

Holton Exhibit Features Lace, Weaving

By [Jan Biles](#)

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The colorful weaving of Holton native Evelyn DeGraw is featured in one room of the museum.

HOLTON — Jackson County Historical Society volunteer Margaret Utz knows every item in the “A Lacy Christmas” exhibit at the Roebke Memorial Museum in Holton.

Walking room to room, she describes the bobbin lace, crochet work, tatting, quilts, weaving, knitting and embroidery in the displays, which she set up with the help of fellow Holton resident and volunteer Vera Hinnen.

“This (fanciwork) was their amusement, and they decorated their homes with this because it was cheap,” Utz said.

A Christmas tree decorated with lace angels, bells, snowflakes and stars made by Louis Fernkoph greets visitors as they step into the museum.

Century-old, white Victorian-era dresses, intricately crocheted doilies and tablecloths, lace collars, fancy aprons, corset covers and other items fill up two downstairs rooms. The kitchen contains Hoosier cabinets, monogrammed silverware and family recipes for Frozen Pear Salad and Ginger Pears.

Another downstairs room features the weaving of Evelyn DeGraw, a Holton native who was head of the textile design division at The University of Kansas from 1948 to 1978. Prior to being hired by KU, DeGraw taught at a rural Jackson County school from 1930 to 1931 and at Holton elementary schools from 1931 to 1933.

“I feel the weaving is the best attraction for this show,” Utz said.

On the second floor are a children's room with buggy, toys and clothing; a bedroom featuring evening gowns and hats; and a room showing off the Roebke girls' graduation dresses.

Many musical items, including an early 20th-century Kimball organ, player piano, Victrola and concertina, can be found throughout the house.

The Jackson County Historical Society has scheduled a series of demonstrations and music events in November and December in conjunction with the holiday exhibit, according to Anna Wilhelm, a volunteer with the historical society.

Upcoming demonstrations include weaving by Barbara Beyer, spinning and knitting by Marty Mavrovitch and quilting by Donna Tudor on Saturday; spinning and weaving by Mavrovitch and music by Jay Branam on Dec. 3; and rug hooking by Layne Hunley, spinning by Beyer and dulcimer by Fred Applehantz on Dec. 10. Artists on Dec. 17 have yet to be announced.

Utz said the Roebke Memorial Museum was given to the Jackson County Historical Society by Doris Roebke as a memorial to her parents, Kate and Louis Roebke Sr., and her siblings, Rose Roebke Volker, Charlotte (Lottie) Roebke, Karl Roebke and Louis Roebke Jr.

Louis Roebke Sr. was a carpenter who moved to Holton from Germany. He began making coffins and later became wealthy as an embalmer.

“At one time, he owned the whole block, with a tennis court, cow and garden,” she said.

The original home, built in 1876 by Roebke for his bride, was a two-story house consisting of the present dining room — which was the kitchen and the living room — and two upstairs bedrooms. As the family grew, the house was enlarged. It now contains six rooms on the first floor, five rooms on the second floor and a full, floored third story.

The home was the setting for social functions for many years in Holton.

Utz said the museum is funded mostly by donations and has had to cut back its hours because of budget limitations. The museum also is in need of volunteers.

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