

Christmas in Pratt – December 20-22, 2023

Ten SIA members, seven from Kansas and three from Oklahoma, met in Pratt KS for an informative and fun outing the week before Christmas.

The first stop on Wednesday was **PrairieFood**. This company was started in 2016 by two KU chemists. PrairieFood is a micro-carbon-rich soil amendment made by their patented process which deconstructs readily available biomass resources such as feedlot manure and spent distillers' grain. The manure is broken down into an organic liquid which can be spread over a field. The plant is in one of the old hangers used during World War II.

Located in another hanger used during World War II is the **B-29 plane museum**. The tour guide was a veteran who shared his knowledge about this plane.

Supper was at the **Club D'Est** known for their steaks. Afterward we drove through **Lemon Park**. We enjoyed the one-mile drive looking at the animated Christmas displays.

Our first stop on Thursday was the **Next Generation Cotton Gin** located west of town. We did not get to watch the gin move a round bale of cotton full of twigs through the process of cleaning, which ends up in a square bale, because the machine was broken down. The manager took us through the plant and explained what happened in each part of the processing. Some interesting facts of what can be made from one bale of cotton are 313,600 \$100 bills, 215 jeans, 259 bed sheets, 3085 diapers, 690 terry bath towels and 4321 mid-calf socks, to name a few items.

Coming back through Pratt we stopped at the **Serva-Terria** restaurant which has been part of this town since the 1950's. The buffet-style meal had a good variety of choices, so no one left hungry. There was enough time before our next stop to do some shopping. While the ladies went to shop for Christmas gifts, Jill took the three men to the Vernon Filley Art Museum. There was an exhibit of 20 Christmas trees and items made by local artists.

We traveled east of town for a tour of the **fish hatchery** at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. It was built in 1903 and expanded in 1912-13. The hatchery consists of 83 one-acre production ponds. Even though there aren't many fish during the winter months the director gave us a tour and explained the breeding program.

The last stop of the day was at the **Art Barn**. Janice Rose knew the artist, Dick Bixler, and his wife. This guy is very talented working with different types of metal. He gave us a tour through his bed and breakfast before the evening activities started. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived and there were wagon rides pulled by Clydesdale horses. Several local musicians played an assortment of Christmas music.

We finished the day enjoying supper at the **Cancun Mexican Grill**. We said our good-byes since several were leaving early the next morning. *(article by Jill McCollum)*





