



**FRANKLIN COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
OTTAWA, KANSAS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photographic art historian to discuss J.B. Muecke's Home Front photos at March 20 event

Ottawa, Kansas—During the 1940s and 1950s, photographer J.B. Muecke (sometimes spelled Mickey) documented life in Franklin County, Kansas, capturing everything from major events like floods and tornadoes to the everyday moments of life in a small town.

On March 20, 2 p.m. at Neosho County Community College in Ottawa, Kansas, John Pultz, associate professor of art history at the University of Kansas, will examine a special collection of Muecke's photographs—Home Front photographs shot during the early to mid-1940s. Many of the images show small-town Midwesterners “doing their bit” to support the country's struggle against the Axis Powers during World War II.

Through his presentation, “Americans at Their Best: Patriotism and J.B. Muecke's Photographs of Franklin County,” Pultz wants to help viewers appreciate Muecke's photographs in a new way.

“I will work with viewers to look closely at Muecke's photographs to see how his choice of subject matter and careful staging convey ideas and ideals—especially the patriotism of Franklin County people during the Second World War,” said Pultz.

Thinking about photographs locally is not new to John Pultz, who has published on Kansas photography in *Western Waters: Photographs by Gregory Conniff, Terry Evans, and Wanda Hammerbeck*, addressing pictures of Cheyenne Bottoms, a wetlands and migratory bird habitat near Great Bend, and in *Our Town on the Plains: J. J. Pennell's Photographs of Junction City, Kansas, 1893-1922*, analyzing commercial studio photography in the early years of the twentieth century.

A writer of essays and books on photography, Pultz currently teaches the history of photography and art since 1900 at the University of Kansas. He has also worked as a curatorial fellow at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, as a consultant at the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Denver Art Museum, and curator at the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas. He studied at Amherst College and the Williams College/Clark Art Institute Graduate Program in the History of Art, and holds a Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

After Pultz's presentation, attendees will have an opportunity to examine prints of Muecke's work for themselves. The Franklin County Historical Society also invites anyone who lived in Franklin County during the 1940s and 1950s to share their stories of the time as they relate to the subject matter in Muecke's photographs.

“We'd love for attendees to take a closer look at Muecke's pictures. Perhaps you can help us identify people in

the photographs, or perhaps you just remember what it was like to participate in a paper or scrap drive,” said Deborah Barker, executive director of the Franklin County Historical Society. “You may even remember J.B. Muecke himself. We would love for you to share your memories with us.”

The March 20 event is part of a larger research and oral history project centered on J.B. Muecke’s work. The Franklin County Historical Society’s “Home Front in the Heartland, Revisited,” was recently awarded a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council.

For more information about the March 20 program, please call the Franklin County Historical Society at (785) 242-1232 or e-mail Deborah Barker at barkerd@olddepotmuseum.org.

Founded in 1937, the Franklin County Historical Society strives to preserve, present, and promote the history of Franklin County, Kansas.

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