



McPherson County News

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2017 "Eclipse in the Sandhills"



JANELLE BLAKE PHOTO

The viewing site for the 2017 Total Solar Eclipse is located south of Tryon. Admission is \$15.00 and that will include a bottle of water and a pair of eclipse glasses. Aunt Bea's Cafe will be open Sunday and Monday. They are offering sack lunches for the eclipse. Vendors will be in town and there is a craft show planned, along with a variety of activities to showcase the Nebraska Sandhills.

The unincorporated town of Tryon has been planning for two years for what will be one of the biggest festivals in the county's history. Big skies, wide open spaces, and western culture have made McPherson County prime viewing for the first total solar eclipse to cross America in 99 years.

Tryon is right under the path of the moon's shadow on earth, and Linda Kemp and Elnora Neal have been busy coordinating the event.

Kathy Starr and Cathy Ascherl will be manning the information booth at Miller Park.

It's like planning one of the biggest parties of your life and not knowing how many is on the guest list.

Elnora Neal said the major hurdles have been getting everything organized, lack of help, and concern over parking.

The viewing site is one half mile south of Tryon and people will need to be transported to the site.

"We have rented buses to

take people to the viewing site, although a lot of people will be able to walk to it," Neal said.

Admission is \$15.00 and will include a bottle of water and a pair of eclipse glasses.

Aunt Bea's will be open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Sunday and there are at least four food vendors and an ice cream booth. Vendors will be open from 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. Aunt Bea's will reopen at 7:00 a.m. Monday and close at 11:00 a.m. for the eclipse. They are offering sack lunches. The cafe will reopen after the eclipse and serve food from 3:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

The North Platte Visitors Bureau will be running bus trips from North Platte to Tryon and Stapleton.

Organizers are planning a two-day event that will center around the 2 minutes, 54 seconds of "Eclipse in the Sandhills."

Their goal is to teach visitors about Sandhills ranching, culture and

heritage. They are doing that by hosting prairie tours and trail rides with Dusty Trails, a Tipi Village and Flint Knapping, coffee with a rancher, and educational booths.

Von Hunn, grandson of the late Rev. B.D. Hunn, will be speaking at Sunday morning church services in Miller Park at 10:00 a.m. Ringgold Free Methodist Church, Hall Church, and the Tryon United Methodist Church are participating. Bring lawn chairs due to limited seating.

Dean Thompson will demonstrate how to build a sod house at the soddy in Tryon. You won't want to miss this special presentation.

The Sandhills shows 74% chance for favorable viewing conditions. The organizers have been preparing and are ready to show off the beauty and hospitality found only in the Sandhills.

A complete listing of Tryon's "Eclipse in the Sandhills" events:

Sunday, August 20

9 a.m. - 6 p.m.: Dusty Trails Prairie Tours & Trail Rides, southeast of Tryon; Tipi Village and Flint Knapping.

7 a.m. - 7 p.m.: Aunt Bea's Cafe - Open.

9 a.m. - 7 p.m.: Food Vendors Open.

9 a.m. - 6 p.m.: Craft Vendors, Quilt Display, Coffee with a Rancher, Educational Booths in Fair Building.

10 a.m.: Church services in Miller Park by local churches. Von Hunn, grandson of the late Rev. B.D. Hunn, to speak.

11 a.m. - 6 p.m.: Petting Zoo.

Noon - 6 p.m.: Soddy, bank, jail open.

3 p.m.: Demonstration on building a soddy by Dean Thompson.

Noon: Working cow dog exhibition.

2 p.m.: Cattle sorting, arena southeast of Tryon.

7 p.m.: Sandhills in Music, Miller Park.

Dusk: Stargazing at the viewing site south of Tryon.

Monday, August 21

Eclipse Day!

8 a.m.: Gate opens for viewing site south of

Tryon.

7 a.m. - 11 a.m.: Aunt Bea's Cafe open (grill closes at 10:30 a.m.) Sack lunch available.

9 a.m. - 7 p.m.: Food vendors.

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.: Dusty Trails & Prairie Tours. Tipi Village & Flint Knapping; Craft Vendors and Quilt Display; Niobrara Valley Vineyards wine tasting.

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.: Coffee

with a Rancher, Educational Booths in Fair Building; Petting Zoo; Antique Tractor Show. All above close during Eclipse viewing time.

11:30 a.m.: Moon will start taking bites off sun. Jared Daily, professor of physics and engineering at North Platte Community College narrating.

12:55: Totality!

2 p.m.: Drawing for raffle tickets.



COURTESY PHOTO

One of the t-shirts designed by Dennis Miller for the Eclipse in the Sandhills.

Welcome to McPherson County!

by Joyce Snyder

McPherson County was established in 1890 and named for General John McPherson of Civil War fame. It is located in the southern edge of the Sandhills area. It is 36 miles long, east to west and 24 miles from the north to the south border, giving it an area of 864 square miles (2227.42 sq. kilometers). When the settlers first came to this area the evidence of the "Great American Desert" was still present. Grass was sparse and one could still track a large animal through the sand. Prairie fires and buffalo were hard on the sandy soil. The land is choppy hills with an occasional broad valley, many with lakes or marshes in them.

There is an abundance of underground water, making it easy to drill wells of pure soft water through the sand and gravel. The hills are used for grazing cattle and the meadows for harvesting hay. The eastern part of the county, near the head of the South Loup River has some farming. Other streams are the North Birdwood Creek & its tributary Squaw Creek.

Some of the first people in the area were the Haskell Brothers hunting wild horses, John Bratt, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody and Frank & Capt. Luther North. Some family names of permanent settlers are Allen, Bassett,

Bedell, Booze, Brooks, Calhoun, Clothier, Clouse, Connell, Dolph, Hogue, Huffman, James, Miller, Musser, Neal, Quinn, Rupp, Schick, Shimmin, Trego, Van Meter, Waits and Wisner.

The Homestead Act of 1862 gave a person a quarter section of land if he would come live on it for five years and put improvements on it. In every case, except good farm land it was not enough to make a living. Even after the Kinkaid Act of 1904 increased the amount of free land to 640 acres (1 square mile), it still was not enough, although it was sufficient to lure many people to the Sandhills. Some had to leave before proving up on it, and others as soon as they did. Cattlemen who had come earlier and been able to use some of the open range to establish themselves were usually in a position to buy out the Kinkaiders. A recent estimate shows 36,000 cattle, varying with the season and sale of calves.

The 1910 census shows the population was at 2,450. Since then, there has been a steady decline. Today there are a few less than 500 people (only about 100 in the unincorporated county seat of Tryon). We are the 8th least populous county in the United States with .578 persons per square

mile (or 1 3/5 sq. miles per person). There were at one time about 23 post offices. Today there is one. By 1915, 37 school districts had been organized. Today there is one.

McPherson County Schools accommodates an average of 50 elementary students and 35 in the high school. The school employs 26 people. Fairly unique is our 6-man football team competing with the other 14 teams in the state.

There is one restaurant and one bar/restaurant, one post office, one feed mill, one credit union, and one gas station/vehicle repair business in McPherson County. There is also a well drilling operation, an auto-body shop, a hairdresser, one volunteer fire department, two septic tank, trenching-backhoe businesses and several feedlots. A ranch owned business sells small repairs. A newly completed camp ground is welcome. There are three church congregations and one shared newspaper publication.

McPherson County is a good place to live and raise a family. In fact we are rated the 3rd safest place to live in the state. We would like to welcome Eclipse viewers to our county. We hope your visit will be memorable and that you return to your homes with pleasant memories of the Sandhills of Nebraska.

Ringgold

(Continued from front page) Monday for \$10.00.

Everyone should know about Sandhills water.

"We are above the Ogallala Aquifer, which is a natural reservoir and has been said to be some of the purest drinking water anyone can have. We drink this water straight from the well/faucet. It's not uncommon to drink from a hydrant."

If people don't want to drink this abundant water they should bring bottled water.

Camp fires at the campsite will be prohibited. A community campsite fire will be available and there will be yard games for anyone to use.

"Everyone in this area knows how to fight fire from a young age, but we don't want to have to show you.

The Schultis family is hosting a square dance Saturday night, August 19. You will learn how to square dance "like the pioneers did." You will also be able to take a hay rack ride on Sunday afternoon, August 20, at 4:00 p.m. A \$5 donation is suggested for either event and this money will go towards the restoration of the Schultis' barn, located in Ringgold.

Jeff Brosius, solar astrophysicist for NASA/God-

dard SFT, will be sharing his knowledge on the total solar eclipse on Sunday after 8:00 p.m. in Kent and Kathleen Fisher's yard. There will be time to hear from others on their experience and knowledge and the yard will be open for stargazing. Cool drinks and watermelon will be served after the eclipse in the Fisher's yard.

Kathleen said her three daughters and a couple of friends are helping her with this big undertaking. And of course, her husband, Kent, has been busy making preparations.

"Even though our web-

site reports Center Line Camping is sold out," we continue to take at least five calls and emails a day," Kathleen said. "We have just been passing them on to Stapleton or Tryon."

"As products of the Sandhills, we have been raised to be welcoming, accepting, and helpful. We hope that you will feel this while staying with us. We are excited to meet you and for you to meet us."

There will be ice, bottled water, pop, kettle corn, and crafts for sale at Ring-

Blood Drive August 25

The American Red Cross Blood Drive will be held in Tryon on Friday, August 25. The drive will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the McPherson County Fair Building. Walk-ins are welcome

and needed but call Elaine Miller at 308-587-2446 for an appointment.

Give Blood, Help Save Lives. Download the blood donor app at redcrossblood.org.

Aunt Bea's Senior Meals Lunch Menu

Monday, August 21 - No Senior Meals. 2017 Total Solar Eclipse

Tuesday, August 22 - Steakfingers, mashed potatoes and corn

Wednesday, August 23 - Meatloaf, baked potato

and peas Thursday, August 24 - Pork Roast, pork dressing and green beans

Friday, August 25 - Chili soup with hamburger sandwich