

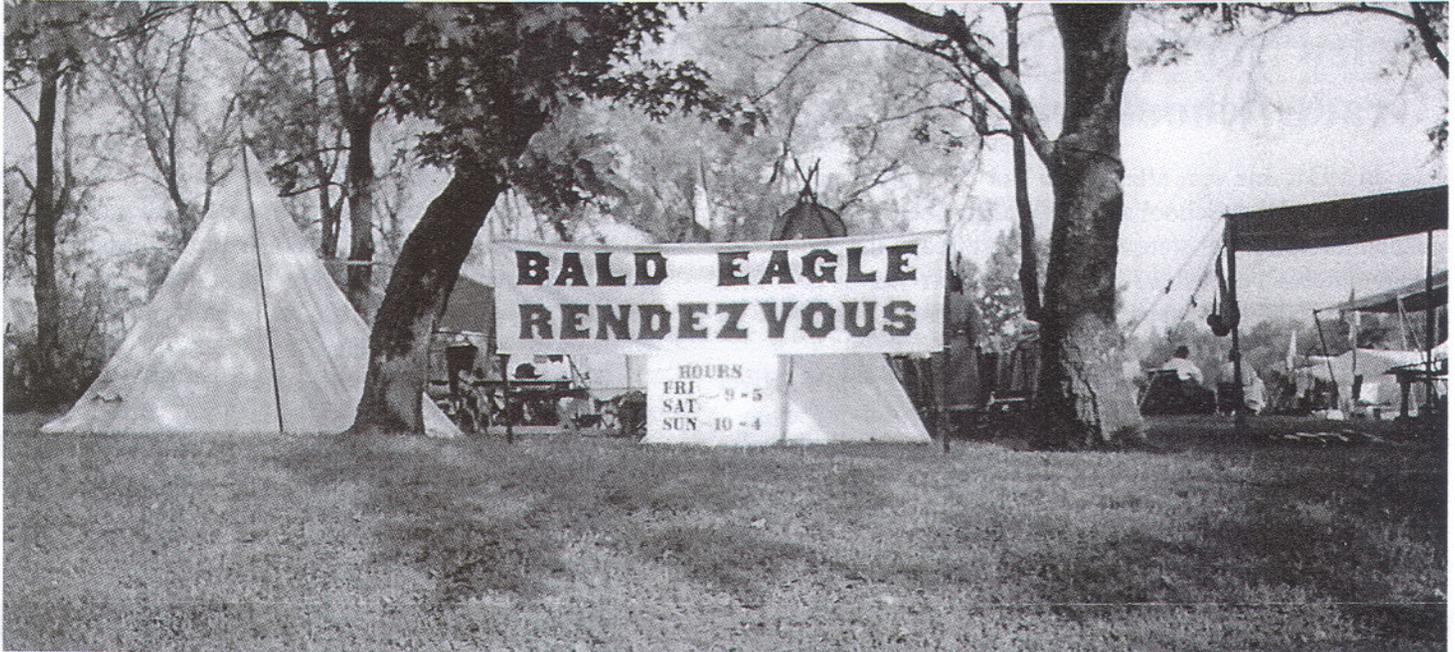
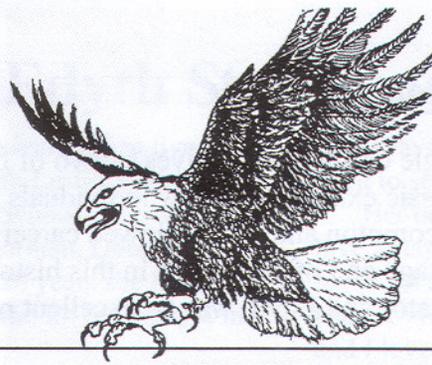
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# **BALD EAGLE**

**Volume Thirty-one, Issue Number 4**

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Rendezvous photos by Shirley Funk

The second BALD EAGLE RENDEZVOUS made it an official annual event. The beauty of the tents on the manicured park overlooking the Kansas River makes the setting unique. Twin promotional geniuses--Tim Rues, the Constitution Hall administrator, and Paul Bahnmaier, Lecompton Historical Society President--all but guarantee the third annual Rendezvous next fall will be even greater.

## Lecompton's "Bald Eagle Rendezvous" Features Tomahawks and Apple Pie

by Tim Rues, Constitution Hall Administrator

Historic Lecompton is best known as "the birth place of the Civil War," and this year the Lecompton Historical Society plays a leading role in celebrating both the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial and the Kansas Territorial Sesquicentennial (150<sup>th</sup>). Through those early decades, the banks of the Kansas River were home to fur traders, Indians and the early French explorers.

For the second year the "Bald Eagle River View Park" was the site for the Bald Eagle Rendezvous. It was three days of fun for period reenactors, old-time cooks and gunsmiths and hundreds of visitors.

Bald Eagle River View Park

bloomed into an encampment of tents with scores of tourists and school children enjoying the demonstrations. Modern-day reenactors, members of the First Santa Fe Trail Plainsmen Black Powder Club of Kansas, were outfitted in authentic, period clothing portraying French Voyageurs, Mountain Men, Plainsmen and Traders.

The rendezvous was in the park perched on a bluff above the Kaw River at the east end of Second Street in Lecompton. This one-acre park offers a panoramic vista of the Kaw River Valley. It is also the site of the recently restored 1850's stone cabin known as the "First Democratic Party Headquarters"

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### *Christmas Vespers and Territorial Capital Museum Open House Dec. 4*

Lecompton Historical Society's annual Traditional Christmas Vespers will be in the Territorial Capitol Museum Chapel at 2 p.m., Dec. 4, 2005. Music will be provided by the Lecompton United Methodist Church Choir, Bell Choir from the First United Methodist Church, Topeka, Francis Sanford, Cindy Daniels and other talented performers to be named later. An open house follows in the museum.

The Society has selected Nov. 19, Saturday, as Lane University decoration day. Any who would like to help deck the halls with boughs of cedar and holly, please come at 9 a.m.

## Two Women Who Make Lecompton Proud

**President's Note:** This issue of the Bald Eagle chronicles the lives of two of Lecompton's illustrious women. Both Helen Norwood and Edyth Stevenson are classic examples of how individuals can make Lecompton such a wonderful place to live. Each grew up in Lecompton and then followed careers in Lawrence, yet each of them never failed to let acquaintances know of their heritage and of their roots in this historic town. Helen exemplified all of the outstanding qualities of a wonderful educator and Edyth was an excellent politician whose service lived up to the highest standards.

-- Paul Bahnmaeir

### **Helen Norwood, Daughter of a Horse Trader, Grade School Principal, Willing Volunteer**

In 1931, one year after Helen Norwood graduated from Lecompton High School and the year that she passed the examination for her state teacher's certificate, the Jones School needed a teacher. It was located on what is now E. 500 Rd., about a mile south of the distinctive clock house on US40.

Helen was living with her parents on their farm on River Road just east of Lecompton, which would be about seven miles northeast of the Jones School. "I wanted to be a teacher so I saddled up one of our horses and rode over," she says. "Jim Brass was out plowing. I had to ride on out into the field to apply for the job. Can you imagine it?"

#### **One-Room Jones School**

There's a twinkle in her eye as she recalls her first teaching assignment. "The Jones School had eight grades and about 15 students. I was the only teacher, of course. I lived with the Brass family just down the road. He was on the school board. I remember I started at \$70 a month. That was 1932."

That started Helen's career in teaching, which began in that one-room school and concluded after 21 years as principal of Lawrence's Schwegler Grade School. When she retired in 1978, the Parent Teachers Association, appreciation, gave her an all-expense paid vacation to Hawaii.

In talking with her now it's clear that

some of her finest memories come from her two years at the Jones School. "Those days all of the eighth graders had to go to town to the courthouse to take a test to see if they qualified for high school. I was more nervous about whether my students would pass than they were." Did they? Her smile answers the question.

Her day would start early. Helen says that she'd walk the mile and a half to the school and build a fire. Two years later at the Crowder School she'd drive her Ford—"it had a rumble seat"—to school, picking up 10-year-old Jack Collins along the way. "He'd help me build the fire," she says.

#### **Milking Cows and Plowing Fields**

Helen was born in Lecompton in 1912. In her early years she'd milk cows, drive a team plowing corn fields and help in the garden. "We always had horses. My Dad was a big, red-headed man, a horse trader. When times were hard he'd sell walnut logs—I think they used them for gunstocks. Or he'd take a team and wagon with cream and eggs to town. Everyone called him Speck. He was a real character."

The daily newspaper, *The Lecompton Sun* of Jan. 24, 1918, wrote that R.M. Norwood "is still engaged in walnut logging, and delivers every day to Lecompton two or three loads of government gun-stock materials. Lecompton walnut will thus do service in France and later in Germany."

On July 18, 1918, the newspaper said, "Rob Norwood shipped his last car of walnut logs, until fall, Monday. This makes 40 cars he has shipped this season. Each car holds between four and five thousand feet, and is worth from \$30 to \$50 per thousand feet. He has already contracted for many logs for next fall and winter."

Helen's mother taught her at home so her first year at Lecompton Grade School saw her in the second grade. So here was second-grade Helen Norwood, with her first-grade brother George, driving a horse and buggy to school. "I'd tie the horse to the fence in my Grandpa Norwood's yard. He lived across the street. When the school house caught on fire, I just ran across the street to his house," she says.

She remembers downtown Lecompton of the 1920s and



*Helen Norwood, a principal of a Lawrence grade school for 21 years*

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# Above All Else, Edyth Stevenson Loves Lecompton

When you're 94 years old, you've had time to live a few different lives. First she was Edyth Leslie, star basketball player at Lecompton High School. She married in 1934 and for 48 years was Edyth Norman, Douglas County Treasurer. Then, for the past 20 years she has been Edyth Stevenson, the happy traveler who hit the jackpot in Nevada for \$10,000.

Edyth is a woman with happy memories of all those years and experiences. "I have loved my life," she says, "but I love most my memories of Lecompton. It's a wonderful town and I'm proud of it."

She grew up on a farm just south of Lecompton. She was born on 11-11-11, that's November 11, 1911 and her stories of her early years read like a story book.

"I was milking cows before school when I was seven years old. My younger brother Harold would always piddle around until I'd hitched the horse to the carriage. That horse was Old Ted and he was a big one," she says. "Off we'd go to school."

The Leslies would have as many as 30 cows most of the time. Edyth recalls that "getting an electric milker was a big deal."

## Apple Butter and Cottage Cheese

The Depression years were hard but Edyth says her father would help the family finances by "hauling a lot of hay. Sometimes he'd take a load of wood to town and get \$5 for it; sometimes he wouldn't. If times were really hard we'd butcher a pig or cow. Momma made apple butter and

we always had a crock of cottage cheese. For a few years I went to school in Perry. I lived with my Momma's sister."

Her best memories start at Lecompton High School. "I loved playing basketball. I was a jumping center," she says. "We had a good team. We won most of our games and we always beat Perry. Mr. Browning was our coach and I loved him. He was good."

She began her career in music in high school too. She played the piano and flute, but she loved to sing most of all. She was in all of the plays and operettas and was a soloist for the glee club. And Edyth kept singing. For 30 years she was in the choir and often a soloist for the First Christian Church in Lawrence.

## One Note Too High

But music also gave Edyth her biggest disappointment. "Right after I retired I went to KU. A teacher had me singing above middle C and I paralyzed my vocal chords. It broke my heart."

After high school she went to a business college in Topeka and then to Emporia Teachers College. She was married in 1934 and lived in Lawrence. "I worked in retail at the Palace in Lawrence and then I did the payroll for the Hercules company before I got a job at the Douglas County treasurer's office.

"I wasn't a politician," she says. "But I liked the work and the commissioners asked me to run for treasurer. I was only opposed one time and I beat that guy." She was re-elected three times as Douglas County Treasurer and retired in 1977.

She has enjoyed an active retirement, taking a Caribbean cruise and more often than not traveling to Nevada. "I was in Laughlin on the Colorado River. We were getting ready to leave and I was down to my last \$2. I saw a slot machine and thought, why not. What a thrill to win \$10,000.

"Harrah's is a good place to gamble, either out in Las Vegas or north of Topeka," she smiles. "I still like to head up there."

For years she has been a regular at the annual banquet for Lecompton High School grads. "I'll just keep going as long as Betty and Bill will get me there. (Bill and Betty Leslie; she's the Lecompton Historical Society treasurer). I just love that town and my high school memories. I don't want to miss that banquet ever."

--John Peterson



The arrow could be a star. Edyth Stevenson loved her basketball and remembers that Lecompton always beat Perry back in those good old days. She always jumped center. Other members of the team were Louise Clark, Mary McCrae, Helen McClanahan Smith, Elsie May Lasswell, and Arlene Fulton. the coach, standing next to Edyth, was Clarence Smith.

## Helen Norwood, Educator and Volunteer, *continued from page 2*

1930s well. The Rowena Hotel sat where the city park is now. The post office was in Walt McClanahan's store. Her grandfather had a carpentry shop and Alf Miksell had the barbershop. There was a beauty shop and a hardware store. Jake Hill owned the drugstore.

"There was the old one-lane bridge over the Kansas River. It had two planks that cars would drive over. Horses wouldn't go on that bridge," she says. "If you were going to cross over you'd make sure no one was coming from the other direction"

She was the oldest of five girls; they had seven brothers. Her two youngest brothers are still living; Wes in Lawrence and Jim in Cheney, Wash. The Norwoods attended the E.U.B. church and Helen remembers being awed by "the big, tall doors. Sure, I taught Sunday school classes."

### 16 Years to Graduate

After those early years at the Jones and Crowder schools, Helen taught first and second grade at Lecompton Grade School. "I loved teaching the youngsters," she says. And it was then that she seriously started pursuing her college education. "For 16 years I spent the summer at the Emporia Teachers College before I earned my degree. I received my masters from KU. I needed it so I could become a principal."

She spent 15 years teaching at Pinckney Grade School before becoming principal of Schwegler.

Helen is one of those women that retirement simply meant a change of direction.

She worked with Julia Springer to found the Lecompton Historical Association and save the Lane University building, which now houses our Territorial Capital Museum. "I love that old building," she smiles. "I have two more period dresses to donate to the museum."

She retired to the Norwood farm east of town and her garden earned the reputation of producing some of the finest vegetables. She liked to go to the dog and horse races in Nebraska. And she would go to Lawrence often where she was on the Council on Aging's transportation committee and was responsible for getting its bus to visit Lecompton.

### A Hug from the First Lady

One of her proudest memories is of Byron Norwood, the son of her nephew William and his wife Janet. Byron was killed in Iraq and his mother, Janet, had written the White House saying how proud she was of her son's service. That January, as a result, William and Janet were invited to attend President George Bush's State of the Union address. It was Janet who Laura Bush hugged during President Bush's speech.

So many of Helen's friends have been teachers and she loves to talk about them. But she's proud of her sister Jessie who didn't like teaching and became a nurse. "That one year she taught at Star she had to ride a Shetland pony to the school two miles south of Lecompton. That was enough for her."

Then, there's Gary Stauffer of Lecompton who succeeded Helen as Schwegler Grade School's principal. He lives in Lawrence today. "When I retired I asked for him to take my place," she says.

She talks of Harold and Shirley Summers; Harold was principal of Lecompton Grade School and Shirley taught at Lecompton High School, and of Clarence Smith who taught her in the fifth, seventh and eighth grades. And of Sara Slaven Walters who taught at Star and Lecompton schools...and, well, Helen knew all of the teachers. It was her life.

--John Peterson



Rob "Speck" Norwood with horses Nellie and Logan near the Thomas Lee Hardware Store in 1922. Young Helen would drive the same team to grade school many days.

# The Annual Report from the President of the Lecompton Historical Society

By Paul Bahnmaeir

The Lecompton Historical Society enjoyed another fantastic year in 2005. We had nearly 5,000 visitors from 47 states and 16 foreign countries to visit the Territorial Capital Museum at Lane University.

Charlene Winter has conducted 41 tours of the historic sites in Lecompton. The Lecompton Reenactors, a thriving troupe of actors led by J. Howard Duncan and Tim Rues, have performed at 44 different locations across eastern Kansas.

**LecomptonKansas.com**, our terrific website had 42,881 visits and the number grows each year. This year we began archiving the Bald Eagle newsletter on the Internet site and we hope to soon have the more than 20 years of newsletters available to the Internet.

Valuable donations of artifacts and monetary contributions continue to show how much pride and loyalty individuals have for Lecompton.

We recently have determined that the word Lecompton was used 51 times during the historic Lincoln-Douglas debates. This is the most famous debate in American history and for Lecompton to be used 51 times shows how important the city was to pre-Civil War history. Horace Greeley, editor and publisher of the New York Tribune, published a special eight-page edition that discussed only the Lecompton Constitution. It is no wonder that E.H. Butler of Philadelphia, the leading map maker of the time, stated that no city in the world was ever such a party cry; and that from 1855 to 1859 Lecompton was spoken in as many languages as the London, Paris or Berlin.

## The Lecompton Constitution

It can certainly be said that no town in Kansas can hold a candle to the history of Lecompton. The Lecompton Constitution had a major impact on United States history and was debated in Congress and in the Presidential campaign of 1859.

Constitution Hall in Lecompton is unquestionably the most historic building in Kansas and one of the most historic in America. Docents in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. say the writing of the Lecompton Constitution was one of the major events in United States history. Other towns may claim things about their history, but only Lecompton ranks in historical significance with Gettysburg, Harper's Ferry and Ft. Sumter.

Thanks for all you do to promote this community, Constitution Hall, our Territorial Capital Museum and the Lecompton Historical Society. And, of course, we welcome new members. Please use the form on the adjoining page.

## Events of 1855

From the *Kansas Weekly Herald*, Leavenworth, K.T., October 27, 1855

### Lecompton, K.T.

A sale of lots took place in Lecompton last Tuesday. The sale averaged \$172, for each lot—40 lots sold—bringing a total of \$6,880. The lowest lot sold was for \$104, the highest for \$55.00. Many of the lots brought as high as \$200 and \$300. It is now a settled fact that Lecompton is to be a large and prosperous city—at least 300 buildings will be put up there in the next 12 months. From Leavenworth City to Lecompton, the distance is not exceeding 35 miles, and a road can be made at a little expense, equal to any in the world.

### Lecompton City Ordinances

Ordinance No. 1

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Lecompton:

That the firing of a gun or pistol within the corporate limits of the city, between the hours of sunset and sunrise, shall be deemed a misdemeanor and any person found guilty of same, shall be fined in the sum of not less than one or more than five dollars.

This ordinance to take effect and be in force from and after its publication

Charles W. Otey, Clerk  
Owen C. Stewart, Mayor  
Lecompton, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1855

## Dates to Remember

**Nov. 19** – Tree trimming at Lane University Museum

**Dec. 4** – Traditional Christmas Vespers at 2 p.m.

**Jan. 29** – For six consecutive Sundays at 2 p.m. the internationally-renowned lecture series at Constitution Hall in downtown Lecompton

**June 12** – Annual Lecompton High School banquet.

**June 23-24** – Territorial Days

**Sept. 22-24** – Bald Eagle Rendezvous



There were old rifles, lots of tents, and "old-timers" in early 1850's outfits. The picture to the right is of the inside of the recently restored Territorial Democratic Party Headquarters, which is the centerpiece of Bald Eagle River View Park.



## Long Live the Bald Eagle Rendezvous!

*Continued from page 1*

in Kansas.

The rendezvous represents the Lecompton Historical Society's recognition of the importance of the decades before Lecompton became so nationally prominent in the mid 1850s. Commerce flowed on the river. Beaver pelts were the first real product shipped along the Kansas or Kaw River. Early Native American tribes such as the Kansas, Missouri, Osage, and Pawnee traded their pelts to French traders during the reign of Kings Louis XIV and XV in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They received in payment trade items such as cloth, tools, weapons, beads, trinkets, and liquor.

With the transfer of Louisiana from French to American hands in 1803, noted American entrepreneur John Jacob Astor established his American Fur Company. His company employed the famous French Chouteau brothers. Frederick

Chouteau opened and operated an AFC trading house to the Kansa Indians from 1829 to 1832 at Horseshoe Lake on the south bank of the Kaw River which today is the resort community of Lake View, Douglas County a few miles down river from Lecompton.

The Rendezvous was exciting, even though at times heavy rains fell. For three days and nights the grounds of the park became home to reenactors who demonstrated old-time skills such as campfire cooking and baking and food preparation, hide tanning and pelt preparation, flint and steel fire starting, decorative beadwork, Native American crafts, flint knapping, gunsmithing, flintlock rifle loading and firing, tomahawk and knife throwing. There were also games and skill activities for kids.



## Events of 1855...Our Sesquicentennial Celebration Continues



Members of the Lecompton Historical Society and Lecompton Reenactors wield their shovels. One member remarked, "I'm glad it's a reenactment." In attendance, Birch Higgins, Wally Holderman, Mae Holderman, Leah Kuhlman, Opal Goodrick, Frances Sanford, Charlene Winter, AK Winter, Sabrina Reed, Stetson Reed, Jon Reed, Michelle Martin, Coty Heinman, Tim Rues, Keith Noe, Dan Michaux, Carol Noe, Rick McConnell, Darlene Paslay, Vicki Leochner, Trudi Michaux, Mike Stewart, Kim Stewart, Dorothy Shaner, Greg Howard, Marlene Hackathorn, Bob Morris, Mary Lou Morris, Roy Paslay, Iona Spencer, Paul Bahnmaier, Maxine Dark, Marcella Anderson, and John Conrad.

### Excerpts from Kansas Territorial Capitol Building Contract of 1855

In 1855, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$50,000 to start the construction of the Kansas Territory Capitol Building. On Dec. 27, 1855, Gov. Wilson Shannon signed a contract with Aristide Rodrigue for the building's construction. Rodrigue was a founder of Lecompton and the town's first physician .

The contract specified precisely how much various kinds of excavation and materials would cost. The first page of the contract defines Dr. Rodrigue's responsibilities and how "he will do and perform all ...the work in about the building and erection of the Capitol, on the Capitol Square at the City of Lecompton...."

Much of the contract talks of "said specifications" and "considerations to wit.

"For common excavation such as is seen on the surface, thirty five cents per cubic yard. (Today's smaller dump trucks routinely carry 9 cubic yards.)

"For the excavation of loose rock, seventy-five cents a cubic yard.

"For the excavation of solid rock, One dollar and eighty seven and a half cents a cubic yard...."

Interestingly, the City of Lecompton "in consideration of the location of the capitol at Lecompton" agreed to furnish 500,000 bricks. Dr. Rodrigue's company was to receive "six dollars and fifty cents per thousand for the said five hundred thousand brick." That would be \$3,250 for laying up an awfully lot of bricks.

The terms of payment were defined. Dr. Rodrigue was to present a bill of estimated expenses monthly and Gov. Shannon would withhold 20 percent of the total billings until the job was finished.

We now know that work was suspended on the capitol following the Free State Party victory in the October 1857 legislative election. By then, the \$50,000 was gone with only a half-story of work completed on the building. It was the

1858 defeat of the Lecompton Constitution, created by the pro-slavery forces in 1857, by the U.S. Congress that meant the Kansas Territorial Capitol building would never rise in Lecompton.



Constitution Hall Administrator Tim Rues and Michelle Martin on the steps of the building for which the groundbreaking occurred in 1855.

## Donations to Territorial Capital Museum

1. 1903 Public Schools of Lecompton and 1901 Lane University yearbooks, and other articles, by Brea Black.
2. Garden Tool, by Martin Long.
3. Kansas Founding document, by Virgil Dean.
4. "We the People" booklet, by Mildred Dean.
5. G.I. Joe Statue Classic Collection, memorial for Ruth Norwood Harris.
6. Check writing machine, memorial for Cecilia Roberts.
7. Eisenhower plate, memorial for Edith Slavens Ward.
8. Family photos, by Marcella Kreipe Anderson.
9. 1918 Lecompton High School announcement belonging to Amos Geelan, by Charles Geelan.

## Obituaries

**NORDLING, Bernard E. "Bernie"**, 84, died Aug. 31, 1005.

He was born June 14 1921, near Nekoma in Rush County, Ks., the son of Ebben and Edith Freeburg Nordling. He graduated from the University of Kansas Law School in 1949

He was a Life member of the Lecompton Historical Society.

Survivors include his widow, Barbara of the home; his

daughters, Karen Koehler, of Lawrence; Kristine Stepaniuk of Chester-field, Mo; Leslie Petz, of Garden City, Ks. and Julie Andrews, of Colorado Springs, Co.; son and law partner, Erick, of Hugoton; a sister Lucile Slicker, of Tulsa, Ok.; a brother, Chester Nordling, of Bentonville, Ark.; 15 grandchildren and two great grand-children.

Burial in McPherson Cemetery in McPherson, Ks.

**KOLLIN, Robert Charles 'Bob'**, 89, Lawrence, died Saturday, Sept. 17, 2005

He was born Aug. 28, 1916, in Marshall-town, Iowa, the son of Fred and Anna Fryhoff Kollin.

Mr. Kollin served in the U S. Army Air Force during World War II.

He was a member of the Lecompton Historical Society for years.

He married Erma Korber on Aug 2, 1957, in Fort Worth, Tex. She died Sept. 19, 2002 A twin brother, Bill died May 31, 1986.

Survivors include a son, Scott, Lawrence; a foster daughter, Melody Cain, Tucson, Az.; and a foster granddaughter.

Burial in Frieden United Church of Christ Cemetery near Bern.

## Membership Report

### Life membership:

John Solbach and wife

Patricia (Kennedy] Solbach

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### Lecompton Historical Society

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Vice President \*Rich McConnell

Secretary \*Vicki Roberts Bahnmaier

Treasurer \* Betty Leslie

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