

"The Sage of Emporia in Popular Culture" kicks off Sundays at the Site

By **MARCIA LAWRENCE**
The Emporia Gazette

Much has been written about William Allen White, the legendary editor and publisher of The Emporia Gazette, known as “The Sage of Emporia.” But when was the last time you linked William Allen White with either Superman or MTV?

Roger Heineken presented a unique view of White Sunday afternoon at Red Rocks State Historic Site, opening the Sundays at the Site 2025 series and celebrating the historic site’s 20th anniversary. Heineken’s program was entitled “The Sage of Emporia in Popular Culture” and he treated his large audience to some little-known tidbits about Emporia’s favorite son.

“I try to distinguish between what we know about White from my theories,” Heineken said. “Popular culture is kind of a catchall phrase. Not everything I’ll discuss was within William



MARCIA LAWRENCE/GAZETTE

Roger Heineken said, "I've been involved with the Red Rocks site since before it opened to the public in May 2005. The range of his life and career, and the family's, is so deep and wide. I wish I could have known him."

Allen White’s experience or lifetime.”

Heineken continued, noting, “Had White not published “What’s the Matter with Kansas” in 1896 at 28 years of age, I wouldn’t be giving this program. The editorial countering the Populist Movement went viral, in modern parlance, making him famous in short order. The editorial was republished in newspapers across the country and was distributed in pamphlet form by the Republican Party. The editorial opened doors for White’s greater influence, which flowed beyond journalism and politics affecting American popular culture.”

Heineken explained that White was a prolific writer, publishing 23 books in all genres. He wrote numerous magazine features, and penned thousands of editorials in the span of his 49-year career. Unknown to some, several of his works were adapted into films of the silent era. His Mary White editorial, written on the occasion of his daughter’s untimely death as a mere 16-year-old, inspired the 1977 ABC Movie of the Week 56 years after her death. The movie was filmed in Emporia and the surrounding area.

Personal associations and friendships contributed to White’s impact on pop culture. Heineken’s slide show offered numerous examples of that impact. His friendship with bestselling author Edna Ferber is a good example. Ferber lived in New York, but collaborated in writing scripts for Hollywood films.

“She would always stop in Emporia to visit Sallie and Will on train trips between the east and west coasts, breaking up a long journey,” Heineken

said. “On one visit White was telling her about land runs in Oklahoma Territory while sitting on the porch of Red Rocks. She thought it would make good background for a book. Ferber published the bestseller “Cimarron,” sold film rights to Hollywood for a record \$125,000, and the movie became the first western-genre film to win the Best Picture Oscar.”

Clearly enjoying himself, Heineken continued. “The Coca-Cola Museum in Atlanta has an exhibit on the secret formula for the new Coke of the 1980s. The company initiative was called “Project Kansas,” inspired by a White quote from 1938. This launched the Cola War between Coke and Pepsi.”

Continuing with the big names that everybody knows, Heineken said, “People theorize that William Allen White inspired the character of editor Perry White in the Superman comic series. When pop comics came to serials, writers developed the character of William Allen White in the stories. One of the 1940 episodes featured Superman battling the Clan of the Fiery Cross—clearly a nod to White’s gubernatorial campaign, conducted solely to run the Ku Klux Klan out of Kansas.”

Heineken had the audience in stitches as he shared slides of huge models of William Allen White’s head that have been used for decades by the band They Might Be Giants, whose music video clips have been featured over the years on MTV.

“The band’s website continues to offer William Allen White merchandise,” Heineken noted with a straight face, “which at one time included WAW thong underwear.”

More and more examples



MARCIA LAWRENCE/GAZETTE

Roger Heineken presents “The Sage of Emporia in Popular Culture” at the Red Rocks State Historic Site Sunday afternoon to a large and appreciative audience.

of the lasting legacy of Emporia’s William Allen White were presented, not the least of which included the “White Connection” to John Steuert Curry’s huge murals in the Kansas state capitol building, and the Curry “Tragic Prelude” image used by the rock band Kansas as an album cover.

Heineken concluded his presentation by saying, “I always say White is the gift that keeps on giving. There is always something new to learn about our favorite son. I’ve been involved with the Red Rocks site since before it opened to the public in May 2005. The range of his life and career, and the family’s, is so deep and wide. I wish I could have known him.”

2025 is the 20th year of the free Sundays at the Site program series sponsored by the William Allen White Community Partnership, Inc., the local organization that works in cooperation with the Kansas Historical Society to help fund annual operations and present the Red Rocks State Historic Site. The next program in the series will be “Kathrine Klinkenberg White As I Knew Her” on Sunday,

LEGAL S

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Advertisement for Bids
Lyon Co., Kansas
2025 Rd. P Bridge Replacement
Sealed Bids for the construction of the 2025 Rd. P Bridge Replacement in Lyon Co., KS will be received at Lyon County Courthouse in the Clerk’s Office, 430 Commercial Street Emporia, KS 66801 until 10 A.M. on July 8, 2025, then publicly opened and read aloud in the Lyon County Commission Chambers. *The envelope should be plainly marked on the outside “RD. P BRIDGE BID”*. Bids received after this time will be returned unopened. The Project generally consists of construction of a new 100’-125’-100’ WMCC bridge and supporting roadway grading. Principal Items of Work: Quantity Unit Common Excavation 3,710 C.Y. Contractor Furnished Exc. 2,997 C.Y. Rock Excavation 142 C.Y. Compaction of Earthwork 4,837 C.Y. Concrete (Grade 4.0)(AE) 461 C.Y. Reinforcing Steel (Grade 60) 118,330 Lbs. Structural Steel 263,000 Lbs. Piles HPI12x53 400 L.F. Predrilled Pile Holes 63 L.F. Drilled Shaft (48”)(Cased) 108 L.F. Slope Protection 544 C.Y. Surfacing Material (AB-3) 1,480 Tons Seeding & Erosion Control Lump Sum L.S. Traffic Control Lump Sum L.S. Bids will be received for a single prime Contract. Bids shall be on a lump sum and unit price basis. Bid security shall be furnished in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders. The Issuing Office for the Bidding Documents is: Drexel Technologies, 10840 West 86th Street, Lenexa, KS 66214. Prospective Bidders may examine the Bidding Documents, by appointment only, at the following:

1. Lyon County Clerk’s Office, 430 Commercial St. Emporia, KS 66801
2. BG Consultants, Inc., 4806 Vue Du Lac Pl, Manhattan, KS 66503, (785) 537-7448
3. Drexel Technologies www.drexeltech.com

Bidding Documents may be viewed and ordered online by registering with the Issuing Office at www.drexeltech.com. Following registration, Bidding Documents may be downloaded from the Issuing as “zipped” portable document format (PDF) files. The cost of printed Bidding Documents from the Issuing Office will depend on the number and size of the Drawings and Project Manual, applicable taxes, and shipping method selected by the prospective Bidder. Cost of Bidding Documents and shipping is non-refundable. If Contract Documents are shipped, the requesting party assumes responsibility for all related shipping charges. Non-refundable corporate, certified, or cashier’s checks shall be made payable to Drexel Technologies. The date that the Bidding Documents are transmitted by the Issuing Office will be considered the Bidder’s date of receipt of the Bidding Documents. Partial sets of Bidding Documents will not be available. Wage Rate Requirements: Prevailing wage rates do not apply to this project. The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to waive any irregularities therein.

LEGAL S

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Legal Notice

The North Central-Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging, Inc. is accepting applications for purchase-of-service agreements for certain services funded under the Older Americans Act. Proposals are requested from providers that serve all of these counties in the 18-county region Chase, Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Geary, Jewell, Lincoln, Lyon, Marion, Mitchell, Morris, Ottawa, Pottawatomie, Republic, Riley, Saline and Wabauance for the provision of the following services:

- Evidence-based disease prevention and health promotion, physical fitness and exercise, services funded under Title III-D of the Older Americans Act.
- Provide Matter of Balance and Tai Chi for Arthritis
- Provide other evidence-based programs that meet the highest-level criteria under the Administration on Aging guidelines.
- Family Caregiver Support Groups funded under Title III-E of the Older Americans Act.

Providers must comply with all of the following requirements:

1. Provide service in these counties in the 18-county area Chase, Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Geary, Jewell, Lincoln, Lyon, Marion, Mitchell, Morris, Ottawa, Pottawatomie, Republic, Riley, Saline and Wabauance counties
 2. Accept referrals from designated staff of the NC-FH Area Agency on Aging.
 3. Provide a demonstrated record of top-quality services to meet the needs of older Kansans and caregivers of older Kansans in NC-FH AAA region.
 4. Comply with assurances, reporting, match and all other policy requirements.
 5. Submit completed application before close of business June 20, 2025.
- Information for prospective applicants is available by contacting: Katie Allen, North Central-Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging, 401 Houston St., Manhattan, KS 66502. Email: bid@ncfhaa.com Phone: 785-787-2432 Fax: 785-776-9479. The North Central-Flint Hills Area Agency on Aging does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, age, sex, color, national origin or disability.

FOSTER

From **PAGE 1**

"Then to have Hugo chambers. I said, as my friend and know him. Oh my gosh, my grandparents would just be so happy today," said Foster, recalling his speech, "I became someone today. I became someone in the history books"

Following his heartwarming speech, Foster once again spoke with Chambers, who allowed him the chance to play his snare with the all star band.

A few years later, following Chambers' passing, his wife came to visit Foster while he was performing. That's where Foster received one of his most surprising gifts.

Chambers' wife had come to give Foster that same snare drum, the same drum that had been on countless records spanning decades.

Foster maintained the same incredulous feeling recounting the story as he did when he first received the gift.

The belt buckle of Merle Haggard

Foster met Merle Haggard back in 1981 after working with some of his close associates at Lake Shasta in Redding, California.

They became fast friends, and Haggard loaned out his cabin at the lake to Foster for a month following his marriage to Debbie Duchelle, a

singer and bassist.

While there, Foster actually inspired Haggard in a moment of writers block for his song, "My Favorite Memory." After that, Foster was asked to go on tour with him.

"Me? go play drums with you?" Foster said, recalling his starstruck response to Haggard's invitation.

The only downside was Merle had no backstage access passes left to give Foster. The passes came in the form of belt buckles, made for each of "The Strangers," the name of Merle's backing band.

Foster couldn't help but verbally express his disappointment.

"That's my luck. I go, you get something cool like that, they have a belt buckle with your name on it. That's too much," recalled Foster.

After hearing how much it meant to Foster, Merle stood up and handed Foster his own belt buckle.

"All the scratches you see are from Merle's guitar, where he's in concert playing, but that's Merle's original belt buckle," remarked Foster, pointing out the various markings of the buckle.

The accomplishments of Rod Foster

The life and story of Rod Foster is so much more than who he has played with and the various pieces of music memorabilia that sit in his house. There is a much deeper and more inspiring story behind all of the snare



AUSTIN HOAGLAND/GAZETTE

drums, posters, and CDs.

Rod's upbringing was spent in extreme poverty.

"My grandparents were so poor, we didn't even have plumbing. We lived a mile and a half out here, and we didn't have plumbing," said Foster.

Foster was inspired to pursue drumming after watching an episode of the Mickey Mouse Club featuring Mickey playing the drums at five years old, seeing the joy that playing could bring to others.

He only took one drumming lesson his entire life. He could not read sheet music. He had to fight for every opportunity that he received, and yet he achieved international acclaim and success purely from his passion to do the same thing he saw on the TV all those years ago.

"If I can be in a place I've got 5,000 people or more, and I do one thing in the entire show that brought hap-

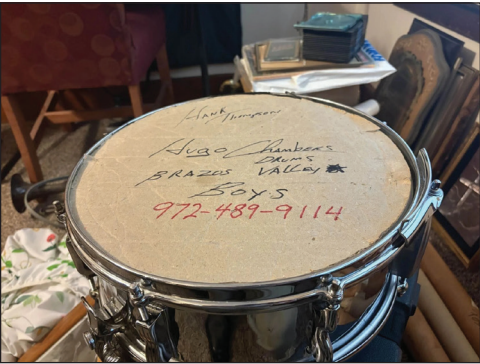
piness to one person, just for a few moments - they forgot their sorrows, their troubles - I've done my job. I've done my job. I brought happiness to them," said Foster.

These days, Foster remains in his house in Olpe, starting a new hobby of shooting short films and even starting to pitch the idea of forming a new band to start playing around the Lyon County area.

Until then, Foster is surrounded by his mementos and memories of all of the accomplishments that came from nothing.



AUSTIN HOAGLAND/GAZETTE



AUSTIN HOAGLAND/GAZETTE



Emporia Kansas

Juneteenth 2025

There will be no residential trash, (WEST SIDE) recycling service, roll-off service, or cardboard service on Thursday, June 19, 2025, in observance of Juneteenth.

Residential trash and (WEST SIDE) recycling service normally picked up on Thursday will be picked up on Wednesday, June 18, 2025.

Residents are asked to please have polycarts out by 6:00 a.m. on pick up days as areas may be picked up earlier than usual.

Commercial accounts will be picked up as normal. The City of Emporia/Lyon County Transfer Station and Recycling Center will be closed on Thursday, June 19, 2025. Normal hours of operation will resume on Friday, June 20, 2025.



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