



### TCHS GOES INTERNATIONAL



Chris van der Linden from The Netherlands contacted Laurie Walters (by e-mail) on behalf of his friend, a Mr. Kees. Mr. Kees does not speak English and has “adopted” **PFC Edwin F. Willert**, a 1939 graduate of Tonganoxie High School. Edwin’s name is on the “Wall of the Missing” at the American War Cemetery (also called The Netherlands American Cemetery) located in Margraten, Holland. The cemetery is on the Cologne-Boulogne Highway used by Hitler to invade the “Low Countries” in 1940 and again when the Germans retreated on the same road in 1944.



Margraten Cemetery is located on 65.5 acres of land where white crosses dot the fields to commemorate the 8,301 dead. Mr. Linden informed Laurie that all of the 8,301 graves have been “adopted” and in addition, almost all the the names of the “Wall of the Missing” have been “adopted” too. Flowers are placed by the Dutch people on special days as Memorial Day and Christmas. The Wall of the Missing contains ca. 1,700 names of WW II American Soldiers who were killed in the area whose bodies were never found. Pfc. Edwin F. Willert is one of the missing



whose name is on “The Wall of Missing”. He died April 15, 1945 as a Prisoner of War. He was a member of the 168th Infantry Regiment of the 34th Division as a Medical person. This Division was the first American Division deployed to Europe in WW II. Normally it’s members are from the states of Minnesota and Iowa. It is a mystery how a man from Kansas served in a unit from Minnesota and Iowa.

It appears that Mr. Linden and Mr. Kees have similar interests in WW II and have a particular interest in keeping people aware of the history of American Soldiers in WW II who are buried or listed on the “Wall of the Missing” in this cemetery. Furthermore, it seems to me that there are several historical/study groups in the Netherlands who maintain an active interest in these

WW II war heroes and strive to find out what they can about those dead soldiers. Last May 26th a memorial ceremony was held at the cemetery.

Edwin Willert

Fred Leimkuhler



These varied study groups search for families of the fallen and provide information about the final resting place of their brother/son. Chris says, "It's an honor for me to let them know, after more than 60 years, how their brother lived and died because they don't know."

Edwin Willert and his family lived on 2nd street according to the 1940 census. Family members were his father, Fred; his mother, Ella; older brother, Herbert; older sister Olga, and Edwin. In this census Edwin was listed as a druggist. However, he was not old enough to have completed the education for

pharmacy, and he is not listed in the state listings of pharmacists of that time.

Edwin served as president of the FFA chapter in 1938 and was on their judging team. In the photo he is second from left with a dark "T" on his sweater. He is listed as killed in action, however, the Dutch have information that he was killed while a prisoner of war.

In the 1925 the Kansas Census, the family appears in the Wyandotte Co., Kansas Census (pg. 2637). In 1940 the family is in Tonganoxie, but by Edwin's death, Wyandotte County is listed as his address.

#### Hostesses for the 3rd Quarter

July: Carol Stouffer,  
Esther Eason  
Maryann Needham

August: Ferry & J.W. Evans  
Keyta Kelly & Michael Kelly

Sept: Janet & Jim Stuke & Gladys  
Walters

#### Tuesday Night Programs

All programs begin at 7 PM

July 23rd- Erika Nelson "Tall-Postcards of Dad Martin and Pop Conrad"- rescheduled from Feb. 26th.

August 27th -- To be determined

September 24th--Lisa Harkrader, local author will discuss creative writing, getting published, and her book, *Air Ball*, winner of William Allen White Award.

["I keep six honest serving men: They taught me all I knew: Their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who" R. Kipling](#)

["If you don't get what you want, it's a sign either that you did not seriously want it, or that you tried to bargain over the price" R. Kipling](#)

# BUILDING AND GROUNDS REPORT

\_ Jim Stuke

## The Bell Tower update:

Thanks to the generosity of the Peter & Margaret Leighty Trust, the bell towers on the school and church are being covered with vinyl to protect them from the weather. Having a volunteer paint the bell tower was a safety issue, and we did not want to take that risk, so it was decided to cover the towers with vinyl.

The school bell tower has been covered with vinyl and it is nice to see the tower is all white again. The contractor is now working on the church bell tower. The roof supports for the church bell tower have deteriorated and are unsafe, so the bell tower roof will be lifted off with a crane and repainted on the ground. This work should be done within the next two to three weeks.

This project has taken longer than expected because Mother Nature has made it difficult for the contractor to work due to rainy and windy days.



TCHS BUILDING COMMITTEE  
-Jim Stuke

For the past several months there have been many discussions on the need for artifact storage. Other museum directors told us that we have too many artifacts on display in our museum, and we should place some of them in storage to be used with a different display at a later date. The problem is that we don't have adequate storage space and we don't have a climate controlled space. AND when more artifacts are donated we want to be able to preserve them and display them in the future.

The Board of Directors has directed the Building Committee to develop a plan to build a new storage facility. Immediately, some of the questions that are discussed include how much space is needed, what type of building to construct, and do we have the money to build a new building, AND will we be able to maintain it in the future.

This also brings up additional questions as; How do you see the future for our society? How do we attract new energetic members? How can we promote and partner our Society within our community?

The Building Committee members are Bill and Kathy Peak, Susy Ross, Jim Stuke, Perry Walters, and Emil Wiley. If you have any ideas or suggestions please do not hesitate to contact a committee member.



## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE-Kathy Peak

I am proud to announce the approval of the board to establish an annual scholarship in the amount of \$300.00.

**PURPOSE:** In keeping with the mission of the Society, the purpose of this scholarship fund is to encourage young people from Tonganoxie to enter and pursue education and career fields related to history.

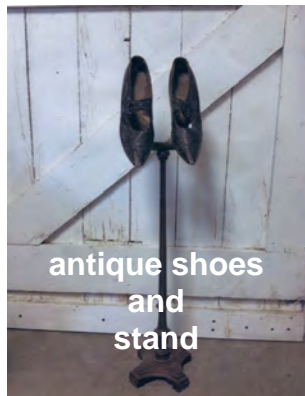
**QUALIFICATIONS:** Scholarships awarded by the Fund will only be given to students from USD # 464 pursuing a course of study related to history. The student applicant must be entering an accredited college or university after the completion of high school or equivalent level of education, and must show a GPA of 3.0 or higher on a scale of 4.0. The applicant must provide a typewritten, double spaced essay of at least 500 words on a subject set annually by the committee. This essay must accompany a TCHS Scholarship Application form. Previous recipients may be considered for an additional scholarship award.

**APPLICATION & AWARD DEADLINES:** Applications must be submitted by March 1, proceeding the fall semester of college. Scholarship awards will be announced no later than May 1. An award check in the amount of \$300.00 will be issued by the treasurer upon receipt from the recipient of proof of enrollment in an accredited college or university.

**HOW TO APPLY:** Application forms and criteria for scholarship are available by calling Janet Stuke (913-369-3189) or Kathy Peak (913-845-2852)

## IT'S IN THE MUSEUM

-Susy Ross



Billie Aye has always loved and appreciated antiques. She recently donated an antique shoe stand and a pair of antique shoes to the museum. The shoe stand originally came from Zoellner's Department Store in downtown Tonganoxie. Billie purchased the stand from Pat Black's auction and was told by

Pat that it came from Zoellner's. Pat, at one time, owned and operated the Zoellner's Department store. Billie purchased the shoes. Although she never wore them, she used them to complement her Model "T" era decor.

Earletta Morey who works at the School Volunteer Center for the Tonganoxie Elementary School has donated a quilt to our collection. The State quilt was made in honor of Agnes Black by the 4th and 5th graders with the help of school volunteers in the 1980's. Each block on the quilt represents a State with it's capital, state bird, state flower, order and date of joining the Union. What a history lesson for 4th and 5th graders.



We are always happy to receive donations since this is our only source for acquiring objects for the museum. As our collection grows there is a need for additional space. It is appropriate that a building committee is addressing this concern.



"Life is hard. It's even harder when you're stupid".  
"A man deserves a second chance, but keep an eye on him". John Wayne.

## THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD'S MESSAGE

-Laurie Walters

June 22 was the day that a number of members and friends gathered in the shade of the Reno Methodist Church for the annual TCHS picnic and pot luck supper. This event also is the time that we honor all of the many volunteers who make the historical society function. Most members raised their hands numerous times in demonstrating the many jobs they did.

A special "Certificate of Appreciation" was presented to DENISE BAKER for her service to TCHS as secretary and her long term labeling project. This project not only provides us with a significant amount of money, it provides a good opportunity for our members to visit and



socialize as they work. Denise gets the ball going and Gladys Walters calls the workers. The members do the work and the job gets done.

Two Special distinguished service awards were presented to LLOYD PEARSON and JIM STUKE. This coveted award may be received only one time and then after at least six years of meritorious service with high distinction

Lloyd's award was presented for the numerous hours he contributes in building and grounds maintenance, for the purchasing and gathering the supplies and food for the ball park concession, and for mowing and snow removal. Lloyd is quietly always around. If you need a willing helping hand, look for Lloyd.



Jim Stuke's award was presented to him for his many years of yard mowing and maintenance, for his accepting leadership in the ground maintenance, and for his many years of service as a director and for his several years as Chairman of the Board. He now chairs the building committee. One thing that you will recognize in Jim is his

ability to listen to others and then demonstrate his expertise in getting the group to coalesce on a decision where everyone is a winner.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD'S  
MESSAGE (Con't)

Who is this???

After the awards, DJ Bob entertained the group with trivia contests and games. Like last year he was fun! Also he provided music that we c o u l d understand-- music of the 50's



Tongie Days

TCHS also participated in Tongie Days with a booth and drawings. Once again Bill Peak did a yeoman's job of selling chances for our raffle item. Bill can sell anything and usually does as demonstrated by his ability to "bring home the cash".



Bill has operated this Tongie Days booth for the last several years. He has generously given his time for the entire day. This year

he had some relief for a short time.

EDITORIAL NOTE

It seems that TCHS is getting more and more inquiries about families and their genealogy. The inquiry from the Netherlands (written about on page one of this newsletter) has been followed by in inquiry from England on the Baker family.

This Baker family is not part of the Ronnie Baker family, but part of the Mary Smith Ketchum family. Mrs. Smith was a Baker. We have had several inquiries about this Baker family in the recent past. There are several items on this Baker family in our museum. It is an early family who came from England in the mid 1800's.



Most everyone knows this person today, but this 1961 photo may throw some. Valedictorian of her high school; No. 1 in her pharmacy class (while taking 30 hours of Russian) at the University of Nebraska; she moved to California to get married to a

musician and pursue her career, but she found another person in San Diego, Ca. She followed her husband to western Kansas, to eastern Kansas, to Illinois, and back to eastern Kansas, where she has lived for 40 years.

I thought no one would identify this person, but 8 people correctly identified this person as Laurie Walters, our Chairman of the Board of TCHS.

And Now Who is the bill board lady????



This lady went to Tonganoxie High school. Her family has been associated with the ghost town of Hoge, KS. Her first husband sponsored a little league baseball team. She is active in TCHS.

I have heard that on trips sponsored by the First State Bank, she can be quite a surprise in the fun department. Beware!!!

## THE ANNUAL SPRING OPENING APRIL 2013

The spring opening of the museum has always been a fun/social event. This year it was to be a more relaxed atmosphere with desserts and a movie- a movie with popcorn. The movie was to be the silent movie, 'Tracy the Outlaw' by Jack Hoey.

This movie has a later version with Bruce Dern as the star. The story is true and it is based on a real outlaw who existed in the Utah, Oregon, Washington State area. In Jack Hoey's version Tracy was mean. In Bruce Dern's version there is humor.

TCHS had paid to get this movie converted from VHS to digital. Unfortunately, since the movie is over one hour I hadn't totally reviewed it. It



seemed to work, but it soon became known that the movie worked, but various places the

error message "skipping through damaged area" became frequent and THEN THE MOVIE STOPPED.

Washing the numerous smudges didn't seem to improve the outcome. After about 30 minutes of effort, the movie project was abandoned. The sad thing about this movie failure was, several people had come specifically for this movie.

I am happy to relate that Ray Stockman had the capability to take the VHS home and make a "Quick Time" movie, which the editor could use in Final Cut Pro to produce a DVD that does work. This movie is now available to visualize in the museum and perhaps at the fall closing we can show it.

Except for that movie glitch, the rest of the day was a huge success. Many people attended and many new people came and visited the museum the Reno Methodist Church, and the Honey Valley School. And since the movie was not shown there was a great deal more time for renewing old friendships and making new acquaintances.

All in all I would say the day was a success.



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE  
--Laurie Walters

We have two challenges facing us. We are running out of storage room and we desperately need usable office space. This is being addressed by the building committee reported earlier in this newsletter.

We also need to make certain that we have the man power and resources necessary to maintain our current site plus any new facilities that may be constructed.

To help address the second problem the Board of Directors is beginning to evaluate how we interact within the community. Perhaps we need to raise community awareness of our society which may lead to additional memberships. Perhaps we need to look a how we interact with local business, community, our schools, churches, city and county government and the private citizen.

We have a challenge to meet their needs for the representation and recording of their history, whether it be from the times of the settlement of Kansas or those events currently taking place. How this is done relies on our ability to be open to change and new ideas.

PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF YOUR OFFICERS  
AND LET HIM/HER KNOW YOUR  
THOUGHTS !!

## BOLING, KANSAS The Rise and Fall

In 1912 the population of Boling was 12. That doesn't seem like a large population, but Boling, Kansas had thriving businesses. There was a general store, a blacksmith, a post office, the Woodmen of America Lodge, a telephone company, railroad workers, and a railroad train with a stop at Boling. All that remains today is



old foundation  
at Boling

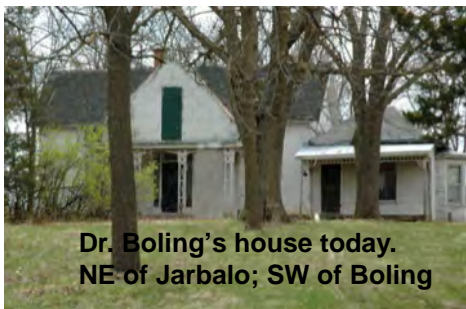
a remnant of the general store's foundation existing as part of Robert Seymour's home.

As stated in a previous newsletter, my

recollection of Boling was the Boling Grange, located along Co. Rd #5. This was where every other Saturday, Gary William's band with Jim Morey on Trumpet, held a dance attracting kids from all over the region. I never got to go due to parental restriction. AND I couldn't dance anyway.

However, the town of Boling was several miles west and north of the Grange. Boling was 1/4 mile east of the junction of Co. Rd. 25 and Seymour road.

The fellow who loaned his name to the town of Boling, Dr. Titus Gordon Vespasian Boling, lived quite a distance south and west of the town of Boling. This house still exists today, but there is no life in it. When Dr. Boling lived here he saw



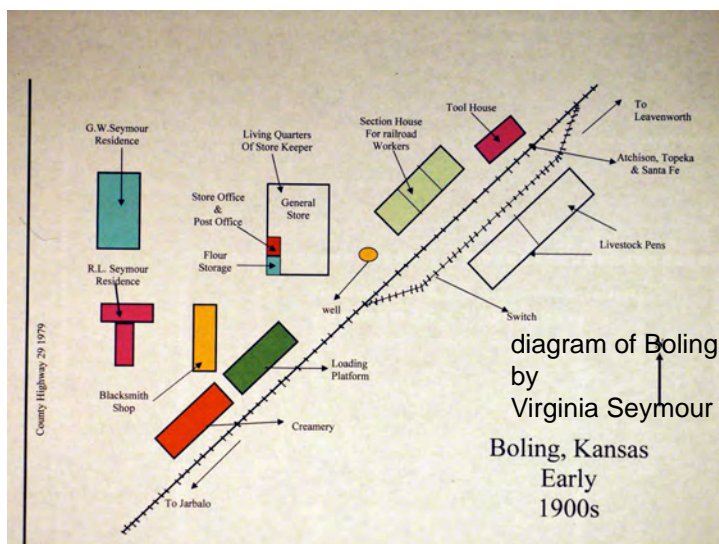
Dr. Boling's house today.  
NE of Jarbalo; SW of Boling

his patients in the home. Now the structure is full of only ghosts of the past.

Dr. Boling came to this country from Ohio. He was a military physician stationed at Ft. Leavenworth. After the Civil War he returned to Leavenworth, but in 1869 he and his family moved South West to the country. He purchased 8 quarter sections of land. Here he

practiced medicine, extracted some teeth, bred shorthorn cattle, served in the state senate, and was apparently associated with the Cyrus K. Holiday of railroad fame.

Boling was no different from any other small Kansas town. There had been among small towns a feeding frenzy during the building of the railroads across the United States. Most towns sincerely believed that they needed a railroad or they would cease to exist. Consequently, many railroads were built through very small towns. Enter the Leavenworth, Topeka, and Southwestern RR. The towns served with the exception of Leavenworth and Topeka were all



small (Little Stranger, Boling, Jarbalo, Ackerland, McLouth, Oskaloosa, & etc) and all are gone except McLouth, Oskaloosa and Meridan. All three remaining towns are quite smaller today.

This railroad was started in 1879 The original railroad was to extend into central Kansas. This never happened because in 1881 the Santa Fe and the Union Pacific purchased the line before it had completed 26 miles of track. This was to remove the competition between the LT & SW within territory the Santa Fe and UP perceived as theirs. Consequently, only 46.3 miles of track was laid and the road stopped at Meridan, KS. The last few miles to Topeka were travelled on Santa Fe rails at a cost.

In 1885 additional competition developed in McLouth and Oskaloosa when the Kansas City, Wyandotte, and Northwestern RR became a factor.

This LT & SW railroad never made any money. During WW I the owners lost patients with their money drain and sold the railroad to a Chicago business man, F. L. Wells. He believed he could make money, but he didn't. Wells let the track decline and wanted to abandon some of the track.

The people believed that if the railroad were to abandon the track, it would be the first step in their abandonment. This railroad had become the lifeline of these small communities. Fear of losing their lifeline set into motion the most interesting experiment and railroad operation of the time.

A new experiment was initiated by the local patrons of this railroad. In 1918 the local patrons bought this railroad and continued to operate it until 1931. It continued to operate at a loss, but benefit districts were established to provide money for operations.

Money had to be raised and it was. McLouth coughed up another \$10,000 (earlier in the history of the LT & SW McLouth paid \$15,000).

Oskaloosa paid out an additional \$15,000. Other towns provided similar amounts of money. Over \$80,000 was raised by the local patrons. The railroad began operation as the L & T (Leavenworth and Topeka).

Some people referred to this railroad as "The People's Railroad". The Charles Haines Family (Charles grew up in Ackerland) referred to the train as "Ole Jerky".



After 1918, the L & T ceased to look like a normal railroad with large steam engines, railroad cars and cabooses. It began to look like a Model "T" adapted to operate on iron track instead of roads. What was really happening

was the patrons were hauling their grain, milk, and etc. to Leavenworth and Topeka in small amounts.

It seems to me that in the beginning of this railroad, the owners made an attempt to make money. After all the benefits of building new railroads were gone, the operations of the railroad became a complete drain and the owners wanted out. The local patrons fear of losing their source of commerce and trade--their "lifeline", purchased the railroad and continued to operate this road with a loss. Tax benefit districts were established to help gather more capital to continue operation of the line.

By 1921 roads began to improve, trucks become more common and one farmer noted that many of the farmers were not using railroads any more and hauling by motor trucks. Now the hand writing was on the wall. It was just a matter of time. The last trip of the L & T was April 29, 1931.

So this situation with a small railroad, small towns, and railroad economic competition among various railroads, Vs. improved roads, Improved trucks and cars suggested that this railroad and those towns could not last. Indeed they didn't. The rise and fall of these small towns like Boling, Ackerland, and Jarbalo paralleled the success and failure of the railroads serving those community.

Early Boling was a thriving community. GW Seymour built a large general store. After it burned in 1901, Robert Seymour built the second general store in 1902. This store burned in 1912 and Charles Gist built another general store. This general store struggled later and eventually closed. The building was made vacant in 1930. Two unsuccessful attempts to open it failed and the building burned in 1938.

The two most prominent families in this community were the Seymour family and the Gist family. The Gist family settled in High Prairie Township in 1856. The GW Seymour family came to High Prairie Township after the





the Civil War. GW Seymour drove a wagon team from Ft. Leavenworth to New Mexico and was known for making this trip more than once. In 1865 he came to High Prairie and raised his family.

The Gist family came from Maryland and eventually settled in the Boling area. Charles Gist at one time was the Blacksmith in town. He also eventually owned the general store seen in photo above. In 1904 Charles took over the management of the Boling Telephone exchange which operated 205 telephones. The Modern Woodmen of America and Ancient Free and Accepted Masons were both operating in the City of Boling.

A chicken story involved the RR workers who lived in Boling. The section crews kept chickens for eggs. The chickens would eat spilled grain and other things along the track. They weren't penned and probably roamed for all their food. One day their chickens were gone. After looking for the chickens they realized they were most likely on the train that just left. They telegraphed ahead to Topeka and sure enough the chickens showed up in a box car. They were sent back on the next train.

Reflecting upon this entire situation pertaining to Boling and the LT & SW/L & T RR, it seems obvious that the small towns and the RR were doomed to fail. Many RR failed more quickly (KC, WY, & Northwestern did). But this RR actually failed in 1918, but the strong push by the local patrons and politician (subsidies from benefit base) kept the road operational another 13 years, after which people could no longer justify the total cost. Boling and the RR ceased to exist.



The store on the left is the general store owned by RL Seymour after 1902, and the store on the right is most likely the last Boling store owned by Charles Gist. Note the differences in the methods of transportation. After 1907 the Seymour family sold the general store to Charles Gist. These two photos sum up this entire article. Changes in methods of transportation was the small RR & small town's demise.

xx A very large thanks to Virginia Seymour for directly or indirectly providing much of the information in this project on Boling. She has been more than helpful in this project and other projects of mine. Perry Walters, editor