



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie
National Preserve

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Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve News Release

For Immediate Release

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Basic Tools and Ranching Skills Demonstrated at the Preserve



On Saturday, May 21st living history interpreters at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve will demonstrate a variety of skills held by cowboys and hired hands on a working ranch. From rock fence building to blacksmithing to veterinarian care of livestock, cowboys did it all. All demonstrations and programs will occur near the historic barn within the Preserve.

Hear the ring of the blacksmith's hammer as volunteer David Edwards demonstrates turning hot metal into horseshoes and other useful tools. Demonstrations are on- going from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with many opportunities to ask questions.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

A very important tool to the cowboy was the horse. From 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. learn about the cowboy's roping skills, tools, and most trusted friend, his horse. Join in the fun and practice those roping skills using a stationary horse; one that's sure not to get away.

Veterinarian skills played a large role in the success of a working ranch. Retired veterinarian and volunteer Gary Pottorff will explain how this skill was passed along to other cowboys, while showing the actual tools of the trade. There will be two presentations. The first talk begins at 12:30 p.m. and the second at 2:30 p.m. Each program lasts approximately 20 minutes with time for follow-up questions.

Learn how stone fences were historically made. Chase County, Kansas has a long history with rock fences being built. The era of open-range for livestock was coming to an end in the late 1800's and required land owners to fence their property; not an easy task in the Flint Hills where the soils are shallow and rock abundant. Over 30 miles of rock fence was originally built by Mr. Stephen Jones on the 1881 Spring Hill Farm & Stock Ranch that is now part of Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Jones used this locally abundant natural resource to construct five foot high dry stone fences to fully enclose the ranch and to create inner pasture fences for his 7,000 acre property. Visitors will have an opportunity to learn more about this very unique fencing process through a 20-minute program beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Other opportunities to experience the prairie and historic buildings are also available:

Visit the one-room Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse on weekends in May and June from 12 noon to 4:00 p.m. and learn about a prairie education. The school is furnished with historic desks, McGuffey Readers, a recitation bench, and other classroom items. Preserve volunteers will be available to answer questions and provide information about the school's rich history.

Observe the historic stone fences throughout the Preserve as you explore the nature and hiking trails. There are two short nature trails for self-discovery. For the more adventurous, there are over 41 miles of hiking trails to experience. All trails are open 24 hours, with some of the best wildlife viewing in the early morning and evening hours. Observe the bison herd in Windmill Pasture or hike around the pasture to observe the bison at a distance. You might even spot the new calf born on May 11, 2011.



Ranger guided programs are offered along a 6.4- mile bus tour route that takes you deep into the prairie. The bus tours are scheduled daily at 11 a.m.; with more tours possible depending on staffing availability and weather conditions through October 30, 2011. Bus tours last approximately 1.5 hours and there is no charge for the tours. Advance reservations are recommended but walk- ins are welcome. A minimum of two passengers are required per bus tour. For more information, please call the park rangers' offices at (620) 273- 8494.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is located two miles north of Strong City on Kansas State Highway 177 (the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway). All programs and activities are free of charge. For more information or to make group reservations, visit the preserve's website at www.nps.gov/tapr, email tapr_interpretation@nps.gov, or call the preserve at (620) 273- 8494.

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