



FALL 2025: IN REVIEW

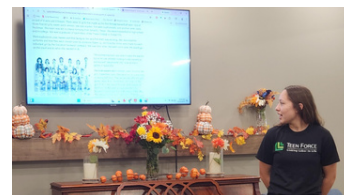
CHAPMAN CENTER FOR RURAL STUDIES

COMMUNITY-POWERED HISTORY

The launch of SpearvilleHistory.com stands as the premier achievement of the Fall 2025 semester. This project represents a sustained partnership between the Chapman Center, the Spearville Township Library, the Ford County Historical Society, Teen Force, and the Tom Feist Foundation. Rather than simply documenting a town from the outside, this initiative provided the mentorship for Spearville to tell its own story through a digital lens.

The official web launch took place this past November at Southwind at Spearville, bringing the research directly to the community.

The presentation showcased a unique intergenerational mentorship, as K-State students Alex Peck, Graham Bajnauth, and Audrey Poulson worked alongside Spearville High School Teen Force interns Marcella Shirai, Cashen Padilla, and Kyla Schauvliege to reveal a digital time capsule and an interactive timeline. A major highlight included Marcella's deep-dive into Lancer Athletics, which combined yearbook archives with oral histories to document the evolution of local sports.



The momentum from the launch continues as our team, including Hannah Palsa and Katie Cortez, expands the archive's reach. We are currently collaborating with Annalise Mercer, Fort Hays State University, and the Ford County Historical Society to digitize decades of Spearville yearbooks, supported by the leadership of community volunteers Mary Scharts and Cathy Mages. Designed as a living archive, the portal remains a collaborative space for residents to contribute photos and stories, ensuring a permanent digital home for the history of the City of Wind and Wheat.

MAPPING THE PAST

CCRS scholar Steven Walsh made significant strides this semester in documenting the 130-mile Military Road that once served as the vital artery between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley. This research reached a major milestone this November with the publication of his featured article, "**Lifeline of Northeast Kansas: The Military Road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley 1853-1866**," in the Riley County Genealogical Society's journal, *Kansas Kin*.

Steven's work provides an in-depth look at how this transit route shaped the development of our region. Due to the incredible depth of his research, the article is being released as a two-part series. The first installment is featured in the November 2025 issue, with the conclusion set to appear in the next edition in May of this year. We are extremely proud of Steven for this professional achievement, which makes his research accessible to historians and local residents across the state.



One of the historical markers documented during the Military Road project



Steven receiving recognition from the American Legion of Wamego

Beyond the trails, Steven also spearheaded a vital preservation effort for the American Legion in Wamego. Founded in 1929 as one of the first posts in Kansas, the Legion's records offer a rare look at a century of veteran life. Steven digitized a massive collection of documents, ranging from bi-monthly meeting minutes to personal member petitions for VA medical care and tombstones. By transferring these records to a digital drive for the Post, we have ensured that future generations can truly understand and honor the veterans who served before them.

View more of Steven's research on our digital projects page:

<https://ccrsdigitalprojects.com/projects/fort-leavenworth-to-fort-riley-military-road>

HANDS-ON HISTORY

Our partnership with the Koester House Museum Foundation and the K-State History Department has moved from strategic planning into active, hands-on preservation. PhD student Kenzie Jansonius and senior Gabriella Randall have spent the semester providing vital support for this beautifully preserved Victorian mansion in Marysville. A major focus of this collaboration is the museum's upcoming 150th anniversary in July 2026, honoring the legacy of Charles and Sylvia Koester.

The semester was highlighted by engaging community programming and rare archival discoveries. Kim Houtz Hiller, Board President of the Koester House Museum Foundation, led a successful "Spooky Tea" event, which featured a presentation by Kenzie on the Victorian Gothic tales that inspired modern horror films.



A successful Spooky Tea at the Koester House Museum



Marla Day (KSU), Sarah Morrison (Koester family), and graduate student Hannah Palsa unboxing Sylvia Koester's Victorian dresses

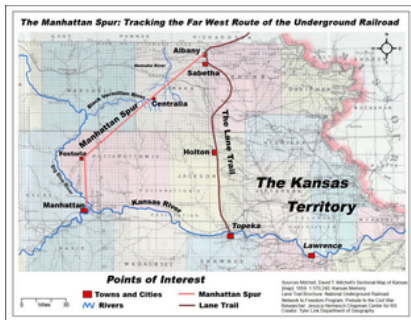
In the archives, Hannah Palsa worked alongside Marla Day, Director of the KSU Costume Museum, to begin unboxing and documenting a collection of historic dresses belonging to Sylvia Koester. We are grateful to Cliff Hight and the University Archives for their work digitizing Charles Koester's personal diaries. These efforts in programming and digitization ensure that the Koester family's remarkable history is ready for the spotlight in 2026.

BUILDING A VIBRANT NATION

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the United States, the Chapman Center is partnering with the Polly Ogden Chapter of the DAR, the Konza Prairie Quilters Guild, and the Riley County Genealogical Society for a community-wide quilt square competition.

Students from every elementary school in Manhattan are being challenged to brainstorm what it means to build a "vibrant nation."

Two winning squares from each school will be stitched into a commemorative quilt, which will be prominently displayed at the Flint Hills Discovery Center this June and July. This project connects our youngest citizens with the legacy of America 250, proving that history is something we continue to build together.



This map from our Walking Through History project shows two routes of the Underground Railroad in KS.

Our Walking Through History initiative also continues to grow, transforming local landscapes into open-air museums. As a cornerstone of our America 250 programming, these guided tours will use physical movement and digital storytelling to explore the local stories that shaped the American narrative. Together with the quilt project, these efforts ensure our national anniversary is rooted in the deep history and local pride of the Great Plains.

PRESERVING A LEGACY

As the Symphony in the Flint Hills celebrated its 20th anniversary and its beautiful final chapter this year, the Chapman Center was honored to be named the primary steward of its digital legacy. While the physical event concluded in 2025, its spirit lives on through the preservation of its archives.



The Chapman Center will help to preserve the web presence of the Symphony in the Flint Hills, ensuring that two decades of art, music, and prairie fellowship remain accessible to the public.



This includes making the iconic Field Journals available online. The Center will allow the digitized essays, poetry, and art that gives voice to the Tallgrass Prairie to remain present. By curating this "living memory," we are proud to help the SFH story continue, honoring the deep history and limitless vitality of this rare Kansas landscape for years to come.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND IMPORTANT DATES

FEBRUARY

Feb. 13: K-State College of Arts and Sciences Engagement Symposium

Feb. 18: Past Perfect Workshop - Spearville, KS
Digitization day - Jetmore, KS

MARCH

March 5: Chapman Research Showcase

APRIL

April 9: Undergraduate Poster Workshop Session

April 18: KSU Open House

April 23: Undergraduate Research Symposium

April 26: Kansas Science Festival

MAY

May 2: Flint Hills Festival

JUNE

June 3-5: 4-H Discovery Days

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 18-19: Chataqua City Park

If you are interested in a visit from the Chapman Center, please contact at chapmancenter@ksu.edu for digitization days, information on internship partnerships with K-State, talks on the ghost towns of Kansas, the language of Kansans, archiving techniques, and much more.



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Our newly redesigned page with a new URL:

k-state.edu/chapman

Visit our new websites:



Digital Projects



Lost Communities



Kansas Treaties