



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
OTTAWA, KANSAS

PO BOX 145, OTTAWA, KANSAS, 66067
(785) 242-1232
WWW.OLDDEPOTMUSEUM.ORG
WWW.FRANKLINCOKSHISTORY.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 30, 2015

Franklin County Historical Society receives Kansas Humanities Council grant to develop Home Front in the Heartland, Revisited Project

The Kansas Humanities Council (KHC) has awarded the Franklin County Historical Society a \$3,430 grant for “Home Front in the Heartland, Revisited,” a research and oral history project built around the remarkable photos taken by freelancer J.B. Muecke during the early-mid 1940s, most of which were originally published in the *Ottawa Herald*.

This collection of iconic images—rescued from boxes of decaying negatives stored in a dirt-floored basement and digitized by FCHS staff during the past three years—depicts small-town Midwesterners “doing their bit” to support the country’s struggle against the Axis Powers.

There are men in a diner, listening to a radio broadcasting FDR’s Pearl Harbor speech. Young children with overloaded wagons and scooters participating in paper drives. Farmers collecting scrap metal from their fields. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts supporting war bond rallies. A recently inducted serviceman in uniform bidding farewell to a younger relative at the Ottawa train station. Shopkeepers and their customers dealing with rationing. German POWs working on farms bereft of local labor.

Using these images and other archival materials plus in-depth interviews with individuals who were children in Ottawa during the period, the project aims to explore and examine the Kansas experience during World War II, a period fast fading from living memory. Findings will be presented at two public programs at the Franklin County Historical Society’s Old Depot Museum in spring 2016.

“The civilian role in the home front aspect of World War II, particularly in rural areas, is long overdue for serious reevaluation,” noted Deborah Barker, executive director of the Franklin County Historical Society. “The KHC grant gives us the opportunity to examine the Muecke photos and related materials under a scholarly lens and disseminate this research to the general public. In the process, we expect the project will spark discussion about the role of civilians during wartime as well as such universal concepts as shared sacrifice, duty, loss, unity, and support.”

Noted Kansas historian Dr. Virgil Dean, who was born and raised in Franklin County and is the longtime editor of *Kansas History* as well as the author or editor of numerous books on state history, is the lead scholar on “Home Front in the Heartland, Revisited.” Henry Fortunato, a visiting fellow at the Hall Center for the Humanities at the University of Kansas and former director of public affairs at the Kansas City Public Library in Kansas City, Missouri, will serve as project director. Fortunato is also the founder of Sunflower Republic LLC, a consulting and creative services firm that develops public history projects.

“KHC Heritage grants encourage the preservation of local cultural resources,” said Julie Mulvihill, executive director of the Kansas Humanities Council. “This project brings Kansans a deeper understanding of life on the home front during World War II.”

The Kansas Humanities Council is a nonprofit organization that supports community-based cultural programs, serves as a financial resource through an active grant-making program, and encourages Kansans to engage in the civic and cultural life of their communities. For more information, visit www.kansashumanities.org.

Founded in 1937, the Franklin County Historical Society strives to preserve, present, and promote the history of Franklin County, Kansas. For more information, visit www.olddepotmuseum.org.

###

Media Contacts:

Deborah Barker
Executive Director, Franklin County Historical Society
(785) 242-1232
barkerd@olddepotmuseum.org

Henry Fortunato
Sunflower Republic LLC
(913) 309-7888
henry@henryfortunato.com