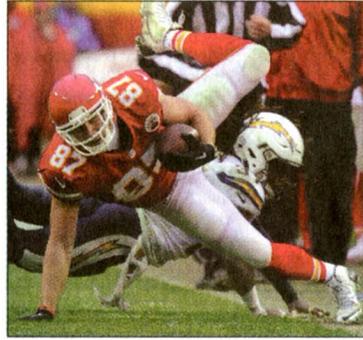


SEVEN IN A ROW

Chiefs hold off
 Chargers in the rain
 for seventh straight
 victory; outlook for
 playoffs improves.

SEE PAGE B1



GREAT PLAINS

Twirlers and dancers
 entertain at the annual
 Mayor's Christmas Party.

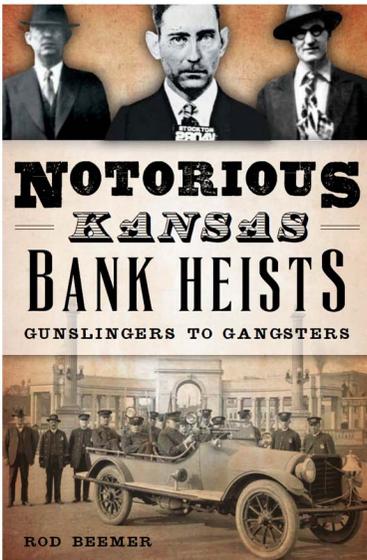
SEE PAGE A5



TODAY
High: 44 Low: 34
 Cloudy and windy.
SEE PAGE A6

'Gunslingers and Gangsters'

This is the cover of Rod Beemer's new book about Kansas bank robberies between 1861 and World War II. The book was published this month by The History Press. Beemer, of Minneapolis, will sign copies of his book Saturday at Books-A-Million in Salina's Central Mall.



Courtesy photo

Local author brings to life the law and lawless of wild Kansas

By **GARY DEMUTH**
Salina Journal

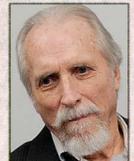
Soon after robbing the Chautauqua State Bank in 1911, outlaw Elmer McCurdy was killed by lawmen in a gun battle.

However, McCurdy wasn't buried for another 66 years. It seems that when McCurdy was embalmed, the undertaker added arsenic to the embalming fluids, which perfectly preserved the ex-outlaw for decades to come.

When the body wasn't claimed after six months, the undertaker decided to use McCurdy as an advertising tool. It seemed McCurdy's

MEET THE AUTHOR, GET BOOK

- **SIGNING:** Author Rod Beemer will sign copies of his new book "Notorious Kansas Bank Heists: Gunslingers to Gangsters."
- **WHEN:** 1-3 p.m. Saturday.
- **WHERE:** Books-A-Million, Central Mall, 2259 S. Ninth.
- **COST:** \$21.99 for book.
- **INFORMATION:** 820-2903 or rod@beemerbooks.com.



Beemer

body could be stood upright even while bereft of life, so he was redressed and a rifle was put in his hands. After being placed in the corner of the mortuary, he soon created local interest as the "Embalmed Bandit."

As the years passed, Mc-

Curdy moved on to become an attraction at a traveling carnival show, a macabre place called the Museum of Crime, at the famed Hollywood Wax Museum and in a fun house in Long Beach, Calif.

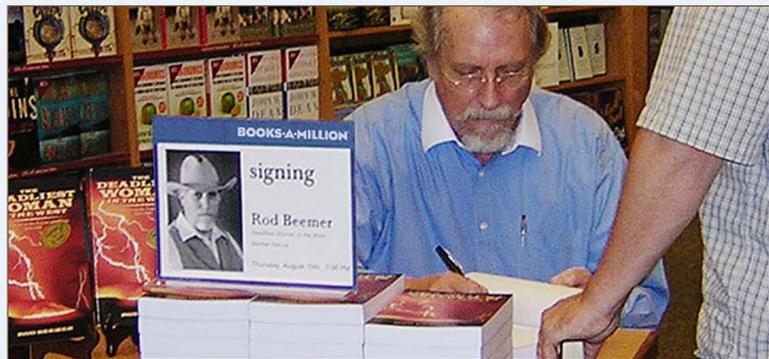
See BOOK, Page A3

BAM! BOOKS-A-MILLION

Date: **Saturday**
Dec. 19, 2015
 Time: **1:00 PM - 3:00 PM**
 Location: **Books-A-Million**
 Central Mall
 Salina, Kansas

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Rod Beemer signs a copy of his previous book, *The Deadliest Woman in the West: Mother Nature on the Prairies and Plains 1800 - 1900*. (Image credit - C & D Beemer)

LOCAL AUTHOR ROD BEEMER will be signing personalized copies of his latest book, *Notorious Kansas Bank Heists: Gunslingers to Gangsters*, at Books-A-Million in the Salina, Kansas, Central Mall on Saturday, December 19, 2015, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

Book / Kansas bank heists chronicled

FROM PAGE A1

When the fun house closed and was leased to Universal Television Studios, McCurdy made his TV debut in an episode of the popular 1970s show "The Six Million Dollar Man."

Finally, someone discovered that McCurdy was not a wax dummy after all, but a perfectly pickled corpse. Still, no one came forward to claim the body. Finally, a group of western historians from Oklahoma paid for McCurdy's burial, 66 years after his exit from the Earth.

"They put concrete on top of him so no one could move him again," said Rod Beemer, author of the new book "Notorious Kansas Bank Heists: Gunslingers to Gangsters."

Beemer captivated

McCurdy's afterlife journey fascinated Beemer, who spent more than a year researching tales such as McCurdy's and that of other Kansas bank robberies and the colorful outlaws who committed them.

The book was published in earlier this month by The History Press and retails for \$21.99.

Beemer will sign copies of his book from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday at Books-A-Million in the Salina Central Mall. Books will be available for purchase at the store.

A former Bennington resident who now lives in Minneapolis, Beemer has published numerous historical articles and 12 nonfiction works, including his 2006 book on the history of weather disasters on the Great Plains, "The Dead-

dangerous time "The Great Plains were a hotbed for bank robberies because of how spread out the towns were and the lack of law enforcement in the areas."

- **ROD BEEMER**, author of the new book "Notorious Kansas Bank Heists: Gunslingers to Gangsters"

liest Woman in the West: Mother Nature on the Prairies and Plains 1800-1900."

The idea of writing about Kansas bank heists was formed after Beemer talked to an elderly man in Marshall County in northeast Kansas about a 19th-century bank robbery in that area.

"If you want to know about history, then you talk to old-timers," Beemer said. "We talked about a bank robbery up there, and that started the wheels turning. I thought there might be some other good stories out there."

Year of research

Beemer signed a contract with History Press in 2013 and spent the next year researching the book, traveling to historic sites and using the knowledge and resources of local historical societies.

"They're some of the greatest people in the world," he said. "They will do a lot of work for you."

Beemer's book covers the period between Kansas statehood in 1861 to World War II, what he called "the outlaw era through the gangster era."

"The Great Plains were a hotbed for bank robberies because of how spread out the towns were and the lack of law enforcement in the areas," he said. "Also, banks had a bad name to begin

with, and people distrusted them. In many cases, bank robbers became folk heroes."

The book is divided into thematic chapters with titles such as: "The Strange and the Bizarre," "Wrong Career Choices," "Amateur Yeggs and Unsolved Robberies," "The Deadliest Heists" and "Fighting Back: Citizens, Bankers and Vigilantes."

Stories covered in the book include:

- The famous Coffeyville bank robbery, in which the noted but poor-planning Dalton Gang tried to rob two banks at the same time. The banks had big picture windows through which the town's citizenry could see a robbery clearly taking place. After arming themselves, the citizens engaged the Daltons in a ferocious shoot-out. They killed all the outlaws except Emmett Dalton, who lived to write his memoirs.

- The famed bank robbers and lovers Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow did not rob any Kansas banks together, but apparently Clyde did rob a Lawrence bank. Beemer said the only way historians found out about the robbery, which was not reported in any newspapers of the era, was through Clyde's accomplice Ralph Fults, who later reformed and preached against law-

lessness.

- Nearly 4,000 known vigilantes patrolled the Sunflower State during the 1920s and 1930s to combat the criminal menace, many of them organized by the Kansas Bankers' Association. One Winfield-based group called the Aerial Sheriffs used an airplane equipped with a .50 caliber machine gun to hunt fugitives.

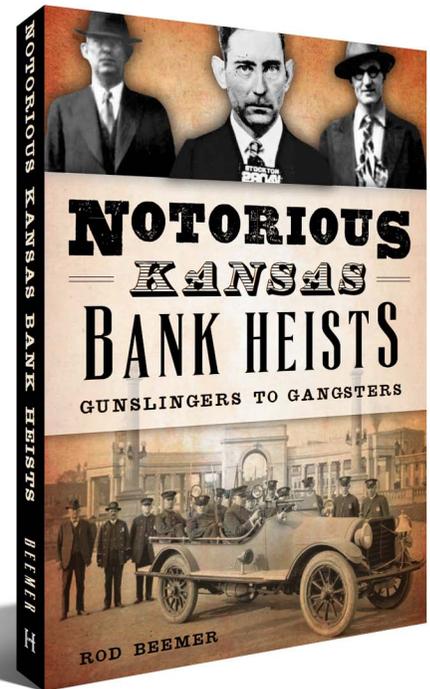
"I didn't realize we had vigilantes in every county," Beemer said. "Unlike today, vigilantes back then were trained and many were deputized to operate within

the law."

Beemer had so much fun writing "Notorious Kansas Bank Heists" that he's thinking of writing a companion book to be called "Livestock Rustling" which he said will cover everything from cattle rustlers to chicken thieves.

"Anybody who's a real writer never lacks material to write about," he said. "There's so much material out there."

— Reporter Gary Demuth can be reached at 822-1405 or by email at gdemuth@salina.com.



NOTORIOUS KANSAS BANK HEISTS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KANSAS NATIVE ROD BEEMER is an independent writer, researcher, and speaker who has authored and co-authored twelve nonfiction books, an e-book novel, numerous magazine and newspaper articles, as well as anthologies. He is a member of the Kansas State Historical Society, West Texas Historical Association, Smoky Hill Trail Association, Westerners International, Fort Larned Old Guard, and Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association. Rod lives in Minneapolis, Kansas, with his wife of forty-seven years.

