

KANSAS!

READERS' CHOICE

five SMALL TOWNS

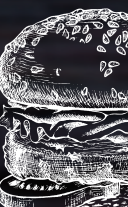
FAVORITE



KANSAS
FINEST

WINTERTIME
LUMINARY WALKS

Classic
BURGER JOINTS



KANSAS' FINEST



The 2016 Class of Kansas' promoters, lovers and supporters

As Kansans, we know our homeland is far from nondescript. It's diverse, vibrant and rich with history. The individuals in the 2016 class of Kansas' Finest are going above and beyond to share the golden glory with the world, and for that reason, they belong to this exclusive group of valued advocates for state tourism.

BY MEGAN SAUNDERS

EL DEAN HOLTUS

When Dr. Brewster Higley built a cabin in Smith County in 1872, he couldn't have fathomed how "Home on the Range," the poem he penned in that location, would influence not only the state but also the world. El Dean Holtus is making sure Higley's legacy lives on far beyond where the deer and antelope play.

In 1947, "Home on the Range" became the state song, and the owners of the cabin, Ellen and Pete Rust, resisted high-dollar offers to own a piece of history. Today, the cabin and surrounding 240 acres are managed by their nephew Holtus, along with other family members. Holtus has lived six miles southeast of the cabin all of his life, in the home his father built in 1914.

"It may sound corny, but there's no place like Kansas," Holtus says. "You can't beat being out in the country like we are. The range is unbelievably quiet. It's not a static site; it's dynamic."

Holtus and his family supervise and monitor the cabin and its history for year-round, daily visitors. He has welcomed visitors from all over the world and all ages, including many school field trips. One of Holtus' favorite daily rituals is checking footage on the cabin's security camera, but not for standard surveillance reasons.

"I see people visit the cabin throughout the day, and they walk in like it's a cathedral," Holtus says. "They stand in the center of the cabin silently and look around. When I see the admiration and respect for history they have, that's a great reward."

FAVORITE KANSAS ATTRACTION:
Fort Larned, Fort Riley
and all military posts

