Douglas County Historical Society Watkins Museum of History 2021 Annual Report



WATKINS MUSEUM of HISTORY

DISCOVER THE REAL STORY



In April 2021, the Granada featured the Watkins Museum on one of their rotating signs to support local businesses.

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Cover photo: The museum's "Then and Now" photo series has been popular on social media. The historic photo is of a march on April 6, 1968 in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Image courtesy of the University of Kansas Archives.

From the DCHS President, Abby Ehling

2021 brought many firsts for the Watkins Museum. For the first time in the history of the museum, we hosted a ticketed traveling exhibit called *Encountering John Brown*. Available throughout the fall, this exhibit brought in almost 1,800 visitors. The exhibit generated record-breaking retail sales for the museum too!

In an effort to promote this exhibit, the staff implemented new marketing strategies - banners on Mass Street, online advertising, and even a billboard on I-70. Also in 2021, the museum launched a new radio program on KLWN, and created a video series featuring board members talking about their favorite exhibit or artifact. All exciting new ways to reach different audiences.



Additionally, the museum hosted twelve other excellent gallery exhibits. Lawrence and Douglas County have so many stories to tell from a variety of perspectives, and the museum continues to seek either loans or permanent donations to share those stories with the broader public.

The Watkins staff continued to provide innovative ways to engage with the public through online programs. While the year 2020 necessitated a need for a quick shift to virtual engagement, the online world became much easier to navigate in 2021. Live virtual school visits were new in 2021, as many schools continued to suspend in-person visits because of the pandemic.

While virtual programming is here to stay, we look forward to bringing back many more in-person events in 2022. We have appreciated your support through all the ups and downs of the last couple of years and cannot wait to see you at the museum soon.

From the Director, Steve Nowak

2021 was a year of experimentation—offering virtual fieldtrips, hosting a national traveling exhibition, expanding social media, even advertising on a billboard! This experimentation has helped us consider what the museum can and should become.

What we learned in 2021 will be the foundation for decisions about how we engage the public, the ways we present exhibitions, even the use of our building. What we experienced in 2021 also helped inform and expand what we know about our audiences and the needs of our community. Nationwide, 30% of museum visitors prefer or are interested in attending online programs. Locally, there is increased interest in Lawrence's social history and a growing concern about equity and inclusion. In response, the Watkins is exploring onsite/online hybrid programming and finding ways to invite community members to inform exhibit development.



2022 will see the emergence of new priorities, new partners, new programs—a new Watkins Museum! On behalf of the DCHS Board of Directors and the museum staff, I thank you for your support and encourage you to join with us on our journey.

Mission Statement:

The Douglas County Historical Society, operating the Watkins Museum of History, promotes civic engagement by supporting the preservation, research, and interpretation of county history through active exhibits and thought-provoking educational programs for the public.

Public Engagement

In 2021, Watkins public engagement staff continued efforts to provide our local and digital communities with unique, relevant, and meaningful experiences. We embarked on a wide range of events, always striving to promote the museum's exhibits and involve partners from across our region and beyond.

Highlights for the year included the continuance of the Portals to the Past and FREE History digital series, both of which tackled important issues like freedom and racism with the help of expert speakers. For instance, two online presentations by Asian American scholars confronted anti-Asian hate and offered insights on how to challenge it.

The special exhibit *Encountering John Brown* inspired fifteen different tie-in events, featuring guests ranging from YouTube star Mr. Beat to renowned novelist Russell Banks.

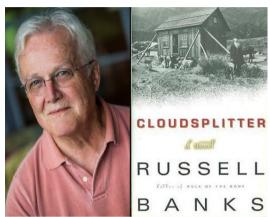
In October, we assisted with planning and promotion for 51 Years OUT!, in which 17 different community groups joined forces for a weeklong commemoration of the Lawrence Gay Liberation Front.

The support of Watkins members enabled these events and the rest of our programming lineup, and we are carrying this innovation forward into 2022.

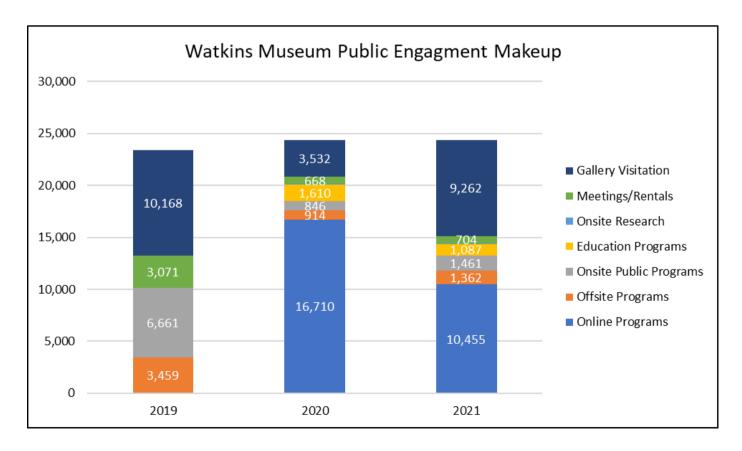
2021 Engagements

Visitation: 9,262
Meetings/Space Rentals: 704
Research: 59
Programming (in-person and

online): 14,365 Total: 24,390



In partnership with the Lawrence Arts Center, author Russell Banks spoke about his historical novel, Cloudsplitter, in connection to the Encountering John Brown exhibition.



Education and Program Partners

The spring of 2021 was filled with many field trips conducted through live video. These programs brought the museum education staff into classrooms throughout Douglas County and beyond. Summer events continued in a digital form, adhering to safety guidelines, and Student Advocates from area high schools assisted in creating amazing video content for Watkins Summer Games. In the fall we started returning to normal, with in-person John Brown field trips, Homeschool, and Tiny Tours, as well as on-site events for families like Halloween and Tails and Traditions. Between September and December over 1,000 young people and their families came to learn and play in the museum.



2021 Education Numbers

Digital Field Trips: 571 students
Onsite Field Trips: 187 students
School Visits: 250 students
Education Conferences and
Presentations: 79 participants
Total: 1,087 participants



Above: Lead Educator Amanda Hamilton Burkhart leads a live virtual education field trip with a group of local students.

Left: Homeschool students learn how to tell their story by making zines.

2021 Programming Partners and Sponsors

Anamcara Press Art in the Park **Baldwin City Public Library** Between the Rock and a Hard Place Black Jack Battlefield and Nature Park Center for East Asian Studies, KU City of Lawrence Clinton Lake Historical Society Department of African and African American Studies, KU Department of History, KU Department of Museum Studies, KU Downtown Lawrence, Inc. **Emily Taylor Center for Women and** Gender Equity eXplore Lawrence Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area Friends of Oak Hill Cemetery Guardians of Grover Barn Hall Center for the Humanities Heritage League of Greater Kansas City Humanities Kansas

Kansas Authors Club Kansas City Social Studies Consortium Kansas Museums Association Lawrence Arts Center Lawrence Arts Roundtable Lawrence Branch, NAACP Lawrence Community Orchestra Lawrence Magazine Lawrence Parks and Recreation Department Leadership Lawrence League of Women Voters **Lumberyard Arts Center** Nuestra Herencia KC **Overland Traveling Exhibits** Santa Fe Trail Association Spencer Museum of Art The Eldridge Hotel The Learning Collaborative KC The Raven Book Store Theatre Lawrence TreanorHL











Collections and Research

2021 saw significant additions that broadened the representation of the Lawrence community. In early 2021 Dana Lattin donated papers relating to the creation of the Ryan Gray playground in the Hillcrest Neighborhood. The Ryan Gray playground was the first children's play area in Lawrence designed with accessibility features so that children in wheelchairs could join in play. Materials and images loaned for the exhibit Feels Like Family: Lawrence's Early Mexican Restaurants were donated by the Leon "Chico" and Erminia "Ermie" Garcia family. This donation, which included a pitcher from the city's first Mexican restaurant, broadened our understanding of how the city's culinary history changed in the 20th century. Gary Davis, a former North Lawrence resident, donated over 200 photos of his family, ancestors, and North Lawrence community members. These images provide insight into the lives of Black citizens in North Lawrence from the 1870s until the 1990s.

Notable collections of 2021:

- An extensive photo collection from the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, 1950s-1960s.
- Art pieces made by Ursula Minor, Rachel Trusty, and Ethan Horatio Anderson for the museum's 2020 exhibit commemorating the 150th anniversary of the 15th Amendment were added to the museum's collection in 2021.
- Mary Ward Smith Means, Pasture by the Sea, 1874.
 Oil on Canvas. Museum Purchase, 2021.057.001

Research Highlights:

Most research requests include queries for all types of collection materials, but the three most popular include:

- Topic or event requests: 92 of 223 requests (41%)
- Property-related requests: 73 of 223 requests (33%)
- Photograph/image requests: 33 of 223 requests (15%)

Significant requests:

- Provided 39 digital images for the Lawrence Douglas County Public Health Department's submission for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health Award. LDCPH's submittal included a short film that was partially filmed in the Watkins Museum.
- Identification of Lawrence locations linked to segregation for the Lawrence Arts Center's Ghost of Segregation exhibit and programs.

"Hot Topics of 2021"

- African Americans in Douglas County
- Shunganunga Boulder
- The Day After movie
- Human Relations Commission/Race Relations

2021 Research Services Statistics

Research requests: 223
Research appointments: 59
Hours of research: 622
Photographs reproduced: 231
Documents reproduced: 619



Pitcher used at El Tampico, the first Mexican restaurant in Lawrence. Donated by the Garcia family.



Photograph of the congregation at the First Regular Missionary Baptist Church in North Lawrence. Part of the Gary Davis collection.



East side of the 800 block of Vermont Street, looking north, ca. 1962-1963. Today, this same perspective is of a large parking lot behind the shops on the 800 block of Massachusetts Street.

Exhibitions

Many of the exhibits in 2021 celebrated anniversaries. Commemorations of the Parks and Recreation Department's 75th anniversary, the 51st anniversary of the Lawrence Gay Liberation Front, the centennial anniversary of the Friends in Council literary society, and the 100th anniversary of Lawrence Memorial Hospital filled museum galleries.

Changing Exhibitions

- Days of Rage (June 2020 - February 2021)
- Training Wheels: Children's Toys and Lawrence History (September 2020 March 2021)
- The 15th Amendment at 150: The Art of Voting (October 2020 May 2021)
- Community Construction: The People and Companies that Built Lawrence (February 2021 - October 2021)
- Opal Jayne Kennedy: Lawrence's Legendary Educator (March 2021 - September 2021)
- Field Days: 75 Years of Lawrence's Parks and Recreation (April 2021 - May 2021)
- Feels Like Family: Lawrence's Early Mexican Restaurants (May 2021 - October 2021)
- John Brown's War: Bleeding Kansas and the Battle of Black Jack (July 2021 - October 2021)
- Armed with Knowledge: The Scientific Testing of Old Sacramento (September 2021 - February 2022)
- Not a Straight Path: The Fight for Queer Rights in Lawrence (October 2021 - March 2022)
- A Century of Care: The History of Lawrence Memorial Hospital (November 2021 - April 2022)
- Dear Friends: Lawrence's Literary Societies (November 2021 - May 2022)

2021 Loans for Exhibits

In 2021, the Watkins Museum partnered with LMH Health to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Lawrence Memorial Hospital.

The Watkins Museum partnered with Felicia Miller, daughter of Leon "Chico" and Erminia "Ermie" Garcia, on a display about the family's restaurants and businesses.

For the past four years, the Watkins Museum has displayed the exhibit *Freedom Day: The History of Juneteenth*, created by Tamara Cash in partnership with Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area and Humanities Kansas. We were proud to share the display in the year Juneteenth became a national holiday.

Encountering John Brown

Number of days on display: 66 Tickets sold: 1,601 Exhibit visitors: 1,798 Gross revenue: \$28,862.48 Net revenue: \$12,686.40



The traveling exhibit Encountering John Brown debuted at the Watkins Museum in fall 2021 and was the first ticketed exhibition held at the museum, drawing in almost 1,800 people to visit.



Members of the literary club Friends in Council celebrated their 150th anniversary with the opening of the exhibit, *Dear Friends*, at the Watkins Museum.



The exhibit A Century of Care featured several artifacts and photographs from Lawrence Memorial Hospital.

Facilities and Volunteers

The Watkins Museum underwent a number of facility improvements in 2021. These projects enhanced the museum experience for our visitors and improved visitor safety or building efficiency.

Introduction of UVC lighting in the playhouse provided a simple and ever-present way to disinfect the 1870s playhouse. Fixtures on timers periodically emit UVC light, which kills microbes but does not penetrate surfaces, disinfecting the playhouse and keeping the youngest museum visitors safer while they play. This installation, the first of its type in the state of Kansas, was funded by a distribution of CARES funding from Douglas County.

Installation of motion-sensing light switches in the public restrooms and LED light bulbs in the chandeliers in the galleries made lighting more efficient and energy-saving while improving the appearance of the galleries. All incandescent lighting has been removed from public areas and a consistent light color makes public areas more welcoming and the exhibits look their best.

New shelving in the museum's bookshop area created a more compact, appealing, and accessible display of books and other merchandise. The shelves included lighting which brightens the museum entrance and highlights merchandise. In 2021, retail sales experienced a recordbreaking peak during the traveling exhibition, *Encountering John Brown*.

Replacement of the outdated "crash bar" sensor on the elevator door with an infrared motion sensor brought this aspect of the elevator up to current standards. This is the first of many improvements the elevator will need to make it fully compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act.

2021 Volunteer Numbers

Front door and education volunteers: 16
Hours worked: 1,577

Exhibit volunteers: 28 Hours worked: 660

Total volunteers: 44
Total hours worked: 2,237



Check out the museum merchandise at the new bookshelf by the front door.



Doug Tyler and his service dog-intraining, Jace, greet visitors at the front door in fall 2021.

Volunteers

In 2021, 44 volunteers provided 2,237 volunteer hours for the museum in 2021. The national volunteer rate is \$28.54 per hour, which means our volunteers contributed an astounding \$64,000 to the museum through their time. We could not run our museum without the assistance of our volunteers!

Front Door & Education Volunteers

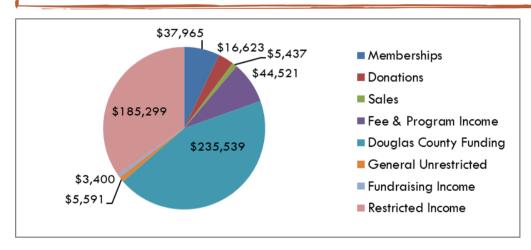
Rita Adame	Susie Nightingale
Noelle Bisson	Carola Ratzlaff
Marie Brockhoff	Mary Tallmon
Laura Burkhart	Ralph Tallmon
Ryan Dekat	Charlie Thomas
Jan Elder	Christine Traner
Tristan Hobbs	Doug Tyler
Ken Karr	
Paula Monroe	

Encountering John Brown Exhibit Volunteers

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Eric Anderson	Charles Jones	Julie Tı
Diana Carlin	Pat Kehde	Ka
Jerree Catlin	John Nalbandian	Car
Virgil Dean	Martin Owens	Dι
Sandra Gautt	Jim Peters	K
Tom Harper	Rosalea Postma-Carttar	Jer
Nate Holman	Gary Smith	Cł
Joni Hughes	Dustin Struble	J
Bud Jacobs	Lauren Taylor	В
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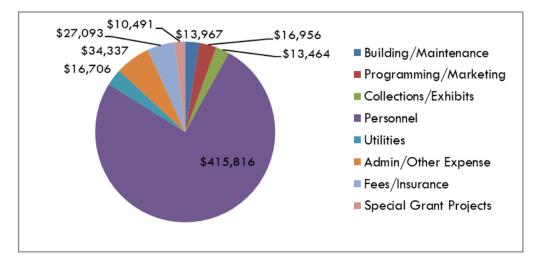
Grants and Financials

- Baldwin City Public Library, \$756.51 for programming support
- BNSF Railway Foundation, \$2,500 for third floor core exhibit
- City of Lawrence, \$13,000 to support marketing and social media outreach
- Douglas County Community Foundation, \$510 for Homeschool History program
- Douglas County Heritage Conservation Council Natural and Cultural Heritage Grant, \$15,000 for Embattled Lawrence
- Emprise Bank, \$1,000 for KLWN radio program
- Ethel and Raymond F. Rice Foundation, \$22,535 to support research services and internships
- Hall Center for the Humanities, \$10,000 for historic structure report of the Grover Barn
- Humanities Kansas Culture Preservation Grant, \$3,146 for processing of Glenn Kappelman collections
- Humanities Kansas SHARP Grant, \$9,216 for operations through the NEH's distribution of American Rescue Plan Act funds state humanities councils
- Institute of Museum and Library Services American Rescue Plan Act Grant, \$36,835 to support cataloging and digitizing collections materials and developing digital resources
- Lawrence Breakfast Optimist Club, \$500 for educational programming
- National Endowment for the Humanities American Rescue Plan Act Grant, \$49,759 to support development of an integrated series of field trip experiences at five heritage sites in Douglas County
- Network to Freedom, \$10,000 for historic structure report of the Grover Barn





FY 2021 Income: \$534,375





FY 2021 Expenses: \$548,830

Membership

The Douglas County Historical Society closed out 2021 with 357 members. Membership dues totaled \$37,965 for the year. Members also donated an additional \$17,520 that went toward the museum's general operating budget and donated \$64,096 to our third floor core exhibit capital campaign. In total, members contributed an impressive \$119,581 to the museum in 2021. We are so grateful to each of you for supporting the museum and enabling us to share and preserve the stories of local history. Thank you!

J. B. Watkins Fellows (\$<u>2,500+)</u> Kathleen & Bill Argersinger Judy & Dave Billings Tom Harper Nancy Helmstadter Carol Koenig Cathy Reinhardt & Norman St. Laurent Bill & Kathryn Tuttle Jeff & Mary Haynes Weinberg

Benefactor (\$1,000-\$2,499)

David & Mary Kate Ambler Katie Armitage Tom & Grace Carmody Jerree & Harley Catlin Patrick & Maureen Costello Michael & Kathleen Delaney Ann Gardner & Tom Gleason Sandra Gautt Web & Joan Golden Michael & JoAnn Hageman Jon & Barbara Heeb Emily Hill & Burke Griggs Pat & Ned Kehde David & Jennifer Little John Nalbandian Lew & Carolyn Phillips Ken & Mary Margaret Rowen Jeff & Suzi Sigler, Sigler Pharmacy Gary Mark Smith Steve & Pat Sublett John & Deanell Tacha

Patron (\$500-\$999) Mary & Brower Burchill Diana Carlin & Joe Pierron

Laurie Ward

Cindy Yulich,

Emprise Bank

Leslie E Christenson Janet Cinelli & Eric Ryan Amanda & Josh Davis Candice Davis Robert & Katherine Dinsdale Tom & Marilyn Dobski Aileen V. & Redman Callaway Fund Carolie Hougland Raymond & Mary Lee Hummert Jon & Vicki Jamison Abby & David Magariel Judy Niebaum & Dave Marden Roger & Sue Pine Kathleen & Gary Sebelius Dan Watkins Mike & Linda Wildgen Bart & Georgette Yost, Rumsey-Yost Funeral

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Norma Decker Hoagland Evan Holt Larry Irick Charles & Carol Jones Ken Karr Jeanne Klein Carol & Dave Kyner

Rachael Sudlow

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Scott & Kathleen Morgan

Carla Mumma

Membership

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Julie Taylor

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<u>Organizational Members</u> **Baldwin City Public Library** Downtown Lawrence, Inc. **Eudora Area Historical Society** eXplore Lawrence Franklin County Historical Society Johnson County Museum Kitchen 8 Lecompton Historical Society **New Generation Society** of Lawrence Riley County Museum Wakarusa River Valley Museum Wyandotte County Museum

Corporate Sponsors **Coneflower Consulting** Eldridge Hotel **Emprise Bank** Lawrence Business Magazine Lawrence Central Rotary McDaniel Knutson Financial **Partners ProPrint** TreanorHL

Community Outreach

The museum increased its media and community presence in creative ways in 2021, and resumed in person holiday traditions and popular annual events.



The traveling exhibition, Encountering John Brown, generated new ways to advertise and promote the museum, including a billboard on I-70 outside of Chapman, Kansas.



The museum launched a new radio program on KLWN, *Time Capsule with the Watkins Museum*, which airs every first and third Tuesday of the month and features stories of local history.



The museum started a new video series, Museum Minute, featuring board members talking about their favorite exhibit or artifact in the museum.



The weekly social media series featuring "Then and Now" photos connects the past to the present and has generated many new followers online.



The Watkins hosted its popular Halloween event in person this year, which drew in 547 children and families over 3 hours.



The museum held the annual family event Tails and Traditions on December 5, bringing in 299 visitors prior to the Old Fashioned Christmas Parade.