



The OPHS News

The Newsletter of the Overland Park Historical Society



Volume 32, Issue 3

www.ophistorical.org

July/Aug./Sept. 2026

Annual Indoor Picnic

Date: Saturday, August 15, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Lunch served at noon.

Location: American Legion Post, 7500 W. 75th St.

Cost: \$15 per person (Must have RSVP to OPHS by Tuesday, August 11.)

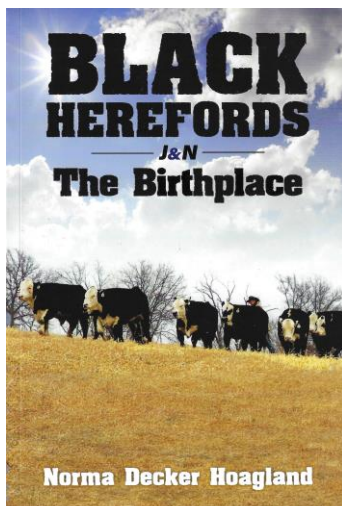


Please join us for our fun, annual summer event! We are combining the picnic with our August general meeting on August 15. The Sons of the American Legion will be preparing hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken sandwiches, potato chips, potato salad and baked beans. Desserts and a variety of beverages will also be provided. To secure your RSVP, please mail your check, payable to "OPHS," to 8001 Santa Fe Drive, OP, KS 66204. If you have questions regarding the event, please call the office at (913) 381-8867. **NOTE: You may attend one or both events. Those staying after the program for the picnic will be provided with name badges.**

Save the Date for These Upcoming Presentations

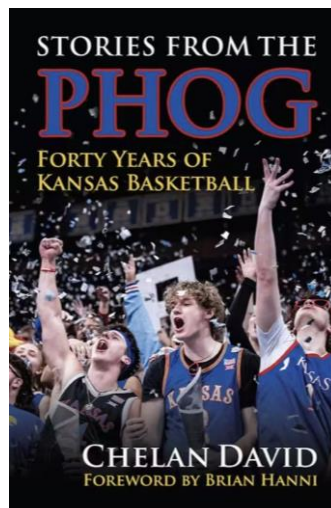
See Pages 23 & 24 for more information on these upcoming author talks at Discover O.P.

October 8
3-4 p.m.



Norma & Joe Hoagland

October 22
6-8 p.m.



Chelan David

November 19
6-8 p.m.



Freedom Will Be Theirs by the Sword:
The Battle of New Market Heights



Jeff Kluever

President's Message

It's mid-summer in Overland Park and it's HOT! So are your OPHS Board of Volunteers and Executive Director Brad Moore in "hot" pursuit of opportunities for our Organization's long-term success. With the professional assistance of our Strategic Development Advisor Vicki Lilly working hard on making our case to potential donors, grantors and members we are beginning to see success from supporters providing generous donations.

Raising money for the OPHS's Depot Project entails securing year-to-year operational and programming support. This process for any 501c3 organization, like the OPHS, must be ongoing, creative, relevant and consistent. It's hard work but critical work.

To make sure we are navigating in the right direction members of our Board have been identifying, interviewing and working with consultants on our website, our museum focus and display area, the use of our various spaces, our electronic/video storytelling and adjustments to the depot to better example the Strang Line and the history of our Community and City.

Your Executive Committee is in active discussions with representatives of the City of Overland Park regarding the completion of the exterior plaza that encircles the Depot. Our third meeting with the City is in early August.

In short, there is a lot of "hot" action to accompany the "hot" weather! Our long-term success is guaranteed only by the dedication, enthusiasm, imagination and volunteer time commitment of your Board, our membership, donors, grantors and of course, the City of Overland Park, who's history we tell. We honor all of you for YOUR continued support as members, friends, and donors in helping us preserve our heritage for the future.

Rod Richardson

Recent Events Recap

Over the past three months, OPHS has hosted several events at Discover O.P., as awareness of our wonderful new facility continues to grow in the community. Here are some of the highlights of OPHS/Discover O.P. activities since May.

May 14: S.M. West Class of 1969 Reunion

Discover O.P. was the host for 60 graduates from Shawnee Mission West, Class of 1969. The gathering was to celebrate the classmates turning 75 years young in 2026! Attendees enjoyed reminiscing and watching a presentation that focused on the highlights of their senior year.



Shawnee Mission West Vikings from the Class of 1969 gathered at Discover O.P. to celebrate turning 75 years old in 2026

May 16: General Meeting

Several members attended our May 16 general meeting, where Executive Director, Brad Moore, delivered a presentation titled *Metcalf Memories*. The presentation highlighted the development along the corridor spanning from 1950 to 1985. Several guests were in attendance, many of whom have since become members of OPHS!



Over 80 members and guests gathered at the American Legion to learn about the development of Metcalf Avenue over the decades.

Recent Events Recap

June 5: Farmer's Market Dedication

Over 500 guests were in attendance on June 5 for the official dedication ceremony of the new Farmers Market at Clock Tower Landing. The new facility has attracted thousands to Downtown Overland Park every weekend, and has boosted the guest count at Discover O.P.

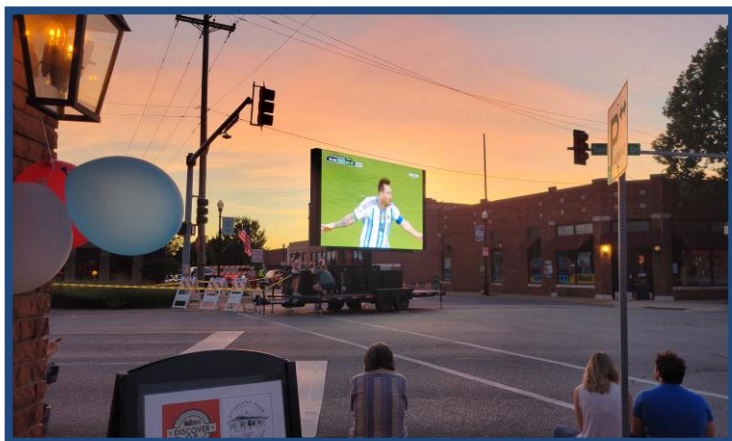


Among those providing remarks at the dedication are (left to right): Mayor Curt Skoog, City Manager, Lori Curtis Luther, and Director of Downtown Overland Park Partnership, Angie Mutti.

Recent Events Recap

June 16: Soccer Watch Party

On June 16, the city held the first of two World Cup soccer watch street parties. A giant screen television was placed just outside Discover O.P., attracting hundreds to the intersection of 80th & Santa Fe Drive to watch the first of two games held at GEHA/Arrowhead Stadium. Discover O.P. remained open during both watch parties, attracting several visitors while also providing a headquarters for the first aid team, fire department and CERT teams who were overseeing the events.



July 2: OP Chamber Summer Intern Event

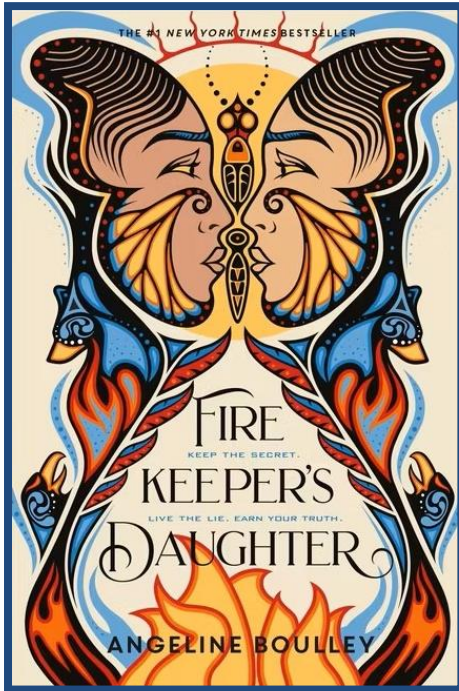
On July 2, the Overland Park Chamber hosted a morning networking event at Discover O.P. for summer interns working for chamber business members. They were also given a presentation on the founding of Overland Park by Executive Director, Brad Moore.



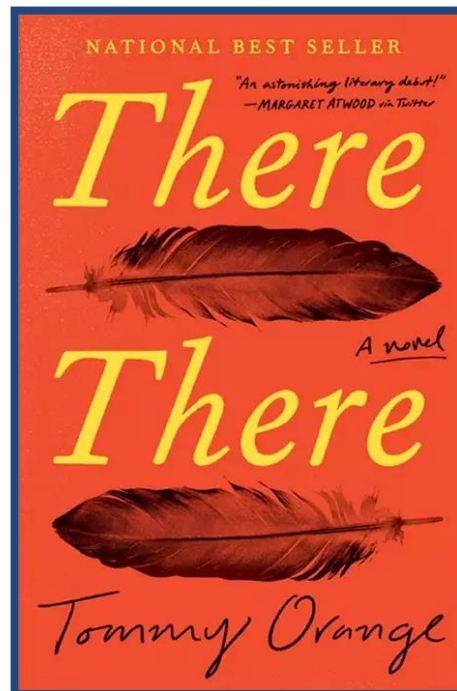
Book Club Resumes in September

Fall 2026 Series:

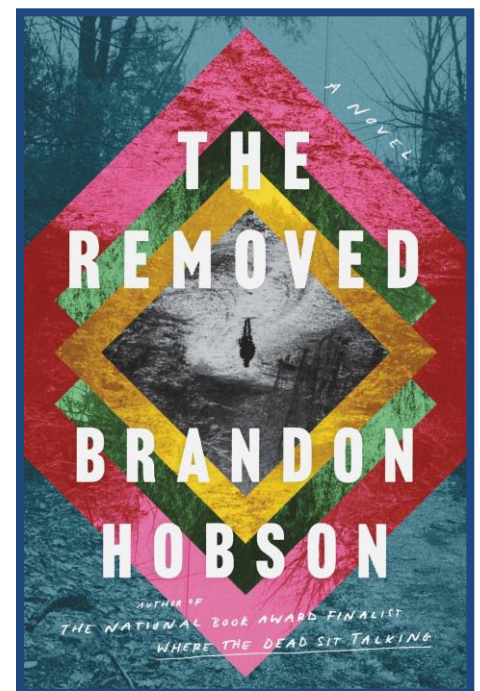
Native American Identity, Past & Present



Tuesday, Sept. 22 – 7 p.m.
The Fire Keeper's Daughter
by Angeline Boulley
Speaker – Erin Pouppirt



Tuesday, October 20 – 7 p.m.
There, There
by Tommy Orange
Speaker – Rosemary Kolich



Tuesday, November 24 – 7 p.m.
The Removed
by Brandon Hobson
Speaker – Marilyn Klaus

Books are now available for check out at Discover O.P. – 8001 Santa Fe Drive.

Join us in celebrating and saving the OPHS Book Club, an extension of our society that has been an annual tradition for years. Under the dedicated guidance of Pat Crabtree, we've been able to receive a generous grant from Humanities Kansas, allowing us to provide a variety of books—many of which grace the New York Times best seller lists—at no charge. Additionally, we've hosted insightful speakers who have deepened our understanding of the themes woven into these books. While our initial funding set a strong foundation, we now find ourselves in need of your financial support to keep this program thriving. Your donations will ensure that we can continue to foster connections through literature and provide invaluable experiences for our members. Let's come together to keep the pages turning and the discussions lively!

If you have any questions about the book club, please contact Pat Crabtree at (913) 523-4784 or by email at vpmtree123@yahoo.com.

All book club meetings are held at Discover O.P. – 8001 Santa Fe Drive.

A History of the O.P. DAR Marker

Have you ever noticed the irregular shaped piece of granite, located on the sidewalk in the northeast corner of 80th & Santa Fe Drive? Hundreds of people walk past that piece of stone every day, unaware that there is quite a history behind it. Here is a summary of that history.



Commemorating the Trail

The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) placed 96 granite markers along the Santa Fe Trail in Kansas with funds raised, in part, by Kansas school children. At that time, much of the trail was still visible and the markers were dedicated with much fanfare. First placed across the street in 1906, this most easterly of all the Kansas markers was moved to this corner in 1925.

What is DAR?

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (or NSDAR) was founded in 1890. Headquartered in Washington D.C., the DAR is a volunteer women's service organization dedicated to preserving American history, educating children, and promoting patriotism. The DAR was established in Kansas in 1896 and has helped promote history throughout the state from its 19th century beginning through the present.

Continued...

A History of the O.P. DAR Marker

In 1906, the Kansas Daughters of the American Revolution began installing red granite markers along the Santa Fe Trail to commemorate the historic route and honor early pioneers.

Origins of the Project

The Kansas Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) initiated a campaign in 1902 to mark the Santa Fe Trail, a historic trade route extending from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, which had been used by traders and settlers since 1821. The goal was to preserve the memory of the trail and educate future generations about its historical significance. The DAR collaborated with local communities, early settlers, and the Kansas State Historical Society to trace the trail accurately.

Fundraising and Marker Acquisition

The DAR acquired red granite boulders of varying sizes for the markers, costing approximately \$16 each. With only about 300 members in Kansas at the time, community support was essential. In 1905, schoolchildren contributed pennies to help fund the project, demonstrating local engagement and support for historical preservation. By 1906, the DAR had raised enough funds to begin installing the markers, with 70–86 markers planned for placement across the state.

Installation of Markers

The markers were installed at key points along the trail, including towns such as Lakin, Deerfield, and Hartland in western Kansas. Some markers were placed at historically significant sites like Pawnee Rock, a prominent landmark and halfway point on the trail, where the DAR also installed a red granite marker at the gate. The markers served as both educational tools and memorials to the pioneers who traveled the trail. The marker in Overland Park is the eastern-most marker in the State of Kansas and therefore is listed as Marker #1 in the DAR records.

Historical Significance

The markers commemorated the Santa Fe Trail, which played a crucial role in commerce and westward expansion. The DAR's efforts highlighted the bravery and perseverance of early travelers and ensured that the trail's history remained visible to the public. The project also reflected the DAR's broader mission of promoting historical preservation and civic engagement.

Preservation and Legacy

Over the years, the markers required maintenance due to weathering and other damage. In the early 2000s, the Kansas DAR surveyed all markers, repaired bases, cleaned stones, and refurbished lettering to ensure they would stand for another century. The 1906 installation of the Santa Fe Trail markers by the Kansas DAR remains a significant example of early 20th-century historical preservation, community involvement, and recognition of the cultural and economic importance of the Santa Fe Trail.

We are proud that Marker #1 sits in the heart of Downtown Overland Park! Next time you are in the area, please be sure to visit the marker and the two nearby display panels sharing the history of the historic trails that led pioneers through our area.

The Fall of the House of Riley

Remembering the Thomas Riley Home

Reprinted from the Johnson County Sun - January 22, 1982

Home of Strang Line Builder Faces Wrecking Ball

An Overland Park landmark will face the wrecker's ball unless \$140,000 is found. That's the estimated cost to renovate the Riley's Sunset lodge, which is both a bit of Johnson County history and an eyesore on the Santa Fe Commons park.

The Lodge, better known as the Riley Home, will be demolished as part of the Overland Park Community Development Department's revised plan for the downtown park. It will cost \$5000 to tear down the former home of "Captain" Thomas Riley who, in 1904, followed William Strang, John Swartz and Harry Michaeu to Kansas to build an interurban railroad. Riley became the Line's general manager and built the brick and stone house around 1930, several years after William Strang died in 1921.

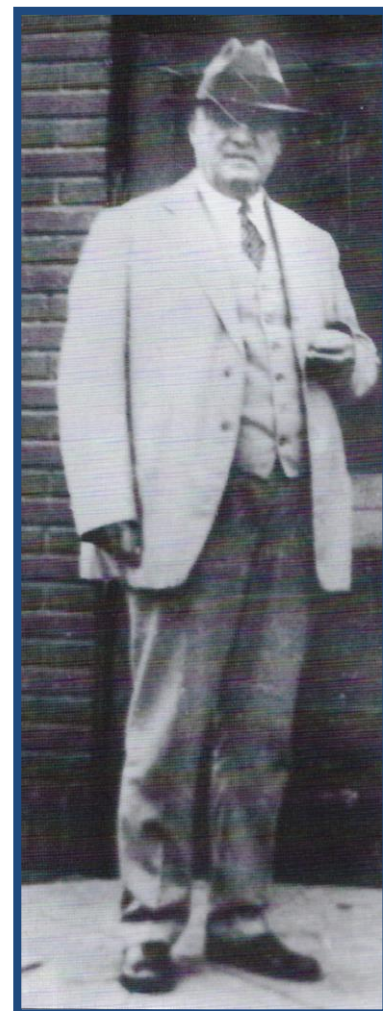
Mrs. Virginia Griffin, the daughter of John Swartz who was the Strang Line's freight conductor, has lived in Overland Park for 72 years. According to Mrs. Griffin, the Riley house offers no significant historical contribution. "Riley lived in the house for only a few years and then moved north of the Missouri River," she said. "The Strang house and other truly beautiful homes have been torn down that should have been saved. I see no reason to preserve the Riley house."

According to Larry Flatt, Overland Park Community Development Director, the Strang "Carriage House," also in the Commons park, has greater historical significance and better potential for renovation funded by proceeds from a 10 percent tax on liquor sold in private clubs. Flatt said city officials met with a number of community and civic groups to find if there were enough interested to warrant a fundraising effort to save the Riley Home. "Generally, most of the input was that it should be torn down," he said.

Not everyone agrees. "I think it's stupid to tear down a landmark," said Dwight Smith, an Overland Park "old-timer" and owner of Smitty's Hardware.

The old house has fallen on hard times. Flatt said there have been two fires in the house and the house had also been the site of a Junior Chamber of Commerce haunted house called Transylvania Station. He said the house, for safety reasons, should be torn down as soon as possible after approval from the Overland Park Planning Commission and the City Council.

Continued...



Tom Riley

The Fall of the House of Riley

Remembering the Thomas Riley Home

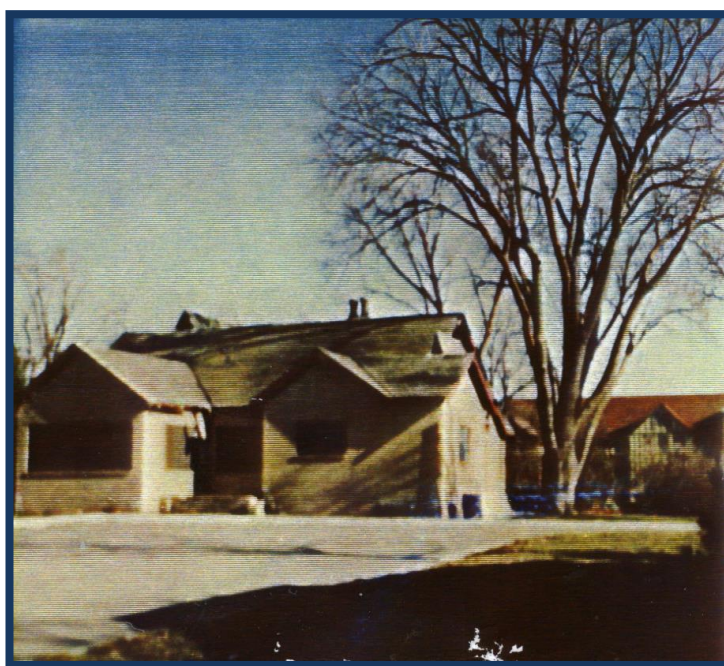
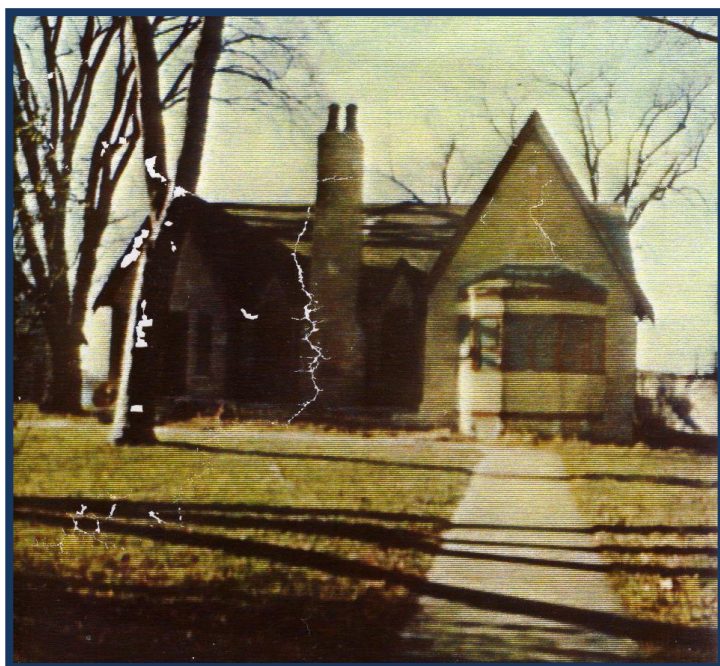
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James McClure, park superintendent, said the floorboards are weak, making it unsafe, and that the decorative 1930's-style mouldings and woodwork are gone.

Gil Rumsey, owner of Gil Rumsey's Picture Place, said the Overland Park Merchant's Association voted five to four to recommend the "house be left standing rather than being demolished at this time."

"Some of us can't see spending \$5000 to have nothing in that spot. Ten years from now, if federal money becomes available, we may wish it were still standing," Rumsey said. "Let's secure it and leave it for a while."

It may come down to how deeply those committed to saving the Riley home will dig into their pockets. "It's always been our position that if the community wants to keep the house and put up the money for it, then it's appropriate to keep it," Flatt said.



Above Left: Rare color photo of the front of the Riley home.

Above Right: Rear view of the Riley home, with the O.P. Presbyterian Church visible in the background.



Left: The Riley home and the Strang Carriage house can be seen in this photo taken on the steps of the O.P. Presbyterian Church looking west across Overland Park Drive

Continued...

The Fall of the House of Riley

Remembering the Thomas Riley Home

Reprinted from the Kansas City Star – December 9, 1981

Overland Park Debates Importance of 50-Year-Old Home

The Overland Park city staff, trying to determine what to do with the downtown Thomas Riley home, is asking local groups whether the gutted building has historical significance.

Staff members believe the home has little importance in the history of the city and are considering demolishing it. "But we don't want to tear it down if there's an interest in keeping it," said Larry Flatt, community development director.

The light-yellow home, on Overland Park Drive south of 80th Street, was built about 50 years ago by Thomas Riley, business manager for the Strang Line Railroad, said John Stone, park planner. William Strang founded the town and the electric railway that extended from Westport to Olathe.

Overland Park bought the home and surrounding property in 1979 with \$420,000 in federal and city money, Mr. Stone said. The city intended to restore the home and use the carriage house nearby as a small art gallery.

Last year the city converted part of the property into a small park, called the Santa Fe Commons. The cost of the project was \$81,000. But the city can't decide whether to restore the home, about a \$140,000 project, or tear it down and build a less-costly public facility there, Mr. Stone said.

The building is in poor shape, he said. "The inside is literally a gutted shell. From an architectural standpoint the building itself we don't feel is representative of any style of architecture," he said. "It's not Gothic, it's not Renaissance; we don't know what it is."

The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, which provided the federal money to purchase the property, has given the city permission to demolish the home, Mr. Stone said. And groups the city has contacted don't appear to oppose the demolition.



Tom Riley and his wife, Alwilda, relaxing in the living room

Continued...

The Fall of the House of Riley

Remembering the Thomas Riley Home

Continued from previous page...

"I don't think anyone in our group is upset about it," said Carroll Denning, president of the Downtown Business Association. "But we haven't put it to a vote."

"The building is only 50 years old," he said. "If that's historical, then I'm beginning to worry about myself."

John Meyer, a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Parks and Recreation, is the only opponent who has surfaced. Because Overland Park is not an old city, the home is historic, he said, and could be used to attract people to downtown.

"This is where Overland Park started," he said.



June 30, 1940 ad from the Kansas City Star. Riley sold the home after nine years.



The Riley home was used as a haunted house in October 1979

Reprinted from the Kansas City Star – February 10, 1982

Lacking Supporters, Old Home to be Razed

The Riley home in downtown Overland Park, apparently void of historic significance, will face a bulldozer this spring. A lack of interest in saving the home led to a unanimous vote Monday by the Overland Park Planning Commission to demolish it.

The home will be torn down in early spring, when the weather permits, said John Stone, park planner for the city. It is possible that a public restroom will be built in its place.

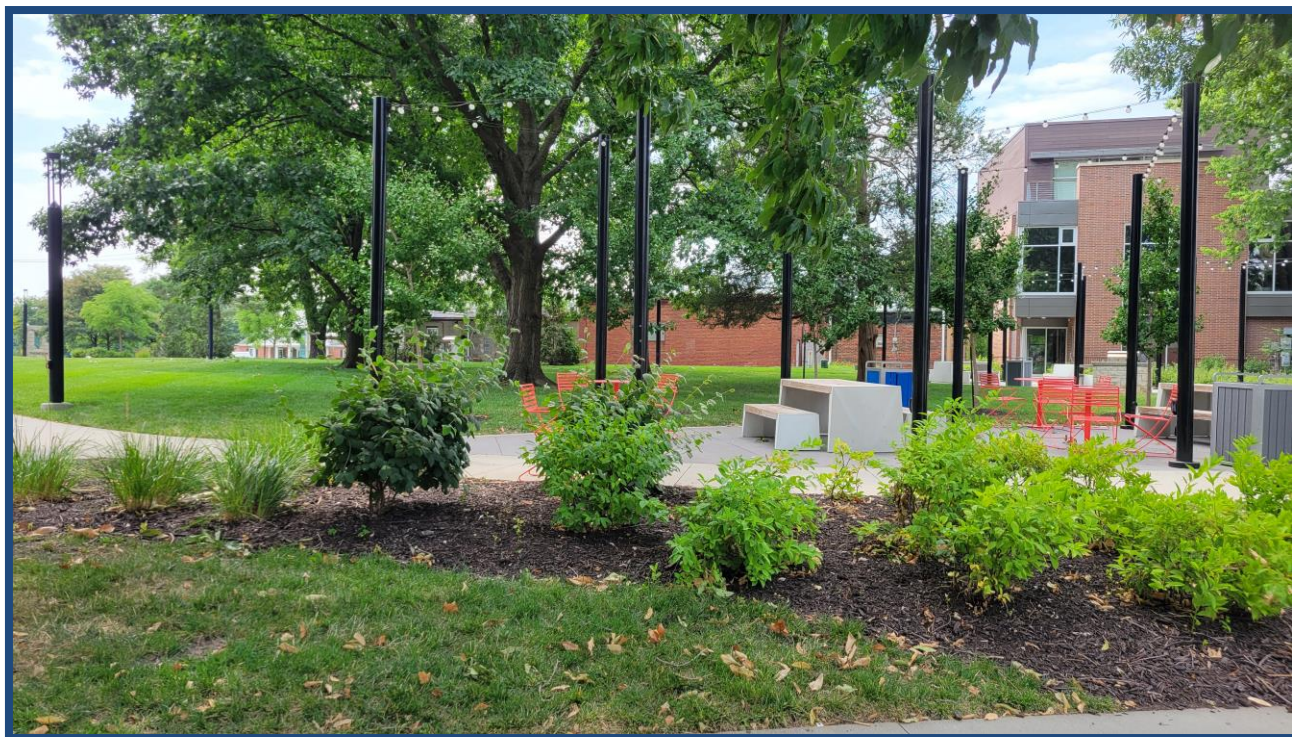
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The Fall of the House of Riley

Remembering the Thomas Riley Home



Left: the red rectangle denotes the approximate location of the Thomas Riley home in what is today known as Thompson Park



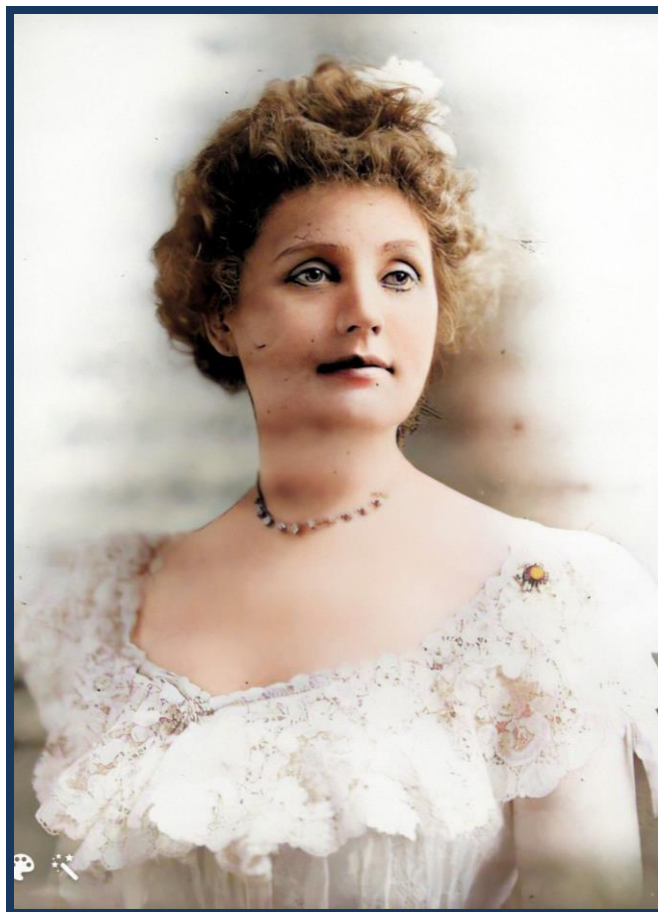
Today, a pedestrian gathering area has replaced the site of the former Thomas Riley home in Thompson Park.

Historic Photos, Colorized

OPHS has recently been using computer applications to colorize our collection of historic Strang-era black and white photos. Enjoy these colorful transformations in this and future newsletters.



William B. Strang, Jr.



Margaret Strang



Strang Airfield
Pavilion

Historic Photos, Colorized



The Strang Land Company offices in the depot, circa 1930



Strang Depot in 1906, with original DAR marker location circled in red.

Vintage Ads From 1967 "Progress Overland Park"



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3 1/2 GAL. CARTONS \$1.21

STORE HOURS 7 AM-11 PM



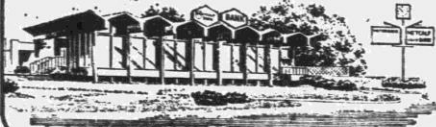
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Vintage Ads From 1967 "Progress Overland Park"

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CHICKEN IN THE ROUGH THURS. ONLY
the world's best fried chicken SERVED FAMILY STYLE ALL YOU CAN EAT

\$1.65 Children 95c Under 2 Yrs. Our Guests Including fluffy potatoes, country gravy, green beans, chef's salad bowl, fresh baked rolls, jug of honey.

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SUITS (Jacket/skirt)	reg. \$15.25	now \$11.00
KNIT TOPS	reg. 4.00	now 3.00
DRESS	reg. 15.00	now 11.00

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reg. \$4 to \$6 now \$3 to \$4

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Shurfine FRUIT COCKTAIL #303 Can 4 for \$1	Shurfine PEACHES 2 1/2 Can 4 for \$1 Limit 4 cans
Shurfine CUT GREEN BEANS #303 Can 5 for \$1	Shurfine Cream or w/k GOLDEN CORN #303 Can 5 for \$1

THRIFTWAY
OVERLAND PARK

We Have Grown with Overland Park

Dalton's Flowers
82nd and Santa Fe Overland Park, Kansas NI 2-2112

Some People Still Waste Gasoline Shopping Around

And all the time the most beautiful collection of apparel was right in the heart of downtown Overland Park. Famous labels on sizes 5 to 16. The kind of intelligent personal service that you hardly find anywhere.

P. O. P. SPECIAL
Dawnelle's Warm Driving Gloves **1/2 PRICE**
Regular \$4.98—3 Days Only
Shoppers Charge or Layaway

7140 W. 80th

Vintage Ads From 1967 "Progress Overland Park"



PROGRESS OVERLAND PARK DOWNTOWN SELLABRATION!

Sponsored by the Member Merchants of Downtown Overland Park Unlimited

FREE! JUNIOR WILD WEST SHOW ★ J. W. Stoker and his rope tricks.
featuring the **RODEO KIDS** .. ★ and Torey Southwick.

Two Shows Saturday, November 11 -
10:30 AM & 1:30 PM - 81st & Santa Fe
Drive. Lots of FREE Parking nearby - ask
any of the friendly Downtown Mer-
chants.



Perfect gift for father, husband or Grand - Custom
Birthstone Family Tie Tac - Custom set with one to
seven Birthstones - symbols of each child or Grand-
child.
12 K Gold filled (set with 3
stones) or Sterling Silver (addi-
tional stones \$1 each) **\$10⁹⁵**
HARRYMAN JEWELRY
7120 W. 80th
ME. 9-5092

Helen's Beauty Salon

Operators

Venita Murray Susan Byrns
Juanita Burnett Larone Mullikin
Helen Bush Helen Bell
7709 Florio Overland Park, Kans.
NI 9-4214



P.O.P. SALE OF SALES

KNIT TOPS & SHELLS **\$2**

DRESSES Values to \$29.95
NOW \$5

DRESSES Values to \$39.95
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THURS., FRI. & SAT.

WINTER COATS

(Fur Trimmed & Untrimmed)
IMPORTED FABRICS
FAMOUS NAME BRANDS
10% DISCOUNT
MINK TRIMMED SUEDE COATS
Values to \$95 **NOW \$59**
All Coat Coats Drastically Reduced!

GROUP OF

SKIRTS
Values to \$8.95
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SLACKS
Values to \$8.95
NOW \$3



SAVE UP TO 50% on our one-of-a-kind SALESMEN'S SAMPLES
Weather Permitting: Sidewalk Sale Bargains Galore

Bea's Sample Shop

7327 W. 80TH, OVERLAND PARK, KANS.
Hours: 9 a. m. to 5:30 p. m.

Thurs. Evening till 8:30

NI 8-3410

MEN'S NATIONALLY ADVERTISED BRANDS

• BRITISH WALKER • WALK-OVER • JOHNSTON & MURPHY



\$15⁹⁹
UP



MEN'S SAMPLE SIZES

Only 6½ - 7 ½

NUNN BUSH CUSTOM GRADE SHOES

\$29⁹⁵ to \$39⁹⁵ VALUES NOW \$12⁹⁹

WOMEN'S NEW DRESS HEELS



FROM CALIFORNIA
ALL
COLORS

• Square Toes, Block
Heels
• Suedes and Leathers
NOW \$5⁹⁹
\$14⁹⁵ Val.



MEN'S HUNTING BOOTS

Insulated leather lined
Moc toe cork sole.

15.95 Val.

NOW \$11⁹⁹



MEN'S, CHILDREN'S & BIG BOYS 4 BUCKLE OVERSHOES

\$2⁹⁹ pr.

WOMEN'S SQUAW BOOTS

All Buck Leather. Sizes 5 to 10.

Compare at \$5 **\$3⁹⁹**

CHILDREN'S LOOP SNOW BOOTS

Red, white, & black. Insulated, washable made in U.S.A. Infant size 6 to child size 3.

\$1⁹⁹



COMPLETE LINE OF RUBBER FOOTWEAR FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

ALLIED SHOES

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Member FDIC

The Overland Park State Bank

7109 WEST 80TH STREET • PHONE NI 8-2800
OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS

Round the Clock Banking—7 A. M. till 7 P. M. Every Week Day
SATURDAY BANKING **FREE PARKING**

Do Bank with us—

Our Doors are Open—Have Been for 57 Years.

JENNINGS

SALE
ON
SCOTTS

NOV. 8 THRU 12

LAWN CARE PRODUCTS

SAVE SAVE SAVE SAVE
SAVE 25% FAMOUS SCOTTS LAWN GRASS SEED

SCOTTS 50% WINDSOR GRASS SEED

1,000 sq. ft.
Reg. 3.95

SALE

2⁹⁷

Limited Supply

2,500 sq. ft.
Reg. 8.95

SALE

6⁷²

Limited Supply

SCOTT'S FAMILY GRASS SEED

2,500 sq. ft. Reg. \$4.95

SALE \$3.72

Limited Supply

FREE! SEE JUNIOR WILD WEST SHOW!

10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Nov. 11

81st & Santa Fe

SAVE 50%

SCOTTS HALTS

Lowest price ever!

**Grabgrass Control
Grub Control**
2,500 Sq. Ft. Reg. \$7.95

SALE

\$3⁹⁷

(Limited Supply
of 200 bags)



JENNINGS
Lawn and Garden Center

7512 West 80th "Just Around the Corner from the Postoffice" Phone NI 2-3968

Vintage Ads From 1967 "Progress Overland Park"

Page 10

ADVERTISEMENT

FREE BUTTONS AND MODEL PLANES

Hey, boys and girls, there are two spots you will want to check Friday and Saturday during the Progress Overland Park celebration. Look in on Snoopy, famous character from "Peanuts" at 75th & Metcalf ... while there pick up a Red Baron button. At the "Wide, Wide World of TWA", Metcalf South shopping center, you may receive a plastic model of a DC-9 or Constellation - while supply lasts.

SAVINGS OR LOANS

CALL YOUR

OVERLAND PARK CREDIT UNION**A COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION****5%** on Passbook Savings Plus Free Life Insurance

Low Cost Loans Plus Free Loan Protection

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Hours Mon. thru Friday 9-5. Sat. 9-1

**FOR THE VERY BEST ... BETTER BUY****RCA VICTOR**

NO MONEY DOWN! NO PAYMENTS UNTIL FEB. 1968 ON ANY RCA VICTOR COLOR TV!

MODEL
GI-645**RCA VICTOR "THE ALCOTT"**

K.C. CHIEFS COLOR TV SPECIAL

23 INCH DIAGONAL, 295 SQ. INCH RECTANGULAR PICTURE
For complete enjoyment of your favorite programs ... view them in natural color by RCA Victor. 25,000 volt picture power and Hi-Lite color picture tube assures color reception at its very best. Attractive walnut finished cabinet.

BUY ON B-A'S EASY TERMS!

PAY ONLY \$21.00 MONTHLY

\$499⁵⁰

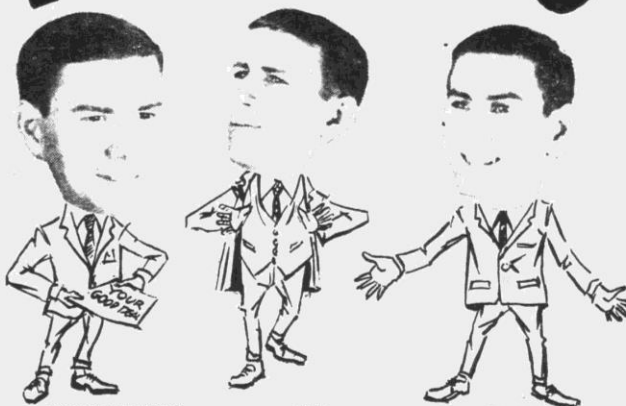
FREE PARKING AT ALL 4 STORES

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6905 W. 75th - CO 2-9535

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95th & Metcalf - DU 1-0700

*Andy Sez ...***MEET THE KLEIN BOYS****LARRY KLEIN****PAT KLEIN****GARY KLEIN**

We've made it a family business ... with family integrity behind every car.

Business Is Great!**35%** INCREASE IN SALES OVER LAST YEAR*There Is a Reason ...*

Great Deals Combined With Sincere Service After You Buy Your Car
Convenient Service Location For Area Residents

Highest Prices Paid For Your Car

Andy Klein's Reputation For Honest And Sincere Dealings

★ BIG STOCK GTO's

★ SEE THE "KLEIN BOYS"
AT THE METCALF AUTO SHOW

YES, IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE
WHERE You Buy Your New Pontiac!

ANDY KLEIN**PONTIAC**

78th & 69 Hiway

OVERLAND PARK, KANS.

NI 2-5050

Then & Now



**Johnson County Memorial Gardens
11200 Metcalf Ave.**

June 1996**Play Ball!**

Remember Segner's Ball Park? You do if you were anywhere near Overland Park in the late 1940's, 50's and early 60's. Especially if there were young men or boys in your family!

When Christian G. Segner retired from his grocer's business at 7109 West 79th St. in 1946, he decided to devote himself to his lifetime hobby. He had always been interested in sports and had always loved baseball. He believed very strongly that athletics was an ideal medium through which young people could learn about good sportsmanship.

Wanting to give the youngsters in his community a decent place in which to play, Mr. Segner converted nine acres of land which he owned into a baseball diamond and built a stadium when materials were scarce and labor was high. The total cost was \$15,000.

The softball stadium was located about a mile southwest of old Overland Park on the scenic Santa Fe Trail. (About where Louisburg Square Shopping Center is today.) It was equipped with lights, bleachers, concession stands and a public address system. Children were admitted free and the Segner's allowed any organization to serve supper at the park as a fund raiser.

In recognition of their community spirit, Mr. Segner and his wife Emma, were given the "Good Neighbor" orchid from the Tom Brenneman show in Hollywood in 1947. Mr. Segner died on June 18th, 1950 at Segner field after suffering a heart attack shortly before the scheduled father's day festivities.

Games continued to be played at the field through the 1964 season. Local merchants and organizations sponsored fast ball teams for men as well as 3-2 games. Ed Lopat and Luke Appling of the K.C. A's, as well as over 250 boys and their families, were on hand for the opening day ceremonies of the final season.

August 1996**Do You Know...**

Where the first telephone office in Overland Park was located? (from June Issue)

In 1903, G. C. Conser of Overland Park started his own telephone company with exactly seven telephones. Known then as the Enterprise Telephone Company, Mr. Conser was the founder, manager and operator until it was sold years later to the Home Telephone Co., and then later to Southwestern Bell.

...In an interview with the grandson, Albert C. Conser, well-known in Overland Park at his bus station, many interesting facts were learned regarding the telephone business with all due respect to its having been a possible source from which sprang the increased number of business establishments of today.

Primarily the first telephone building which G. C. Conser founded was located at the junction of what we know now as 69 highway and 79th Street. Realizing the future of business would be located further in, G. C. decided to move that large frame building to the present site of the "Conser" building, 80th and Foster.

"It was quite a large building", Albert Conser says, "two stories high, about 30 by 60 feet. It took whole week to move".

This first store burned but was rebuilt for a general mercantile business, but it also housed the first ice plant....

"The first telephones used in this community were of the crank-case type", explained Mr. Conser. "And then there were four to five people on a line". The switchboard operator was right in the Conser building. Whenever there was any trouble with the lines, G. C. used to go out to repair them. After many storms, Albert Conser would go on horseback to see if any branches were hanging over the lines, causing shorts.

Since there were not so many phones available in that day, the telephone operator would call the nearest neighbor to the party wanted. In that way everyone was serviced.

(Reprinted from article written by Martha Peto, appearing in the Johnson County Herald, Thursday, May 13 1948)

September 1997

WILLIAM B. STRANG'S AIRFIELDS

Orville and Wilbur Wright made their historic first powered flight in December, 1903. Just six years later airplanes were flying regularly from a small field in Overland Park. William B. Strang, always looking for ways to promote his various business interests, arranged for airplanes to use a sports field in the newly developing community. That field was just east of Strang's Interurban Railway car barn, just north of the present 79th Street between Santa Fe Drive and Metcalf Avenue. This was possibly the first airfield west of the Mississippi River.

The Wright Model B biplane and similar airplanes of that time flew about 45 miles per hour. They carried only enough fuel to fly for 10 minutes at a time. Those early planes had to land frequently to refuel, usually in a farmer's pasture.

A wooden water tower stood just west of the Strang car barn. On air show days a spotter climbed the 100 foot tower to watch for incoming planes. At that time there were fewer trees, and it was possible to see the downtown buildings in both Kansas Cities. When a plane left the ground in Kansas City, the spotter on the water tower would shout the news to the spectators on the ground. The planes probably had to land and refuel at least once before reaching Overland Park. Sometimes a mechanical problem developed, and the plane would not travel the entire distance. One of Strang's nieces told of her experience at one of the air shows. Because of

the cold temperature she wore a warm coat and a fur muff. The spotter on the water tower called down that the plane was coming. It never arrived, though, because of breakdowns. Everyone was cold, but the spectators stayed late in the afternoon hoping to see the plane.

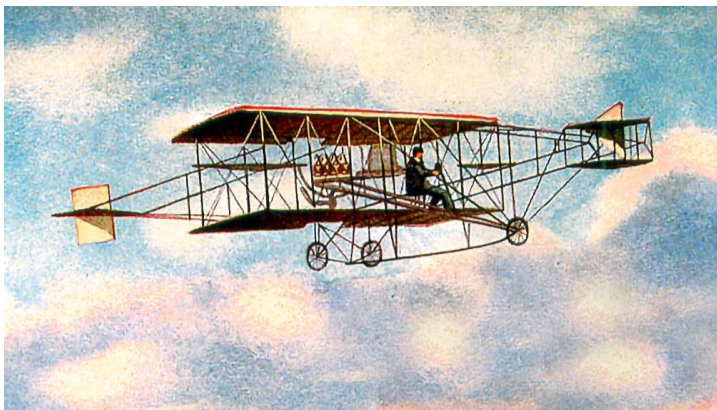
In 1910 Mr. Strang built his Aviation Park on an 80 acre tract southeast of the present Santa Fe and Lowell Streets. Eventually the park contained a grandstand, a pavilion for entertainment, an airplane factory, and a flying school. Contemporary newspaper articles report that on many weekends several thousand people came by automobile and on the Strang Line to see air shows.

Many leading aviators of the day flew into and out of Aviation Park. At least once the U.S. Army conducted training maneuvers in the area. Army pilots were trained there during the early years of World War I.

It is reported the first airplane to reach the altitude of 500 feet flew from Aviation Park. Mr. Strang offered a prize of \$10,000 for the first pilot to fly nonstop from Topeka to Overland Park. One man who tried to win the prize flew as far as Lawrence where his plane developed a problem. He worked on the engine during the night. When he tried to start it the next morning, the crankshaft broke. He disassembled the plane, loaded it on a rail car, and shipped it to Kentucky for another air show.

After World War I interest in airplanes waned. Also, by this time, the area was beginning to be developed and the land being used by Aviation Park became more valuable for housing. In 1921 the park was replatted into building lots for another of William B. Strang's subdivisions.

Adapted from a 1993 article by **Florent Wagner**.



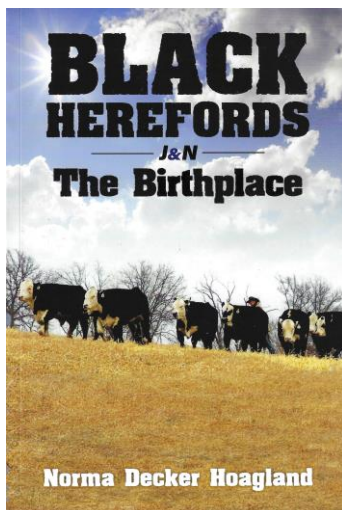
DOP EVENT SCHEDULE

Summer Concert Series | August 13
Third Friday | August 21
Movie Night in the Park | September 12
Third Friday | September 18
Fall Festival | September 25–26
Harvesting for Hope at Strang Hall | October 1
Bourbon, Bacon & Brews | October 9
Third Friday | October 16

Halloween Event | October 24
Mayor's Holiday Festival | November 20
Small Business Saturday | November 28
Santa in Downtown OP | December 5
District Holiday Open House | December 5
Hayride at Clocktower Plaza | December 17
Third Friday | December 18

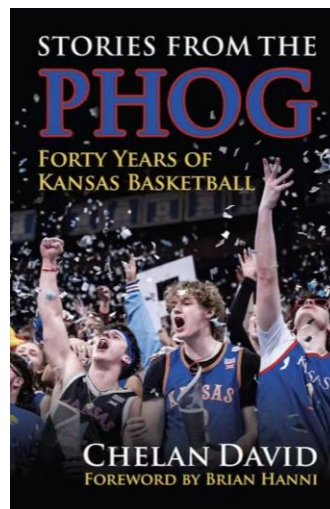
Meet the Authors in October!

Norma Hoagland
October 8: 3–4 p.m.



Norma Hoagland and her husband, Joe, will greet guests at Discover O.P. and autograph copies of her new book, **Black Herefords, The Birthplace**. All proceeds from book sales will go to the Overland Park Historical Society.

Chelan David
October 22: 6–8 p.m.



Lawrence author, Chelan David, will appear at Discover O.P. to give a presentation and sign copies of his new book **Stories From the Phog**, a celebration of the people, places and moments that make Kansas basketball a way of life!



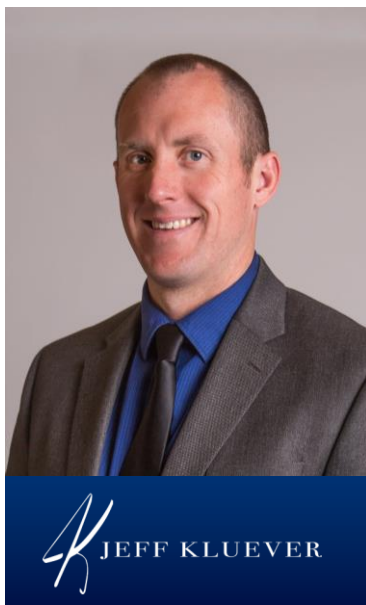
Andrew Yates, Conductor



The Overland Park Civic Band wrapped up their 89th season on July 12, with a wonderful concert featuring the music of composer Leroy Anderson. OPHS wishes to thank Conductor and Music Director, Andrew Yates, and Assistant Conductor, Gerald Gipson, for providing another wonderful season of free music to the public. We look forward to an upcoming holiday concert in December at Atonement Lutheran Church, and another season in Thompson Park in the summer of 2027!

Special Presentation in November

November 19: Jeff Kluever, 6–8 p.m.



Freedom Will Be Theirs by the Sword: The Battle of New Market Heights

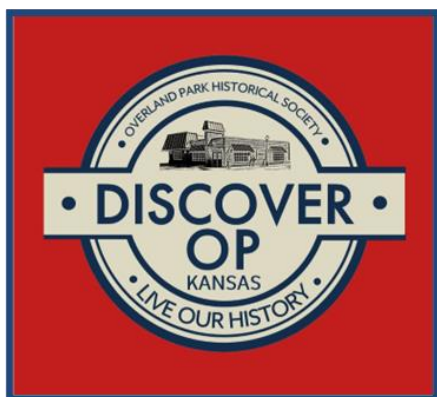
On September 29, 1864, fourteen Black men earned the Medal of Honor for their actions charging Confederate earthworks outside Richmond, Virginia, leaving hundreds of their own dead and wounded on the field. Learn the stories of former slaves and freemen who fought valiantly for a country that did not yet consider them citizens.

Jeff Kluever is an author, former museum professional, and Civil War battlefield tour guide. He lives in Norwalk, Iowa, and travels throughout the Midwest giving presentations on all aspects of the Civil War. Please plan to join us at Discover O.P. for this special presentation.

WANTED!

VINTAGE CLOTHING NEEDED

Beginning in August, Discover O.P. is going to host "Family Day" one Saturday each month. This will be a day filled with special activities for families, and will include a vintage photo session where participants will have the opportunity to don some vintage attire and pose in front of the depot façade as a trolley conductor, motorman, or passenger. We are in need of some vintage-looking clothing that is easy to put on and take off by both children and adults. We are also seeking bowler-style hats in any size. If you have something you can donate to OPHS for this special event, please contact Brad Moore at executivedirector@ophistorical.org, or deliver your donations to Discover O.P. during our regular business hours.



Overland Park Historical Society
8001 Santa Fe Drive
Overland Park, KS 66204

Phone: (913) 381-8867

Hours:

Wednesday - Friday: 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Sunday - Tuesday: Closed

Web: www.ophistorical.org

Email: info@ophistorical.org

