

Pioneer Bluffs

Center for Flint Hills Ranching Heritage



110th Barn Birthday & Annual Barn Dance

May 3rd
4:00 p.m.

April 2025

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Join us for a “Hayloft Hoedown” at 4:00 pm on Saturday, May 3rd, to celebrate our historic barn’s 110th Birthday and 10th Anniversary of its restoration. We will have presentations and a reception, followed by our annual old-time Barn Dance with beginner instruction at 6:00 pm and the dance at 6:30 pm.

Guest speakers Ben Moore and Rick Mitchell will travel down memory lane to present details about the restoration process that took place a decade ago, making the Pioneer Bluffs’ barn what it is today. Following their presentation, be among the first crowd to witness the wonderful Barn Restoration Video created by Dave Leiker and Annie Wilson in its debut to the public.

The celebration will continue with a heavy-snack reception, birthday cake, and guided barn and house tours.



Photo by Harold Gaston (LandBand)

When the Roglers’ finished construction of the Pioneer Bluffs’ barn in 1915, they hosted what they called an ‘Old-Fashioned



Barn Dance’ in which nearly 300 people attended! We think it’s necessary to round out the evening with an old-time barn dance of our own, featuring the LandBand. Beginner instruction will start at 6:00 pm with the Barn Dance following at 6:30 pm.



Photo by Harold Gaston

UPCOMING PRAIRIE TALKS

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

NAMIBIA; RANCHING AND CONSERVATION

1:00 pm

Namibia, in southern Africa, is one of the least densely populated counties in the world, with vast rangelands, cattle ranches, and diverse wildlife. Like Kansas, much of its land is privately owned ranchland. Ryan and Ron Klataske will explore the similarities and differences between Namibia's ranching heritage and conservation culture with the Flint Hills.



Ryan and Ron Klataske

Drawing on their travels together and Ryan's immersive anthropological research, they will share striking photography and stories of how Namibian ranchers have developed innovative conservation partnerships—revealing unexpected connections between ranching in southern Africa and Kansas.



Miles McKee



For these community events, donations are requested, but not required (except where noted.)

For updates on specific events, please check our website or Facebook page.

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

FIVE OAKS RANCH & MILES MCKEE

12:00 pm - BBQ

Compliments of Five Oaks Ranch

Join us at 12:00 pm on Saturday, June 21, before the Prairie Talk for a barbeque meal, compliments of Five Oaks Ranch.

Please RSVP by June 16th by call or text to 620-753-3484 or email: info@pioneerbluffs.org.

[No RSVP needed for the talks]

1:00 pm: Story of Five Oaks Ranch

John and Annie Wilson, Katie Wilson Hancock, and Jane Cauthorn will share stories and historic photos of their ranch on Middle Creek west of Elmdale on its 100th birthday. They'll tell about homesteading immigrant families - Prachts from Germany and Maybells from France, colorful era of Wiley draft horse ranch & Middle Creek Fair, and starting in 1925, Kansas City

Stockyards-based Browning Ranch operated by the McKee, Cauthorn, Parsons, Shaw, and Burnett families, and for the last 32 years by the Wilson family and known as Five Oaks Ranch.

2:00 pm: Break with Cake

We'll take a break between talks and enjoy some Five Oaks Ranch 100th birthday cake!

2:30 pm: Legacy of Miles McKee

Miles McKee, Professor of Animal Science at K-State from 1959-2005, grew up in Chase County. Miles taught thousands of students in beef production, led numerous livestock judging activities, and had an enormous impact through his outstanding academic advise, which guided many young people to success.

In this Prairie Talk, the McKee family will share about his legacy with time at the end for some former students to share their favorite stories and recollections to be recorded for posterity.



L.R. Wiley & Sons - draft horse ranch - circa 1911

DAY OF THE COWBOY

*Honoring cowboys
past and present*

6:30 pm | Saturday, July 26

Come and join us for our annual Day of The Cowboy!

This year's event will feature Bruce Brock, our own local Flint Hills cowboy who is also an established artist.



Bruce Brock

Bruce enjoys sharing his ranching and cowboy experiences through his artwork, poetry, and written stories. He is also known for his leather work, which includes boot and saddle repair.

In the last few years, Bruce's focus has shifted from leather work towards writing and painting. He has written three books containing poems and stories about himself and other cowboy friends of the Flint Hills. He has also shared these stories in the form of acrylic-based paintings. We've heard he may even have a few rope tricks up his sleeve!



On this day of celebrating "cowboy life," we will also remember the lives of Jim and Josh Hoy, honoring them with a special tribute.

ANNUAL FALL ROUND-UP

2:00 pm | Saturday, October 11

Two fun and special treats are in store for our annual Fall Roundup! Come hear "Flint Hills Veterinarians tell their Best Ranch Stories" from a panel of experienced veterinarians. These vets will share their favorite stories - whether funny, wild, or sweet - of working with horses, cattle, dogs and people on ranches across the Flint Hills. The panel will include Drs. Duane Henrikson of Emporia, Tom Jernigan of Council Grove, Bill Brethour of Wamego, Jessica Laurin Gernhard of Marion, and Audra Blasi of Council Grove.



Jennylou & the Buckaroos

For the finale, starting around 3:30 pm, we'll hear a concert by the award-winning Jennylou and the Buckaroos. You won't want to miss this performance, as three state champion instrumentalists join America's sweethearts, Jennylou and Josh Melcher. The hilarious Ranger Stan Greer will be narrating the concert and is guaranteed to keep you grinning between songs.

Homemade cookies and refreshments will be served.



At Pioneer Bluffs, our grounds are free and open every day during daylight hours. The Nature Trail meanders through a wooded area along Crocker Creek, offering a natural space for hiking, exploring, bird watching, photography, and reflection. It builds on our self-guided tour, available on QR codes placed around the property, which provide information on the area's cultural heritage and history. The tour is online at: tour.pioneerbluffs.org



The Hoy Family Ranching Heritage

In Memory of Jim & Josh Hoy

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The Flint Hills continues to mourn the loss of treasured friends and true cowboys in Jim and Josh Hoy. Jim was instrumental in the early days of Pioneer Bluffs. As the Founding Board began building the framework for this new organization, Jim's experiences as rancher, historian, and educator helped shape who we are today. He kept focus on what was most important - the heritage of the Flint Hills. With the wisdom of a cowboy, Jim brought logic, common sense, and understanding to Board decisions. One of Jim's greatest gifts to Pioneer Bluffs was coming up with the term "Prairie Talk" when the Board was developing signature programs. Jim gave numerous Prairie Talks over the years, sharing stories on a variety of topics. Most recently, Jim and Josh did a few Prairie Talks together, including one about their Journey to Kyrgyzstan and were part of a panel of Bison ranchers.

Josh was currently serving on the Pioneer Bluffs Board of Directors as Vice President. He was always thinking one step ahead and had big visions and ideas for the organization. Josh was constantly on the move meeting new people, teaching others about the Flint Hills, or learning new things himself across the globe. Alongside all that he did for the Flint Hills region and beyond, he was also known for his delicious chuckwagon meals and homemade ice-cream that he served at the Day of the Cowboy event last July. We will certainly miss his presence on the Board.

In honor of Jim and Josh, the Hoy Family Ranching Heritage Fund was established. All funds raised in memory of Jim and Josh will be used for projects that preserve the heritage of ranching in the Flint Hills and promote ranching initiatives in the future.