Follow our Travels through

Freedom's Frontier
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
On a regular workday, many people don’t get to look forward to a day of travel, tourism, and good food, but here in Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area (FFNHA), monthly Fieldwork Day gives staff a chance to do just that!

This Month, Marketing Manager Sonia Smith drove us about 150 miles for our visit to Linn County Kansas. The first stop on our expedition into one of the more rural parts of the heritage area was the rest stop where U.S. Highway 69 and Kansas Highway 52. Stops on this trip also are stops along the Kansas Frontier Military Historic Byway, and this rest stop has interpretive panels about the byway – that a little birdie told us will in the near future be updated (they still reflect that the byway used to be called a scenic byway), but provide a great overview of this byway that covers close to 170 miles on U.S. 69, from Leavenworth to Baxter Springs.
Next up: **Trading Post Museum**, Pleasanton, KS, where we were met by **Mary Grosshart** and **Tabitha Vunovich**, who are great storytellers, and made the stories in this little museum begin to come to life. They were excited to share with us that the museum has all new lighting – because of donors, who have also provided funds for the staff here to purchase a computer and scanner for use in digitizing genealogical and other files. They are looking forward to new display units, and to cataloging and storing a lot of the things now on display so that the museum exhibits can better showcase the regional history. We saw some of the treasures inside the museum, and the cemetery just outside the museum, where victims of the **Marias de Cygnes Massacre** are buried.
This is the Marais de Cygnes Massacre monument. You can read about the events that happened at the Marais de Cygnes Massacre State Historic Site [here](#). And although our schedule didn't allow for it on this day, you should visit the site, and also stop at the state Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area and the Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge.
We were having such a great time talking to Mary and Tabitha that it was hard to leave, but Tami Neal was waiting for us at the Mine Creek Battlefield State Historic Site, and so we were back on U.S. 169, heading south to the battlefield.

There we were treated to a special tour, as the visitors center doesn’t open until May.

“On October 25, 1864, on the banks of Mine Creek, two Union brigades of approximately 2,500 troops defeated approximately 7,000 Confederates from General Sterling Price’s Army of Missouri. Federal Colonels Frederick W. Benteen and John H. Philips led the attack in one of the largest cavalry battles of the Civil War and a major battle fought in Kansas. Their dramatic story comes alive at Mine Creek Civil War Battlefield.”

Kansas Historical Society, Mine Creek
Outside, was this lovely view of freshly burned prairie, and Sonia talked with the director of the Linn County Historical Museum in Pleasanton, who dropped in to say hello to the Freedom’s Frontier group at the battlefield.
Touring the countryside, and learning about history makes the heritage area staff hungry, so we stopped at a place in Mound City that we’d heard about from a couple of our tour guides, the Tranquility Village Café. Dan O’Sullivan cooked and Rhonda DeLaughder served us a lovely meal on the patio. Sadly, I didn't get any good pictures of them because I was concentrating on how fun the surroundings were, and how good the food looked!

Dan is in the blue shirt in the picture in the corner, and the woman dressed in red is Skip Childress, who met us there to talk about the Mound City Historical Society and Historical Park, and graciously bought our lunch.
After lunch, Skip showed us around the **Mound City Historical Park**, which was just next door to the Café. We started at the Depot, and saw these vintage hats inside. Then saw the fort, with these beautiful irises.
Sonia discovered that her dad’s friend donated this interestingly-shaped cabin to the historical society.

Printing press in the same building as the bandwagon.

Skip told the group this circus band wagon dates from 1865. The circus left it in Mound City as payment for food the elephants ate while in town. When the circus later returned for the wagon, the townspeople had grown so fond of it, that they hid it in a ravine and wouldn’t give it back.
At our final “official” stop of the day, we visited with Mike Martin, at the Philippine Duchesne Shrine and Memorial Park between Centerville and Parker, Kansas. This is 450-acre Catholic retreat and public park was where Mother Rose Philippine Duchesne came in 1841 to teach. There was a mission here, at the end point of the Potawatomi Trail of Death. She established the first Indian school for girls west of the Mississippi River.
The park has the only known remaining portion of the Ft. Scott and California Road.

Looks ominous, but it never really stormed on us – it was just the right solemn touch for Jim’s visit to the memorial.

And a Trail of Death memorial that lists names of the Potawatomi that died here or getting here.
Jim, Julie, Liz and Sonia got to explore some places none of them had seen before in Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area. They left Partnership Pledge Packets behind (at all but this final stop), and hope to see all of their tour guides again, perhaps at a partnership meeting in the future. We’ll be out and about again next month, and hope you’ll keep following our travels!

For more information about Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage, visit: www.freedomsfrontier.org. Information about Partner sites can be found under the “Places to See” tab.