

# North Newton Interprets Its Rich History

by John Torline



**M**uch has occurred along the banks of Sand Creek during the last 500 years. Indigenous peoples constructed villages of grass lodges on the high ground. Thousands of head of Texas longhorn cattle pounded the earth as they were driven north to Abilene along what came to be known as the Chisholm Trail. A Mennonite College was founded with the construction of a spectacular native stone administration building as its focal point. The community that became known as North Newton grew up around the newly founded Bethel College. Two boyhood friends walked the plowed fields

collecting artifacts left behind by the original inhabitants. Charles Kauffman opened a museum featuring his works of taxidermy and wood carving along with curious artifacts. A committee of octogenarian volunteers created, funded, and maintained a wood chip trail up to, and along the top of the high bank of the creek. The beauty and diversity of the native tallgrass prairie was recognized and attempts are being made to restore representative areas.

These events and manifestations are heralded in a series of eight “pause points” along the walking trails in North Newton. This interpretive sign project was the result of collaboration of

the City of North Newton and the Kauffman Museum and it was primarily funded through a Kansas Department of Transportation Enhancement grant. In addition to the construction, the approved grant provided funding for an archaeological survey of the area.

The archaeological survey was conducted in 2009 by the Wichita State University Department of Anthropology under the direction of Dr. David Hughes. In addition to carrying out field investigations, the surveyors examined local collections. Their study indicated the presence of rich archaeological resources at numerous locations. Some evidence suggests that one site may be 8,000 years old, and ample evidence that the early Wichita Indians inhabited the area at about the time of Coronado's visit to central Kansas.

Waldo Wedel and Emil Haury grew up in North Newton as "campus kids." Both developed an early and intense interest in the artifacts left behind by the

*Left: Jacob D. Goering envisioned the use for the Kidron Martin canal and with other retired men, created a wood chip trail—now Sand Creek Trail.*

*Below: A map of the "Pause Points" along the walking trails in North Newton and an upclose look at the College on the Prairie "Pause Point" for the founding of Bethel College.*

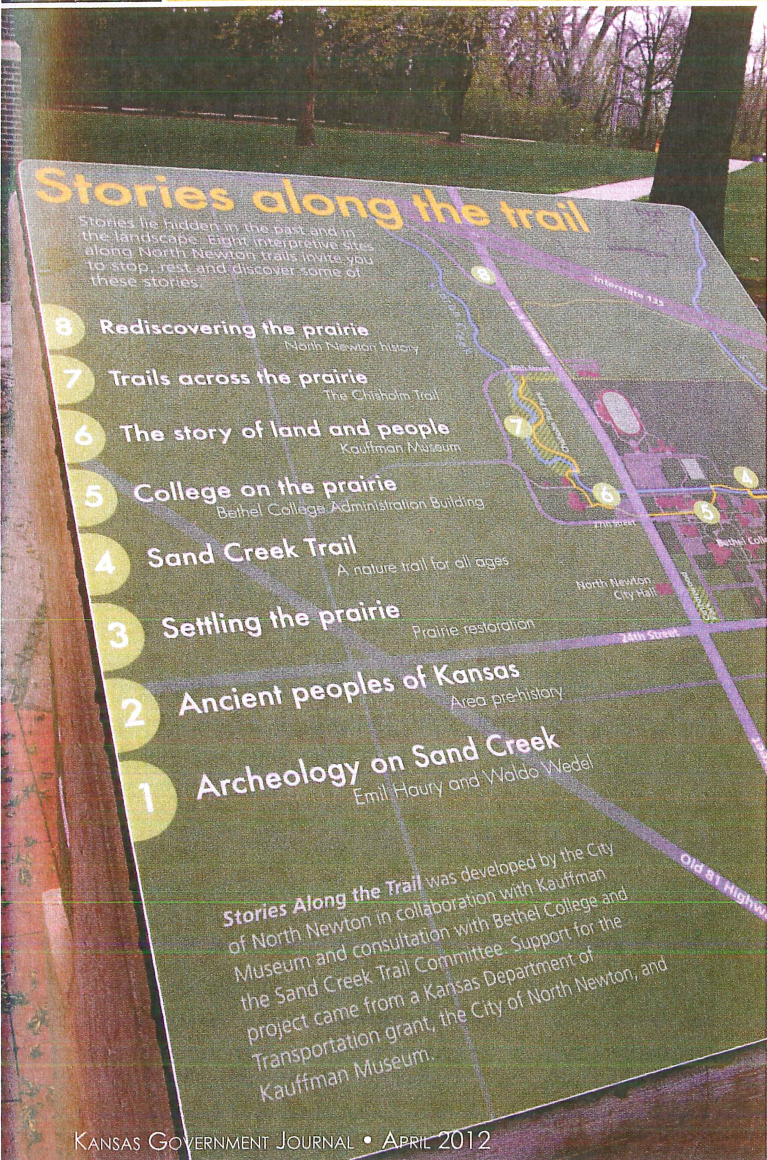
*All photos by Vada Snider.*

Wichita and possibly earlier tribes. Both received their doctorates and pursued careers in archaeology. Dr. Wedel continued his interest in the Great Plains and spent his career at the Smithsonian Institution. He provided the definitive work on the prehistoric Wichita Indians. His initial contact with the artifactual remains of the Wichita were as a boy, along the banks of Sand Creek. Dr. Haury focused on the American Southwest. Both are remembered as distinguished members of their profession and are often referred to as the "father of plains archaeology" and "the dean of Southwestern archaeology," respectively.

The Chisholm Trail is the stuff of legend and lore. Newton was founded as a cow town in 1871 and was a way station along the trail. Herds of Texas longhorn cattle were driven northward to Abilene for shipment to the East. Ruts from the trail are still visible in North Newton in what is appropriately called "Chisholm Trail" Park. (Pause point #7 will tell you where to look for them.)

Mennonites who had moved to the area to grow their turkey red wheat founded Bethel College in 1887. The massive limestone administration building was the vision of renowned architects Proudfoot and Bird. It remains in use today. It is the focal point of the campus and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Charles Kauffman was a talented and industrious taxidermist, wood carver, artifact collector, and folk artist. His collection of produced and collected mounts and artifacts rivaled any of the Ripley's Believe it or Not museums during the mid 20th Century.





*View of the Kauffman Museum and a map with the Sand Creek Trails including interpretive signs about the history of North Newton and the Chisholm Trails. Photos by Yada Snider.*

The vision for the museum has evolved and it has become nationally renowned for its presentation and interpretation of Charles Kauffman's artifacts as well as its outreach and educational programs.

In 1997, octogenarian Jacob D. Goering and his wife Beth retired back to the town of their alma mater, Bethel College. Jake developed a passion and vision for the recreational use of the Kidron Martin canal that flows east from Chisholm Trail Park to Sand Creek. He and several like-minded and similarly situated retired men created a wood chip trail along the north side of the canal that turns north along Sand Creek, then heads west back to Highway K-15, and then south to the Bethel College campus. In 2011, Sand Creek Trail was designated a national Recreation Trail by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Sand Creek Trail Committee, as it became known, commissioned local wood carver John Gaeddert to carve a larger than life "plainsman" out of an elm log that is at the entrance of Memorial Grove, the trail head of the Sand Creek Trail. Memorial Grove features a gazebo, fire pit, bricks engraved to commemorate friends or family of donors, and is maintained in an informal garden setting. The Committee also landscaped an area known as "Arbor Lane" along the K-15 corridor. An endowment has been created to maintain the trail. Its assets are currently in excess of six figures. At 94 years of age, Jake Goering is still a daily hiker of the trail and is actively engaged in its maintenance.

All who are familiar with the story lament the loss of thousands of acres of tallgrass prairie. Restoration efforts are underway in various locations to reintroduce prairie plots and appreciation for them. North Newton has several such reintroductions underway. Kauffman



Museum led the efforts in the 1980s with a scientific approach in restoring a 1.5 acre prairie on museum grounds. The City of North Newton received a KDOT Transportation Enhancement grant for a prairie restoration project on a two-acre tract of ground at the K-15/I-135 interchange. Bethel College has a larger tract under restoration on the east side of the college campus. These three projects are noted at the appropriate pause points. Mennonite Central Committee-Central States has an additional reconstruction project underway at its offices just north of the Bethel Campus. The North Newton City Hall sign is landscaped with native plant materials.

North Newton's long held secrets have now been revealed. There is much to see and do along the community trail system, and you are invited.

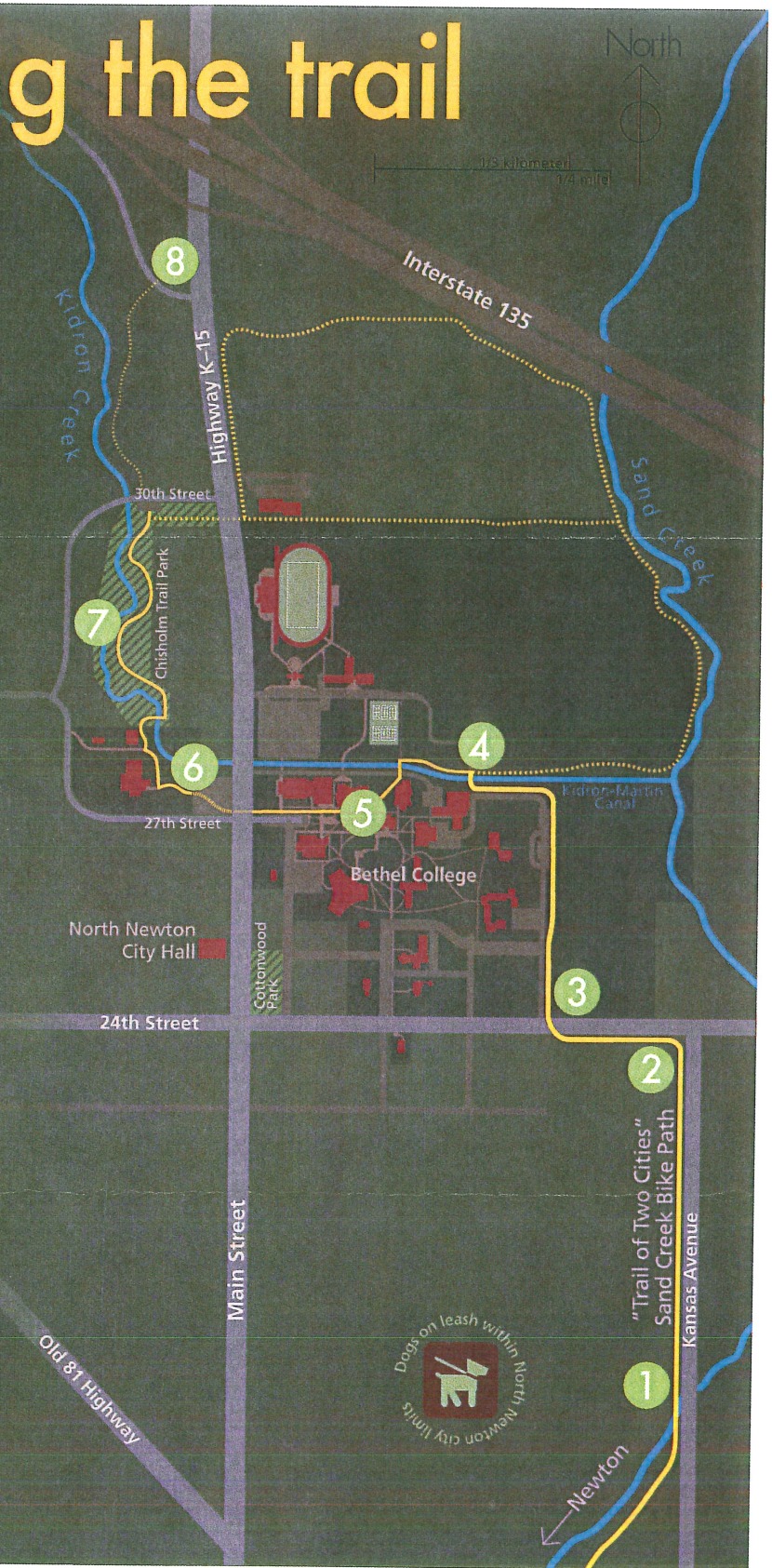
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# Stories along the trail

Stories lie hidden in the past and in the landscape. Eight interpretive sites along North Newton trails invite you to stop, rest and discover some of these stories.

- 8 **Rediscovering the prairie**  
North Newton history
- 7 **Trails across the prairie**  
The Chisholm Trail
- 6 **The story of land and people**  
Kauffman Museum
- 5 **College on the prairie**  
Bethel College Administration Building
- 4 **Sand Creek Trail**  
A nature trail for all ages
- 3 **Settling the prairie**  
Prairie restoration
- 2 **Ancient peoples of Kansas**  
Area pre-history
- 1 **Archeology on Sand Creek**  
Emil Haury and Waldo Wedel

*Stories Along the Trail* was developed by the City of North Newton in collaboration with Kauffman Museum and consultation with Bethel College and the Sand Creek Trail Committee. Support for the project came from a Kansas Department of Transportation grant, the City of North Newton, and Kauffman Museum.



North Newton Trail Interpretive Signage Project: **Sites map**  
reduced to 45%  
cr/Kauffman Museum 2/14/12