the north.

In the weeks leading up to the Symphony,

Beginning at 2 pm, the three educational tents began a series of programs on Natural and Native American History, Wabaunsee County History and Flint Hills Ranching History and Culture. These 22 separate presentations ran until 6 pm, and played to full houses.

There were also tents where Symphony in the Flint Hills and Kansas Park Trust were

selling books, posters and other materials related to the symphony or the Flint Hills. The original paintings by ten prominent Kansas artists, from which the commemorative poster was chosen, were offered at silent auction, and all but two exceeded the base price.

Concert goers bought tokens (at \$2 each) with which they could purchase the program, "Symphony in the Flint Hills 2007 Almanac," an 80+ page glossy publication that contained articles on Flint Hills geography, wildlife, Wabaunsee County history, Flint Hills



**Total admiration** – There was so much to admire at the Wade Pasture in Wabaunsee County. The Kansas Flint Hills put on their best show of wildflowers, native grasses and sheer beauty. The outriders and concert goers only added to the beauty. *Photo courtesy of Soden Photography* [www.sodenphotography.com](http://www.sodenphotography.com)



**Sunflowers, straw and symphony** – A wildflower bouquet, complete with our state flower, sits atop a row of straw bales - also symbolic of Kansas's wheat - which form the outer boundaries of the symphony seating area. *Photo courtesy of Linda Hanney.*

each town in Wabaunsee County —Alma, Alta Vista, Eskridge, Harveyville, Lake Wabaunsee, Maple Hill, and Paxico —began sprucing up and planning events and programs to celebrate the occasion. Early reports indicate that these events were quite popular, with many visitors stopping on their way to the concert site to enjoy, among other things, art exhibitions, a showing of the *National Geographic* Flint Hills photographs, historical museums and displays, nature walks, ranch tours, picnics and cowboy music and poetry.

Early arrivals at the concert site took advantage of guided wildflower walks, covered wagon rides and first-person historical interpretations. Or they lounged in the big tent and looked over exhibits by Audubon of Kansas, the Kansas Native Plant Society, the Kansas Geological Survey, the Wabaunsee County Historical Society, the Kansas Astronomical Organizations, Kansas Watersheds, or one of three Conservation Easement Programs: The Nature Conservancy, Kansas Land Trust, and Kansas Ranchland Trust.



**Tradition and colors fly** – A mounted color guard contingent from Ft. Riley display the flags of our land. The riders and a chuck wagon crested on a distant hill and created a picture from the past. *Photo courtesy of Linda Hanney.*

music traditions and ranching, in addition to program notes and information about the Kansas City Symphony. The program also listed the many volunteers, sponsors, patrons

**Symphony — continued on page 5**

## FLINT HILLS EVENTS

- Jul 5- Aug 16** **Wrapped In Pride, Arkansas City**
- Jul 5-16** **Traveling Exhibit from Mid-American Arts Alliance, Arkansas City**
- Jul 20-22** **Special Olympics Kansas State Softball/Golf Tournaments, Arkansas City**
- Jul 26-Aug 5** **Lyon County Free Fair, Emporia**
- Jul 26-29** **Prairie Port Festival, El Dorado**
- Jul 28** **Flint Hills Death Ride, Madison**
- Aug 2-6** **Cowley County Fair, Winfield**
- Aug 3-5** **Goessel Threshing Days, Marion**
- Aug 3-29** **Kansas Art Guild Exhibit, El Dorado**
- Aug 10** **Opening 100 Year-old Santa Fe Trail Buried Chest, Council Grove**
- Aug 17-19** **Flint Hills Beef Fest, Emporia**
- Aug 17-19** **K&O Steam and Gas Engine Show, Winfield**
- Aug 31** **"Smokin' Behind the Barn" BBQ Cook-off, Winfield**
- Sept 1-Oct 31** **K is for Kansas, Arkansas City**
- Sept 1-3** **Annual Atlanta Labor Day Celebration, Atlanta**
- Sept 1-3** **Labor Day Celebration, Florence**
- Sept 1-3** **Labor Day Weekend Quilt Show, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve**
- Sept 5-27** **"Small Grandeurs", El Dorado**
- Sept 8** **Junior Rodeo, Arkansas City**

## Tourism and Preserving Flint Hills Heritage

By Dennis Toll

The Kansas Flint Hills rise above the ordinary. These ancient grass-covered hills occupy a significant and historic place within the list of great American landscapes. Whether it's through the beauty of their rolling vistas or through the preservation of the native tallgrass prairie that once dominated Middle America, the Flint Hills form a very important place in the heartland of this country.

For this and so much more the Kansas Flint Hills are loved and appreciated by many who live within their borders.

This great landscape, however, is threatened on many fronts, by pressures from development and opportunist who would sacrifice what makes the Flint Hills great for short-term gains.

Once before, more than a century before, the tallgrass prairie was threatened by expanding development. It was the ranchers of the Kansas Flint Hills, however, that stepped up to preserve the prairie through ranching practices that made raising cattle a profitable business and respected the landscape.

In 2005, however, the Flint Hills found an unlikely ally in the form of a group of tourism marketers and local economic development specialists. With the encouragement of Kansas governor Kathleen Sebelius, this group formed the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition, with the stated purpose of improving the economic base of the region and the state through the promotion and marketing of the Kansas Flint Hills as a destination for heritage tourism.

As this coalition from 22 counties grew and evolved, the members – like ranchers a century ago – began to understand that to successfully market the Flint Hills, it would be necessary to preserve and protect what makes the hills unique in the story of American heritage. The coalition, like so many of the region's inhabitants, wants to avoid being overrun by mobs of unappreciative tourists that have little regard for the local way of life.

Instead, the coalition wants to target a growing market in American travel: the heritage visitor who appreciates the authentic landscape and history of the region. These visitors come in smaller numbers but have a larger economic impact on the region because they hunger for authentic experiences and

will actively seek them out.

For this reason, the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition looks to encourage, develop, promote, and market heritage tourism within the region. If developed correctly, heritage tourism means low impact on the landscape, but big gains for local economies. The coalition seeks to promote those themes and stories that make the Flint Hills unique, including the history of the cattle ranching industry and the preservation of the native tallgrass prairie through control burning and grazing.

This effort also involves education as the coalition seeks to educate the region's residents as well as its visitors about the national significance of this unique landscape. The overarching goal of the coalition and its members is to tell the story of the Flint Hills in a way that honors their inhabitants and uplifts visitors, while preserving that story for future generations.

Part of this effort by the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition is to determine the feasibility of becoming a federally recognized heritage area. A heritage area is simply a partnership of local residents, property owners, businesses, and local governments to preserve a unique landscape – like the Flint Hills – and share the story of that landscape with others.

When these local partners work together towards that common goal, the federal government can offer a special recognition that the local efforts are worthy of help. This involves no federal ownership of land, nor does it involve outside control of the landscape. The local agencies and residents work together to protect their heritage and educate the rest of the country on what they have, to the benefit of all.

In the next issue of *The Flint Hills Heritage Newsletter*, we will describe in more detail what it means to have this designation as a heritage area and what benefits and challenges such a designation could bring. Regardless of whether a heritage area designation is feasible or desirable, the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition is already at work to identify what makes the Flint Hills unique, to challenge residents to honor and value that story and to share the story with visitors who will appreciate what they discover here.

For additional information about the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition please visit [www.kansasflinthills.travel](http://www.kansasflinthills.travel).



## Flint Hills Events (Cont.)

- Sept 8 **The American Indian & Bison, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve**
- Sept 10-12 **Great Santa Fe Trail Race Village, Council Grove**
- Sept 12-16 **36th Annual Walnut Valley Festival, Winfield**
- Sept 15 **Hillsboro Arts and Crafts Fair, Hillsboro**
- Sept 15 **Art in the Park and Craft Show, Marion**
- Sept 15 **Open Car Show, El Dorado**
- Sept 15 **Dodge Charger Rally, El Dorado**
- Sept 16 **Cherokee Strip Land Rush Museum Pioneer Festival, Arkansas City**
- Sept 21-23 **Last Run Car Show, Arkansas City**
- Sept 22 **Partners for the Prairie Annual Celebration, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve**
- Sept 22 **Fall Nature Day and Monarch Butterfly Tagging, Arkansas City**
- Sept 28-30 **Dream Ride in the Flint Hills, Cottonwood Falls**
- Sept 28-30 **Old Settlers' Day, Marion**
- Sept 28-30 **Black Dog Festival, Dexter**
- Sept 28-30 **World Karting Association Grand Nationals, Winfield**
- Sept 29 **Elk River Festival, Howard**
- Sept 29 **Walnut River Festival, El Dorado**

# Flint Hills Overland Wagon Train Marks 30th Anniversary of Sharing Pioneer Experience

By Jeff Davidson

The Flint Hills Overland Wagon Train recently moved to the Council Grove area for its' 30th year of operation. Located a few scenic miles southwest of historic Council Grove, the wagon train continues to offer weekend pioneer excursions. reminiscent of the hundreds of thousands of covered wagons rolling through Council Grove along the Santa Fe Trail.

The weekend of June 23-24, a family of Californians met with a group from Lawrence beside the Custer Elm.

A few minutes later they were given a short safety talk about horses and wagons, and then sailed by "prairie schooner"

across the tallgrass prairie of Kansas.

"Bob, Bill – step up," were the words wagon master Derral Sommerfeld repeated each time he wanted his horses to start the wagon. Bob and Bill are a pair of smart stepping blonde Belgians that move their covered wagon with ease across the plains.

The weekend pioneers became acquainted with prairie wildflowers and learned how Native Americans and early pioneers used the plants to enrich their daily lives.

Arriving at camp in late afternoon, they were treated to a hearty supper of "son of a

gun" stew, sow belly and beans, dutch oven cornbread and cobbler.

Following the evening meal, the modern pioneers participated in singing around the campfire and listening to stories of Kansas history.

With the open prairie as a backdrop, a breakfast of dutch oven baked biscuits with gravy, scrambled eggs and bacon started their Sunday morning. They participated in a short

devotional time, practiced their roping skills and headed out for another short wagon ride across the plains.

Lunch completed their journey, and they were on their respective ways, feeling more connected with their ancestors who had made a

much longer, but similar trip, 150 years ago.

The Flint Hills Overland Wagon Train maintains an office in El Dorado and can be reached at 316-321-6300, or their website at [www.wagontrainkansas.com](http://www.wagontrainkansas.com).

Besides their scheduled weekend trips, they are available for day long excursions, and offer group rates for school groups, seniors, scouting or tour groups. They are experts at transporting you back in time to the days of the open range, to covered wagons and cowboys.

It's a great place to be.



**The sounds of the prairie** – With the towering Cottonwoods rustling their silver-bellied leaves in the background and the soft whispers of the Prairie Coneflowers dancing before them, wagon train participants are introduced to a side of the prairie they may have never experienced before. *Photo courtesy of [www.wagontrainkansas.com](http://www.wagontrainkansas.com).*

## Bird Watcher's Digest Features "Prairie Parkway"

The July/August edition of Bird Watcher's Digest features the Tallgrass "Prairie Parkway" Wildlife and Natural Heritage trail in the Flint Hills and Chautauqua Hills of Kansas and eighteen other North American birding trails.

As outdoor writer Mel White of Little Rock, Arkansas outlines for the publication's 60,000 subscribers, "from Louisiana to



Scissor-tailed flycatcher

Alaska, there's more reasons than ever to hit the birding trail."

The trail was developed by Audubon of Kansas. A state map sized photography-studded publication provides details on 48 major areas of natural, cultural and historic attractions in the fourth of the state characterized by scenic and pastoral prairie land-

*Birding — continued on page 5*

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXHIBIT SCHEDULE

**JULY 16-22  
HUTCHINSON**

**JULY 23-AUG 5  
EMPORIA**

**AUG 6-19  
MARSHALL COUNTY**

**AUG 20-SEPT 2  
WAMEGO**

**SEPT 7-16  
KANSAS STATE FAIR  
(HUTCHINSON)**

**SEPT 17-30  
HAYS**

**OCT 1-10  
EL DORADO**

**OCT 15-NOV 11  
WICHITA**

**NOV 12-DEC 2  
ABILENE**

**DEC 3-17  
JUNCTION CITY**

## Walnut Valley Festival Announces 2007 Performers

**Cowley County hosts 36th annual Bluegrass event Sept. 12-16**

Coordinators for the Walnut Valley Festival have released the list of performers for this fall's 36th annual festival. The 2007 lineup will include a number of Walnut Valley regulars but will also include a higher than average number of first-time artists.

Among the new faces to appear at Winfield will be multi-award winning singer, songwriter and vocalist Ronnie Bowman. Ronnie has received considerable recognition including five International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) awards, including IBMA's coveted "Male Vocalist of the Year" not once but twice.

Bowman has also been credited with songwriting success for penning chart topping songs recorded by Lee Ann Womack and country superstars Brooks and Dunn.

Other fresh faces to be featured on the

Walnut Valley will include Alicia Nugent, The Kenny and Amanda Smith Band, The Old 78's, Out of the Blue Band, The Wiyos, Michael Reno Harrell, Woods Tea Company, and Brad Davis, Tim May and John Moore.

Returnees for 2007 include fan favorites such as The David Munnelly Band, John McCutcheon, The Wilders, Tommy Emmanuel, Marley's Ghost and Beppe Gambetta.

Dates for the 36th annual Walnut Valley Festival are September 12-16, 2007. Fans can find additional festival information by going to the official Walnut Valley Festival

website at [www.wvfest.com](http://www.wvfest.com)

Advance tickets are available by calling the Walnut Valley Festival office at 620-221-3250.



**Emmanuel returns in 2007** – Since 2000, Australian Tommy Emmanuel has been entertaining Bluegrass fans with his Chet Atkins-style picking at the Walnut Valley Festival. *Photo courtesy Tommy Emmanuel.*

### Birding — continued from page 4

scapes. Supplies are available from Audubon of Kansas by contacting [aok@audubonofkansas.org](mailto:aok@audubonofkansas.org), 785-537-4385.

As stated in the Digest: "The Tallgrass 'Prairie Parkway' trail runs more or less north to south from Nebraska to Oklahoma in the east-central part of Kansas. The route passes through the Flint Hills, the largest tract of intact or near-intact tallgrass prairie left in the United States. It's an area the size of



*Booming Greater Prairie Chickens*

Vermont.

Among the birds nesting here are greater prairie-chickens, poor-will, upland sandpiper, scissor-tailed flycatchers, Bell's vireo, dickcissel, and Henslow's and grasshopper sparrows. In winter, rough-legged hawk and Harris's sparrow are two of many visitors.

The Tallgrass 'Prairie Parkway' Birding and Natural Heritage Trail leads travelers to sprawling Tuttle Creek Reservoir, the beautiful Konza Prairie Research Natural Area, the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, and Flint Hills National Wildlife Refuge."



*"Here at the café, we have a gentleman from Iowa that comes back here every year. He can not stay away from the Flint Hills.*

*He was here... stationed here during the war in the 1940s, during World War II. And then he ended up living in Iowa. But, he comes back, and he comes to our café, once a year, he has to come back, he says, to these Flint Hills, 'cause he said there is something about these Flint Hills that he cannot stay away from.*

*And he says, some Indian told him one time that it was "freedom" — and that is what he came back to the Flint Hills for.*

*So, I thought that was interesting and something important to share with the rest of the world."*

**Shirley McClintock, on the Kansas Flint Hills, from the Trail Days Bakery Café at the Terwilliger Home in Council Grove (Apr 2007)**

*The Flint Hills Heritage Task Force Oral History Project is partially funded by the Kansas Humanities County.*

and others who helped make this complicated undertaking a success.

Tokens were also used to buy food and drinks. General food service was provided by Puffy's Steak House of Maple Hill and Bad Old Bern's Barbecue of Emporia, while the Flying W Ranch of Cedar Point catered for the Patron Tent. Diners there were entertained with traditional music by the Tallgrass Express.

What might have been an afterthought, considering the popularity of all the preliminary activities, was actually the highlight of the day (as, of course, it should be) — the concert itself. Following an inspirational welcome by Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius, the musical program, entitled "Reflections on the Prairie," under the baton of Damon Gupton, began with Aaron Copland's "An Outdoor Overture."

## **Wah-Shun-Gah Days — Attendance Numbers Down, Overall Dollars Up**

Council Grove held its annual Wah-Shun-Gah Days Festival June 15-17. While the overall crowd numbers looked to be down, the amount of dollars spent was up.

"And — we sold more "tickets" (buttons) than last year. Maybe fewer people are spending more money," commented Kay Hutchinson, Executive Director of Council Grove/Morris County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

Wah-Shun-Gah Days are held the third full weekend in June each year, with next year's date being June 20-22. The festival recognizes the history of the Kanza tribe's activities in the Council Grove area, along with other historical elements within the area.



Tribe members compete in various dances at the pow-wow. Photo courtesy of Council Grove/Morris County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism

Followed by, among others, two movements from Dvorak's "New World Symphony," two other Copland pieces, and the folk song "Shenandoah," the music fit the surroundings perfectly.

Most popular with the crowd was Marvin Gruenbaum's rousing rendition of the country music fiddle tune, "Orange Blossom Special." The concert closed with music from the film "Dances with Wolves."

The concert ended around 8:45 pm, but the evening extended for another couple of hours with stargazing at the astronomy tent and dancing in the big tent to traditional western music by the Blackbury Band. Traffic exiting from the site moved smoothly with no bottlenecks or waiting, bringing the evening to a smooth and satisfying close.

Mark your calendars for June 14, 2008, when next year's Symphony in the Flint Hills will be held in Morris County.

## **Conference — continued from page 1**

Center for Business and Economic Development in the School of Business at Emporia State University and Dennis Toll, Tourism Sales Manager for the Manhattan Convention and visitors Bureau.

For additional information about the conference or the speakers, or to download a registration form, go to: [www.kansasflinthills.travel](http://www.kansasflinthills.travel).

This is Vol. 1, Issue 1 of the Flint Hills Heritage Newsletter.

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