



Dodge County Historical Society

1643 N. Nye Ave. / P.O. Box 766 / Fremont, NE / 68025 / 402.721.4515
www.maymuseum.com

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Kappeler Has Many Ties With Louis E. May Museum

Many readers of this newsletter perhaps do not know that Jeff Kappeler has been May Museum executive director for 12 years.

Prior to this role, Jeff worked as curator of exhibits for about 10 years with Patty Manhart, former executive director.

He also volunteered at the Museum while attending Midland Lutheran College (1968-73).

Those were years after Western Theological Seminary had owned the building and sold it.

The building opened as the May Museum on May 1, 1970.

However, Jeff said he first became aware of the Lutheran Seminary when he was about 8 years old.

“My grandparents lived on 17th Street and after going to Sunday



Jeff Kappeler, May Museum director, polishes the creamer that is part of a silver tea set. It comes from the Fremont family, but it isn’t known if it was once owned by John C. Fremont.

School at the Presbyterian Church, I would walk to their house,” Jeff said.

“I would walk by the Seminary (future May Museum and former Ray Nye house) and was very fascinated by the architecture.”

Jeff said one day he stood outside what is now the Museum library and studied the stained glass windows very carefully.

Kappeler, continued on p. 2

Director's Column

Jeff Kappeler



We were recently informed and very saddened to learn of the death of our painter and restoration expert, Gary Johnson.

Gary was employed by David Lawrence Painting of Omaha for over 30 years.

Some may remember seeing Gary standing on a tall ladder as he scraped maybe more than 11 layers of lead-based paint off the outside walls of the Museum.

Once a section of the paint was removed, needed repairs would be visible and then Gary would fix them.

Next, the bare wood was sanded, treated, primed and finally two finish coats of paint were applied.

Gary was quite skilled and will be greatly missed by his friends at the May Museum.

Calendar of Events

Monday, June 12, July 10

ENGS meeting, 5:30 p.m.

NOTE change of day/time

Thursday, June 15

Annual Meeting, noon

NOTE change of time

Dodge County Historical Society

Friday, July 7-Sunday, July 9

John C. Fremont Days

Museum open 1-4 p.m. on July 7, 8

Memorials & Gifts

There were no Memorials/Gifts.

Kappeler, continued from p. 1

Director Shares Information About Job

When the Seminary sold the house, the stained glass windows were removed.

About 30 years later, the windows were located in Colorado, purchased and returned to the Museum. Jeff said he was the one who cleaned them and put them back in their original openings.

Having a connection with the Museum for over 50 years means Jeff has a wealth of knowledge about the building's history. His daily responsibilities have included developing themes for exhibits and then selecting items from Museum collections to be utilized in each room for the two-year exhibits.

"All the exhibits I've done basically have been an outline of Fremont and Dodge County history in one way or another," Jeff said.

In addition to working with exhibits, Jeff said he really enjoys helping people with research so they can learn more about their families and Dodge County history.

Some of Jeff's research regarding his own family resulted in discovering another connection with the Nyes and May Museum.

Edmund Freeman, one of Jeff's direct ancestors, emigrated from England to Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in 1635.

Benjamin Nye, a direct ancestor of Ray Nye, emigrated from England in 1634. Both Freeman and Nye were passengers on the ship called Abigail. They also were two co-founders of Sandwich, Massachusetts.

"So, now I'm here taking care of this property (May Museum) that has a connection with my family and the Nye family from the 1600s," Jeff said.

"Taking care of this property" as executive director means Jeff has multiple responsibilities that include planning events, public relations, assisting researchers, putting out fires and even polishing a silver tea set if needed.

John C. Fremont Returns To Florida

After 30 years of being on loan to the May Museum, a life-size figure of John C. Fremont was returned in March to his owner in Florida.

Made in 1951, the head and hands (of John C. Fremont) are made of wax and the rest of the body is jointed wood, said Jeff Kappeler, Museum director. The origin of the figure is a wax museum in England.

John Charles Fremont (1813-1890) was an explorer, surveyor and map-maker. He was the first Republican nominee for president in 1856, losing to Democrat James Buchanan. Fremont also was a California senator, U.S. Army General, and governor of the Arizona territory.

Beginning in 1842, Fremont led five expeditions to the American West. The U.S. Senate published a series of seven maps based on those expeditions. The maps, depicting the entire length of the Oregon Trail, served as a guide for thousands of American immigrants.

None of Fremont's expeditions brought him to what is current-day Fremont, Nebraska. Jeff explained, "When Fremont was mapped out, John C. was running for president against James Buchanan in 1856, the year Fremont was founded. A number of founders were Republicans from the East and Fremont was the candidate of their choice, so they named the town Fremont."

According to research sources, "Historians portray Fremont as controversial, impetuous, and contradictory. Some scholars regard him as a military hero of significant accomplishment, while others view him as a failure who repeatedly defeated his own best interests."

Fremont married Jessie Benton, daughter of Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton. They were the parents of 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls.

In retirement, John C. and Jessie lived on Staten Island in New York.

Although the John C. Fremont figure is no longer sitting in a chair in an upstairs Museum bedroom, visitors will see furniture from an apartment where John C. and Jessie lived in New York City. Jeff said included are 4 chairs, rocker and marble-top table.

Referring to when the figure was still in the Museum, Jeff said there were mixed reactions when visitors saw it. "When I gave a tour, I always warned people ahead of time where he would be sitting."

Responses ranged from being mildly amused to startled. "Children were not amused by him. I had to continually reassure them that he was not real," Jeff said.

So, Jeff admits he wasn't sad to send the John C. Fremont figure back to Florida. However, he encourages

people to come visit the Museum. "While John C. is no longer here, the Fremont furniture remains."



This picture of John C. Fremont is from Harper's Weekly, published on July 13, 1861. After his Western expeditions, Fremont earned the nickname The Pathfinder.

Make Butter Using Yogurt

Thanks to Steve Bunck for submitting this recipe for making Aromatic Butter.

The following recipe produces butter that is more flavorful than most available in the supermarkets, but it is not quite like the butter we made at home when I was a child.

Ingredients: 150 grams plain Greek yogurt and 1 quart or liter heavy whipping cream

Add all of the yogurt to a large bowl. Add a small amount of cream and mix. The yogurt is quite thick and is more easily dispersed in a small amount of cream. Once the yogurt is dispersed, add the remaining cream and mix. Cover the bowl with a clean cloth and place in a warm place. (I use the top of my refrigerator.) Allow the mixture to rest for two days.

Uncover the bowl and place the contents in a mixing bowl. Using a mixer with a whisk attachment (mine is a Kitchen Aid) whip the cream until you begin to see curds of butter forming. If you continue to whip, a large mass of butter will form

that is difficult to remove from the whisk attachment. At this point, I change to a more open mixing head and beat slowly for a bit more time. At this point, the cream has "broken", that is to say the butter has formed. Continued mixing will splash the buttermilk all over the place, so I usually stop here.

Cut a piece of cheese cloth large enough to fit generously over a colander or strainer. Place the strainer in a sink and add the contents of the mixing bowl. Gently rinse the butter curds with cold water until the rinse water becomes fairly clear. Grab the ends of the cheese cloth and squeeze to remove the excess water. At this point, you should have about 3/4 pound butter.

If you wish to salt the butter, you will need to weigh it. Add an amount of salt equal to 1.7% the mass of the butter. This measurement does not need to be particularly precise. Use your hands to knead the butter so as to mix in the salt.

Place your butter in a plastic container or wrap it in plastic wrap and refrigerate.

Get Me To The Church On Time

This is the last year for the exhibit “Wedding Bells: Customs and Attire Through the Decades.” With this page focusing on the theme of the groom preparing for his wedding ceremony, there are a variety of accessories in the upstairs bathroom.

Although not included on this page, visitors will see a vest, suit coat, and dress shoes in the exhibit.



An early 1900s tin bathtub with an oak edge was probably purchased from a mail-order catalog like Sears and Roebuck, said Jeff Kappeler, May Museum director.

The copper tea kettle on the footstool held hot water if the bath water became too cool. Jeff said it probably was handcrafted and features a brass handle and porcelain knob.



(Bottom left picture): Any man who did not have a beard or mustache probably owned a shaving mug and brush. Jeff explained that men often left their shaving mug at the barber shop. Many of the mugs had designs that depicted the owner’s profession.

The mug on the top shelf (left) has the picture of a horse head and could have belonged to a livery stable owner.

On the top shelf (right), this mug has a horn and may have belonged to a band leader. Featuring an anvil, the mug on the bottom shelf may have belonged to a blacksmith.

The mug in the center of the top shelf belonged to Louis May and is personalized with his name.

Positioned in front of the display case is a leather strap used to sharpen straight-edge razors.

The celluloid box on the bottom shelf says neckties. Hand-held hair clippers are shown at left of the necktie box.



This collection of late 19th and early 20th century timepieces include a nickel and brass alarm clock from about 1900 and pocket watches.