



THE VILLAGES GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY – Field Trip Information KANSAS



THE BIG WELL MUSEUM

315 S Sycamore, Greensburg, KA
620 723 4102 bigwell.org

World's Largest Hand Dug Well

More than just a hole in the ground!



The Big Well is a marvel of pioneer engineering that was completed in 1888 as the town's original water supply. At 109 feet deep and 32 feet in diameter, this is a breathtaking sight to see. This new museum opened in May 2012 and once again allows visitors to descend a spiral staircase into the Big Well and view exhibits that feature Greensburg's history, the tornado, and our rebuilding as a sustainable community.

Museum

The new Big Well Museum construction began on September 19th, 2011 at 10am with a groundbreaking ceremony. The museum celebrated its grand opening May 26, 2012. The new museum features exhibits on the history of Greensburg and the digging of the Big Well, the tornado, and the rebuilding of our town. Visitors once again are able to take tours into the well.



THE VILLAGES GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY – Field Trip Information

KANSAS

Fick Fossil Museum

700 West 3rd St, Oakley, KA
785 671 4839 discoveroakley.com

People don't generally associate Kansas with the ocean, but Kansas was a very different place 80 million years ago than it is today! Around 70 to 90 million years ago, an inland sea stretched from the Arctic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico and Kansas was under water.

By 1964, however, this vast ocean was long gone. It was then that Oakley-area residents Ernest and Vi Fick started to seriously collect the fossils left by the ancient sea creatures that inhabited this prehistoric sea. In 1971, they had collected thousands of shark teeth and complete fossils. Vi Fick incorporated many of those fossil findings into a very unique collection of artwork. Soon, their collection had outgrown their home.



The Fick Fossil and History Museum, which was established to showcase the Fick family's findings and artwork, allows you to walk through the history of Logan County. Visitors start in the Prehistoric era, amid sharks teeth and fossils and end walking the through replicas of the early boardwalks of Oakley during the Dust storms of the 1930's

Most of the fossils in the museum were found within the vicinity of the Fick's homestead near Oakley. Vi combined fossils and shells with oil painting to create one-of-a-kind artwork. These folk-art paintings are prominently featured in the museum.

The museum houses replicas of Oakley's first Depot, a sod house, Prather's Creamery, and Oakley's General Store. The museum also houses a large, impressive collection of rocks and minerals from the Oakley area and around the world including the remains of ancient tombs! Among its more than 11,000 sharks teeth and many fossils there is the world's oldest known mosasaur fossil, a 15 foot Xiphactinus Audax prepared by well-known fossil-hunter George Sternberg, and other rare fossils.





THE VILLAGES GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY – Field Trip Information KANSAS



National Glass Museum

117 S Washington, Wellington, KS
620 662 1425 or toll free 866 755 3450 underkansas.org

This past year has seen the Museum grow from an empty building to one that houses a collection of glass from the 1800's to the 1970's, representing a large number of the companies that were in existence during those times. It also has a working reference library for the public to use in their research of glassware. The museum is staffed by volunteers, who are always willing to help answer questions.



The museum will help in serving the two main goals of the organization, education and preservation of all American made glassware with an emphasis on the Depression Era.

The National Collection consists of more than just glass items. There are books, glass working tools, etching plates, advertising material and just about anything else you can think of that would be appropriate in a museum dedicated to the glass industry in the United States.

The museum opened to the public at no charge. The museum is supported by donations and proceeds from the gift shop where you may purchase glass items, along with t-shirts, tote bags and post cards. A donation jar is also available to anyone wishing to help support the museum.





THE VILLAGES GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY – Field Trip Information

KANSAS



Strataca Underground Salt Museum

3650 East Avenue G, Hutchinson, KS
620 662 1425 or toll free 866 755 3450 underkansas.org

Salt: The Hutchinson Salt Member of the Permian Wellington Formation was formed about 275 million years ago when the Permian Sea dried up. One of the largest in the world, the extent of this bedded salt deposit is 27,000 square miles in central and south-central Kansas and is marginal to Permian Basin salt deposits in Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and southeastern New Mexico that cover 100,000 square miles. The purest portion of the salt vein at this location is 650 feet underground and is still mined here today. Strataca has access to about 300,000 square feet of mined out area.

Salt Discovery: Salt was discovered southwest of Hutchinson in 1887 by a land developer from Indiana named Ben Blanchard. He was drilling for oil to increase land sales and discovered salt instead. It was the first significant salt discovery west of the Mississippi. The original salt discovery site is open to the public in the city of South Hutchinson.

Kansas Underground Salt Museum (now known as Strataca): By 1999, the Reno County Historical Society recognized the importance of preserving and presenting the Hutchinson salt story to the public. It soon became apparent that the logical, yet most challenging solution would be to re-open a portion of the mine to public tours. Today's attraction is the product of collaboration of the Historical Society and the two business entities that exist in the mine: the Hutchinson Salt Company and Underground Vaults and Storage. UVS is known for storing a vast number of original Hollywood movies, as well as millions of documents and items from all over the world in a secure and environmentally conducive environment. In the late 1990's, when it was decided that in order to expand their storage business a new elevator or hoist would need to be built, a partnership was formed that resulted in the development of the museum.

PERMIAN ROOM

Intriguing, as it is palatial, the Permian Room is one-of-a-kind. Inspired by the poet Pablo Neruda in his *Ode To Salt* — “I know you won't believe me but it sings, salt sings” — Strataca has transformed this space. The walls act as ancient scrolls of the earth revealing secrets of the strata formed by the Permian Sea long ago. Don't miss the opportunity to experience the Permian Room in its full grandeur, only at Strataca.

MINING GALLERY

What is a day in the life of a miner really like? Experience the Myron-mobile, a post-apocalyptic looking car that was driven through the salt mine by Mike Rowe, the host of the Discovery Channel's popular show, *Dirty Jobs*. Take a trip back in time to see how different the mining process was from modern day practices. You'll have an opportunity to hear from individuals throughout every step of the mining process.

THE VILLAGES GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY – Field Trip Information

KANSAS

Strataca (Continued)

HARRY'S HABITAT

About 250 million years ago, Harry the Halophile (salt dwelling bacteria) fled into a pocket of salt water as his habitat dried up around him. Over time the pocket grew into a crystal of pure salt and that's where he slumbered until scientists woke him up in 1999. Harry has the distinction of being the oldest living organism on earth and today you can visit him in Harry's Habitat underground at Strataca. Learn how the discovery of Harry is helping NASA search for life on Mars!

SALT MINE EXPRESS

Journey into a raw portion of the salt mine where virtually everything is exactly as it was left over 50 years ago. The Salt Mine Express is a 15-minute train ride through a part of the mine that was active during the 1940's and 50's. Riders will get to travel through time and witness things the miners left behind. "What goes into the mine stays in the mine." This is a narrated, guided tour.

THE DARK RIDE

Take a 30 minute tour on a tram through an area of the mine that includes lit areas explaining air flow, mine hazards, nuclear waste storage – and much more information dispensed by your personal guide. You also get to collect a souvenir piece of salt!

GE ENGINE NO.2

One of only three such engines ever built, is now on display outside of Strataca. Built in 1919, the antique train ran along a short railway line from 1928 to 1963 that provided switching services for the Carey Evaporation Plant and Salt Mine.





THE VILLAGES GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY – Field Trip Information

KANSAS



Additional Places of Interest

Big Brutus (Bucyrus Erie Electric Shovel)

West Mineral KA

620 827 6177

Bigbrutus.org

Kansas Oil Museum

383 E Central Ave, El Dorado, KA

316 321 9333

Kansasoilmuseum.org