KANSAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION AND KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNOUNCE SEVERAL MAJOR GIFTS TOWARD CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

TOPEKA, KS— The Kansas Historical Foundation and the Kansas Historical Society announced today at the 145th annual meeting that several major gifts have been received during the last few months toward the ongoing capital campaign. With these new gifts, the Kansas Historical Foundation’s Honor · Educate · Inspire Capital Campaign to raise $7 million reaches 85 percent completion.

The Sunderland Foundation is providing an additional $450,000 for renovations. The Sunderland family’s roots extend far into Kansas history. Lester T. Sunderland joined Ash Grove White Lime Association in 1909 shortly after the company completed construction of its first cement plant in Chanute, Kansas. The Ash Grove Cement Company materials were used to construct highways, bridges, commercial and industrial complexes, and single- and multi-family homes. Through four generations of the Sunderland family, between 1909 and 2018, the company grew to become the fifth largest manufacturer of Portland cement in the United States, the sixth largest in North America. Lester T Sunderland created the family foundation in 1945. The Sunderland Foundation is based in Overland Park.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BSNF) Railway Foundation has pledged $250,000. The foundation supports and improves the general welfare and quality of life in the communities served by BNSF Railway, which operates in 28 states and three Canadian provinces. This generous gift underscores Kansas’ important role in the company’s history. Santa Fe Railway, under the leadership of Cyrus K. Holliday, was chartered by the territorial legislature in 1859. The Kansas Museum of History proudly displays the Cyrus K. Holliday 1880s steam locomotive in its gallery, the oldest surviving locomotive from the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway.

The campaign received an anonymous donation of $150,000. Mary Vanier and Dr. Marty Vanier, both of Manhattan, have each pledged $125,000 over two years for a total of $250,000. For generations, the Vanier family has been committed to supporting the broader Kansas community. Former Governor Bill Graves and Linda Graves have donated an additional $25,000. Dr. Mary Davidson Cohen, of Johnson County, finished her pledge of $150,000 and gave an additional $50,000 to bring the Bart and Mary Cohen Charitable Trust gift to $200,000. The Trust’s generous philanthropy has long supported arts and education in the region.

These generous donations move the campaign’s completion from 67 percent, as of last year’s annual meeting, to 85 percent. They are also accompanied by several smaller gifts in recent months. Previous
major gifts include $1 million from the Sunderland Foundation; $250,000 from the Lewis H. Humphreys Charitable Trust; and $1 million from the Hansen Foundation of Logan.

The Kansas Museum of History’s new exhibits will honor those who have come before us. They will tell the stories of Kansas in a way that resonates in the 21st century. The new exhibits are projected to open in 2023. Since the Museum’s opening in 1984 nearly 2 million people have visited. During most years, the Historical Society serves more than 20 million people onsite and online through its award-winning programs that also include historic preservation, tax credits, archeology, state historic sites, and archives.

As part of the virtual annual meeting, Historical Foundation officers and board members were elected. Officers of the Foundation for 2020-2021 are Lidia Hook Gray, Liberal, president; W. Walt Menninger, Topeka, president elect; Richard Walker, Newton, vice president; Rita L. Noll, Council Grove, secretary; and Carol Bales, Logan, past president. Jon Boursaw, Topeka, continues to serve a two-year term as treasurer. Elected to executive committee vacancies for a one-year term are Crystal Ecton, Gridley; and Paul Stuewe, Lawrence. Elected to three-year terms are Ted Ayres, Wichita; Linda Jeffrey, Topeka; and Herschel Stroud, Topeka. Retiring from the executive committee are Don Chubb, Topeka; and Jack Alexander, Topeka. Elected to the board of directors for a three-year term are: Jack Alexander, Topeka; Emily Bradbury, Madison; McKenzie Breidenthal, Kansas City, new member of the board; Paul Buchanan, Wichita; Gennifer Golden House, Goodland; Lidia Hook-Gray, Liberal; Shelley Hickman Clark, Lawrence; Linda Jeffrey, Topeka; Lyn Lee, Hays; Barbara Morris, Hugoton; Amanda Minton, Pittsburg, new member of the board; James Reynolds, South Pasadena, California; Baha Safadi, Lawrence; John Stauffer, Topeka; Herschel Stroud, Topeka; Loren Taylor, Kansas City; and June Windscheffel, Topeka. Retiring members of the board are Dudley Donahue, Durham; and James Maag, Topeka.

The Kansas Historical Foundation, a 501(c) (3), is a fund raising, fund management, membership, and retail organization, whose mission is to support the Historical Society, a state agency. Established together by newspapers editors in 1875, the organizations jointly hold the annual meeting to elect officers and board members.

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