



2017 Save Texas History Essay Contest

7th Grade winning entry

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The Kell House Museum

There are lots of historic house museums in the state of Texas. Some of these historic houses are well taken care of and others are dilapidated. The Kell House museum is a well taken care of house. The Kell House museum is located in Wichita Falls, Texas. Daily tours and holiday events are take place at the Kell House. Santa House, Haunted Tours, and Falls Fairy Fest are just a few of the exciting events that take place at the Kell House museum.

The story of the Kell House begins when the wealthy Frank Kell and his family moved from Bosque County to Wichita Falls, Texas. What made Mr. Kell and his family wealthy were his multiple jobs working with railroad, oil, newspaper, utilities, streetcars, and flour milling. When it comes to major industry in north Texas, Mr. Kell was either in charge, partly in charge, or worked behind the scenes. Mr. Kell was also in charge of the wheat that was also produced in Texas and New Mexico. This wheat supplied American troops that were fighting in World War I.

The Kell House was built in 1909. The Kells started constructing their house after Mr. Kell bought land in 1908. They finished their house in 1910. The outside and inside of the house are designed Victorian style. The house contains a patio and balcony on both levels, five bedrooms as well as a small library. One of the largest rooms in the house is the parlor. The parlor is the room that some of the guests would be entertained with piano music or tea. Walking through the front doors of the house, the first thing visitors see is a large staircase. The staircase was only used by the adults. The children did not use the main staircase because they had their own staircase in the back. One of the most important items in the house was Mr. Kell's elevator. Once Mr. Kell got a little older he installed an elevator in his house. The reason for that was because he had trouble getting to the rooms upstairs. Mr. Kell wasn't the only person in the family with cool and expensive gadgets. Mrs. Kell owned an electric car.

The only family that ever lived in the Kell House was the Kells. Mr. Kell and Mrs. Kell had seven children. Mr. Kell and Mrs. Kell had one boy and six girls. The Kell's grandmother would live at the Kell House





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for months at a time. Willie May Kell, the oldest daughter, moved into the Kell House in 1909 with her family. Willie May lived in the Kell House until her death in 1980. Willie May grew up in the Kell House. Willie May was very successful. She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. She was also the first woman to earn athletic letters from UT. Willie May was a world traveler and worked as a nurse for the Red Cross in France during World War I. After Willie May Kell died in 1980, the Wichita County Heritage Society bought the Kell House and turned it into a museum.

The Kell House is the only historic house museum in the county. One of the many reasons the Kell House is significant is because it possesses local, state, and national landmarks. These awards are prestigious because they are not given to all historic houses.

The Kell House is take great care of, but with it being around for such a long time it does need some repairs, two million dollars' worth of repairs. That is why the Wichita Falls Heritage Society is trying to raise two million dollars for all of the repairs needed. Without this money the Kell House could end up not being safe for tourists or the people who are working in the building.

What makes the Kell House important was its owner, Mr. Kell, and his brother-in-law, Mr. Kemp. Mr. Kemp and Mr. Kell are the reason for the expansion of Wichita Falls, Texas beginning in the 1890s. They both convinced the people in charge of the railroad to extend it into Wichita Falls, Texas from Henrietta, Texas. Mr. Kell ended up owning hundreds of miles of railroad lines.

The Kell House is a very important landmark, and I believe it is worth saving. Frank Kell and his family built the Kell House and live in there. Mr. Kell was a businessman and pioneer in north Texas. Most big industry and Wichita Falls would not have grown here if it hadn't been for him. Local history is not taught in our schools, so if we want to learn about our community, we need to save the places that teaches us about it. The Kell House museum is that place for Wichita Falls, Wichita county, and north Texas. Save Texas history by saving the Kell House Museum!

