

# DONIPHAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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2021

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## News Notes

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**November 18 6:00**

## Musical Instruments in Doniphan County

by Wanda Olson and Melissa Blanton  
St. John's Lutheran Church, 102 Commercial, Bendena

Musical instruments can be cherished keepsakes passed down through generations, or a meaningful part of a church congregation's worship services. Many times, instruments are loved and played by many different hands over the years.

When a person decides to play an instrument, often there is a family story: a sibling who played the instrument, a distant relative who played the instrument or was a musician in some way, or even a whole family culture of playing instruments for many generations.

Our November meeting will be led by two accomplished local musicians, who will share some of their personal instruments and tell about many historical instruments they've played in Doniphan County. We are also inviting anyone with an instrument to bring it for show and share. Don't worry – you don't have to play it!

We will meet first in the sanctuary, and move to the basement for refreshments and business meeting. All are welcome!



### 2021 BOARD MEMBERS

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## THE GRAND ISLAND BRIDGE

*By Jason Midyette*

Travelers crossing the Missouri River on US 26 between Elwood and St Joseph may notice a rather rusty railroad bridge spanning the river to the north of the highway bridge. This is the “Grand Island Bridge” (known as such for the railroad that originally built and used it, the St. Joseph & Grand Island). While today it is almost an anachronism, the railroad bridge was once an important link in the area’s transportation system and something that no important and growing city wanted to be without. Northeast Kansas once had railroad bridges across the Missouri River at Leavenworth, Atchison and Elwood; today the Grand Island bridge is the only one in use.

The railroad that would become the St. Joseph & Grand Island began building track west from Elwood in 1860. Its first locomotive was brought across the Missouri River on a ferry, as was all of its rail and other track building supplies. Not until 1873 would a bridge be built across the river.

Like many early bridges across the Missouri River, the bridge that connected Elwood and St Joseph was not built by the railroad that would use it but by a company formed for the purpose of building the bridge. In this case, it was the St. Joseph Bridge Building Company, and \$500,000 of the over \$700,000 cost of the bridge was paid for by the City of St. Joseph, mostly through the issuance of city bonds. The general idea was that the Bridge Company would earn enough money through charging the railroad (and often anyone else who wanted to cross) for use of the bridge to both maintain the bridge and pay off the bonds and the City of St. Joseph would benefit from the economic activity of all of the rail traffic that the bridge would generate.

By the early 1900’s, the original bridge was showing its age, both from wear and tear and a general lack of maintenance and in 1906, a new bridge was built. The “new” Grand Island bridge was (and still is) about 1500’ in length, with a 465” long “swing” section at the western end. The “swing” section pivots on its central pier, and can thus be “opened” to allow river traffic to pass. In the early days, the bridge was kept in the “closed” position most of the time and “opened” as needed for river traffic. The “swing” section of the bridge was controlled by an operator working from a control house on the bridge itself and an operator was on duty 24 hours a day. Until 1980, the bridge was also used by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad.

In 1919, the bridge received some major upgrades, including new stone piers and a larger/longer swing section. The bridge remains today as it was after the 1919 upgrade project.

Until 1929, the bridge did double duty, serving automobile traffic as well as the railroads. Planks were laid on the bridge deck, to the height of the rails, to

provide a smooth surface for cars and trucks crossing the bridge. The earliest routing of what would become US 36 through Elwood (now 175<sup>th</sup>/170<sup>th</sup> Road between Wathena and Elwood and Vermont Street in Elwood) lines up with the bridge. If you were to go straight where Vermont Street makes a 90 degree turn to the south, at the east end of Elwood, you would end up at the east end of the bridge, though the road is no longer connected to the bridge itself.

In 1929, a new highway bridge was built downstream from the railroad bridge, just north of the current US 36 bridge, and the Grand Island bridge reverted to being just a railroad bridge. The bridge continued to carry trains bound to and from points west until 1990, when the Union Pacific sold a 108 mile long section of the Old Sat Joseph & Grand Island, between Elwood and Upland (a junction just east of Marysville) to a short line railroad, the North East Kansas & Missouri (NEK&M).

Through trains continued to cross the bridge, though the traffic was mostly, if not all local freight generated along the line. In 1998, the UP took the line back from the NEK&M as it desired the line between Hiawatha and Upland for use by coal trains returning to the Wyoming coal fields. The 30 some odd miles between Robinson and Elwood were abandoned and the track torn up in the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The Grand Island bridge survived, though it essentially became a “bridge to nowhere” as the track now ended at the west end of Elwood. The bridge still sees trains, one or two days a week, as the Union Pacific still serves customers in Elwood. The bridge remains in the “open” position most of the time and is swung closed only when a train is crossing it. Operating the bridge is now part of the responsibilities of a UP bridge crew that works on all of the railroad bridges in the area, they travel to St. Joseph as needed to “close” and the “re-open” the bridge as needed. (As of mid-2021, this was usually twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays).

What the future holds for the Grand Island bridge is uncertain. It is an awful lot of bridge to maintain just to serve a few customers on the other side, but at the same time it would be expensive to remove it and very cost prohibitive to put back should circumstances change.

## OCTOBER MINUTES

Symns Jones Family Barn, rural Bendena

October 28

Approximately 30 members and guests in attendance

Thank you to Cindy Hoverson for hosting and presenting.

Thank you to Midyette family for providing refreshments.

Prior to the business meeting, Julie Dorrell presented about her historic house between Highland and Troy. She is applying for a Heritage Trust Fund Grant, and was gathering signatures for her letter of support. She has

invited the Society to meet at her house in May or June. She can be reached at 785-741-3495.

Jason Midyette reports we are still waiting to hear from the surveyor about the Bellemont Landing site.

#### New Business

Officers will be elected at the board meeting. Anyone is welcome to express interest in an office. Like the saying goes "Many hands make light work." We also have one opening on the Board.

Soup Supper will be December 1. Members will bring soups to share. Remember they will be kept hot on the wood burning stove. Corky and crew will get the tables set up, and the fires lit. (Thank you!) Larry Faulkner's daughter Allison Ryan will play violin for us again.

It was decided that we would hold a Christmas party this year. Details were decided after the meeting - will be December 13 at the Highland Senior Center. Dinner will be turkey, sides, roll, dessert and tea or coffee catered by Judy Allen. Cost is \$12 and is payable at the event. Call Mary Johnson 816-273-9081 by December 6 to make a reservation. Bring a gift (ladies bring a gift for a lady and gentlemen bring a gift for a gentleman, \$10 or less) for our gift exchange.

Meeting adjourned.

### ORGAN OR PIANO – WHICH?

By H. B. Hannum, Professor of Music, Emmanuel Missionary College was originally published in 1943 in *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* and reposted on [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org).

Both vocal and instrumental music have had an important part in the history of the church. During its long history the church has made use of various musical instruments to assist in the worship service. In the Bible we read of timbrels, harps, drums, cymbals, trumpets, flutes, viols, dulcimers, and other instruments. Percussion, string, and wind instruments have been used for religious services. Then there are some branches of the church which do not admit the use of instrumental music at all in the church service.

In choosing musical instruments for use in worship services today, we must take into consideration traditional usage, association, and appropriateness of tonal qualities. Some instruments are more suggestive of religious emotions than others; this makes these instruments of greater use to the church.

The traditional instrument for the church is the organ — either the pipe organ or the smaller reed organ. When the piano became a popular instrument and found its place in nearly every home, it became popular also in Sunday schools and even in the church service. But today there is a strong trend back to the use of the organ as a more appropriate church instrument, even for the smaller churches. This undoubtedly has been brought about by an

increased appreciation of organ tone for religious services, and by the, large number of inexpensive reed and pipe organs now on the market.

Churches wishing to improve their services are returning to the use of organ music and the superior tonal qualities of the organ. The piano is primarily a secular instrument, and most of the music written for it is either for the home or the concert. It is a convenient and valuable instrument, adaptable to many uses, but its method of tone production is percussive, which is more stimulating to the nervous system than organ tone.

Until recently the organ was found principally in the church, and sometimes in large auditoriums, but in recent years it has become an instrument for the theater, the radio, and the home. While there is a vast difference in tonal quality between organs used for these various purposes, there is associated in the minds of most people a definite relation between organ tone and religious service. The tones of a church organ seem to arouse the religious emotions in a way not done by other instruments. This makes the instrument very useful for worship services.

Some musicians attempt to play the organ in the same style as the piano is played, with disastrous results. Others attempt to make the organ sound hauntingly sweet and gushy, imitating the theatrical style heard so frequently over the radio. Those who attempt to play the organ for church services should realize that there is a definitely religious style and a distinctly organ approach which must be learned.

By all means, let our churches investigate the possibilities of purchasing some type of organ suitable to the size of the building and the finances of the church. The cost would probably be no more than is usually spent for a piano, but the musical results would be far better.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

OCTOBER 11 BALANCE	\$38,718.28
INCOME:	
Dues	10.00
Donation to be used for refreshments/speakers	100.00
October interest	1.64
Income total:	\$111.64
EXPENDITURES:	
Expenditures total:	\$0
NOVEMBER 9 BALANCE	\$38,829.92
CD #6519 (for Save Our Liberty Project)	\$7584.72
CD #7175	\$6,841.8

## 2021 MEETINGS

*All meetings at 6:00 unless otherwise noted.  
Presenters/topics subject to change.*

**DEC 1 Annual Soup Supper**  
with violin music by  
Allison Ryan. Free will  
donation. Members bring  
soups to share.

**DEC 13 Christmas Party 6:00**  
Highland Senior Center. Cost is  
\$12 for dinner. Reservations to  
Mary Johnson 816-273-9081  
by December 6. More info in  
the October meeting minutes.

«firstname» «LastName» «Paid»  
«Address1» «Address2»  
«City» «State» «zip»

If there is a number lower than "21" next to your name, it is time to renew your membership. Please continue to support your Doniphan County Historical Society. *Your membership is greatly appreciated.* Please consider receiving this newsletter by email to keep our mailing costs low.

### DONIPHAN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Detach and mail with payment to: Anna Midyette, PO Box 197, Bendena, KS 66008

All Memberships are \$10.00. This is a:  Renewal Membership  New Membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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