

TONGANOXIE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

4th QUARTER NEWSLETTER, December, 2018

TONGANOXIE AND WORLD WAR II

A few years ago I wrote a news article about veterans of World War I who lived in Tonganoxie either before WW I or after WW I. In addition to the names I was able to find some information about the military activities most of the veterans accomplished in WW I. The reason: Walt Neibarger, the owner/editor of the Tonganoxie Mirror, had published two articles in his newspaper that named all the veterans from Tonganoxie who were involved in WW I (ca. 250 veterans). To my knowledge there has never been any such publication in the local newspaper about the Veterans from Tonganoxie who served in WW II. **So any information about WW II veterans comes to us from different sources. Although we have names of many of those veterans, we don't always have good information about what unit they served or what they did.** Doing the same type of news article for WW II veterans is next to impossible.

The Tonganoxie Historical Society has a large group of names of people who were in WW II. We do not have any information about many of them. If after reading this article you know something about a WW II veteran, **PLEASE LET US HAVE THAT INFORMATION. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A GLORIOUS AMOUNT OF KNOWLEDGE, IT CAN BE ONE ITEM AND WE WILL BE HAPPY.**

To give you some idea of how extensive WW II was and how many military people were involved in WW II, there were 16,000,000 military Americans involved in WW II. 405,000 were killed and 671,278 were wounded.

In January of 2001 when I retired from the VA, 57 years after the end of WW II, there were still more WWII veterans alive than were involved with Korea, Vietnam, and Bosnia. In 2001 they were dying at the rate of 6,000 per day.

Fortunately, I do not have the knowledge or desire to discuss in an educational manner WW II. I will limit my discussion to what information I have pertaining to members of the Tonganoxie Community who were involved with WW II. Much of this information comes from historical interviews by various people from Tonganoxie. Twelve interviews providing a DVD were by the VFW in 2007. The Tonganoxie Historical Society has also interviewed many people and most of those have some World War II history. One individual, Vernon Kaufman, provided us with a diary of his bombing missions over Germany. His plane was hit and exploded on his next to the last mission which he needed to go home. He was a turret gunner and was killed. It was almost impossible for turret gunners to escape a crashing bomber.

I will also provide some bits of information on how I re-acted to WWII. I can remember several situations in my old mind that might provide some humorous reading.

Many of the veterans interviewed by the VFW enlisted when they were 17. To do this at age 17 required parental signature. Why did these young people decide to enter the war before high school graduation? Among the many reasons for this, two jump to my mind. One was pointed out while I was on the McLouth School Board. An educational psychologist said that up until the 1980's men joined the military to get out of the house, and women got married. The second issue and related to the first reason is many of these 17 year olds were in family situations which were not too productive and the depression was a financial burden on the entire family.

DICK FILPEN

It was was sometime after WW II. I was perhaps 9 years old with my dad at Gracies' Filling Station. Merle and Gracie Reusch operated a filling station that was a perfect example of cracker barrell/pot belly stove



Gracie Reusch

atmosphere. It was a place many farmers gathered in the evening after chores. It was also popular for kids during the day because Gracie would give the kids candy.

A young man came into Gracies' to visit a short time.

He was quite happy to see everyone and he knew everyone. Art Himple, Art Mosier, Lon Pomroy, Merle and Gracie Reusch and Perry Walters, the judge. I remember that he had black hair and was seemingly excited and happy to be in the store. I would judge him to be ca. 5' 8". After about 15 minutes he left.

The discussion then became about him. Gerald Salmon was part of the crew on the airplane that transported him to Europe. It seems he was a paratrooper and had been severely injured by gunfire during a drop somewhere over Europe. The date was March 24, 1945. He had been in a hospital for several months and was just recently allowed to go home. My dad and I left to go home. On the way home my dad said that he would be dead in two months, AND HE WAS. I was shocked to learn that because he seemed to

be healthy, he looked strong and he was happy. My dad said that he was severely shot when he was dropped by parachute over Europe. His organs had been so badly shot to pieces they were ceasing to function.

Dick Filson was a orphan boy who lived with his aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Maston who lived south east of Tonganoxie. He had worked for Norman Wiley before the war and he had also worked for Perry Walters and Merle Reusch. He was graduated from paratroop school at Ft. Benning, Georgia on June 28, 1944, and became part of the 17th Airborne Division. "Dick" as he was called, died August 15, 1949 at Ft. Gordon, Ga. He was 28 years old. His body was transferred back to Tonganoxie by train and services were held at the Methodist Church. He is buried in Hubbel Hill Cemetery. A young baby is also buried in the same plot at Cpl. Filson.

Richard Filson was married to Mary Ann Mahoney on April 8, 1946. After his death she married a Roy Dudgeon. This marriage ended in divorce and she later married Don Himpel.



**Mary Ann Mahoney Dudgeon
when this photo was taken**

STANLEY STANHOPE

Stanley was born March 26, 1927, on a ranch farm just outside the small town (ca. 100 people) of Reed, Kansas. It is 50 miles east of Wichita, Kansas. Stanley had an older brother who joined the Coast Guard at 17.

The farm was hard work. There was well water outside the house and no electricity. One had to carry water to the house by bucket. The depression caused his dad to lose his farm in 1939. The family moved to Illinois where his father had work in the oil fields. Stanley finished the 8th grade and never went to high school.

Stanley attempted to join the military when he was 16, but the Navy discovered this and although his parents would have signed their permission, the military would not take him at 16.

Stanley enlisted on March 1944 in St. Louis as soon as he was 17. He went to Farragut, Idaho.

It was described by Stanley as the "end of the World". It was the second largest naval training center in the United States.

This place was cold, damp and everyone was sick. The illness was always described as "cat fever". Cat-scratch disease is an uncommon sickness that can be transmitted to people by cats. The causal agent is a rickettsial organism called *Bartonella henselae*. |

Ed. note: I question the diagnosis of cat fever on all the patients who were sick. I suspect that the term "cat fever" lumped everyone who was sick with a fever into the same boat. Thus the diagnosis was simple.

Because he could swim he was made a swimming instructor. The job here was to make sure everyone could swim, jump (some had to be thrown from the platform) off a 50' platform, swim through fire and swim on their back. They also had to row a boat. Stanley believed it was difficult to defend yourself against a depth charge while in water. Do I need to explain this further???

The 4 weeks training in Idaho was generally getting one to understand discipline and helping your fellow soldier. The Navy wanted soldiers who looked after each other and were mature enough of follow orders. From the beginning the trainers made it very hard. They seemingly wanted you to go home to mother. The last day this philosophy was changed.

After this Stanley went on a troop ship eventually arriving in Guadalcanal after the battle. Here he went on board the destroyer, Evans, on which he served until the war with Japan was over. This was August 1944. The



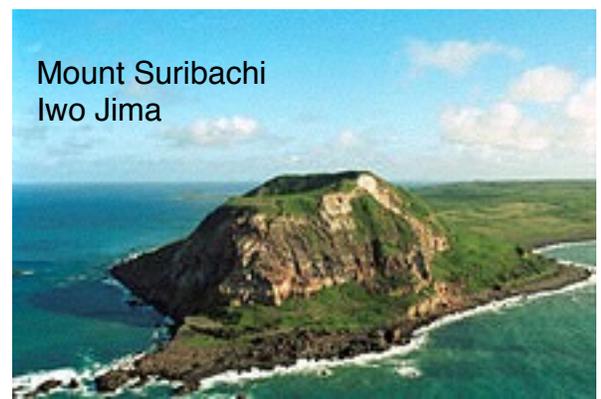
Evans was returning from Saipan. From Guadalcanal the Evans went north to get ready to invade the Philippines (The Liberation of the Philippines). It was Oct 1944. This involved the return of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. The Islands of Leyte, Mindoro, and Luzon were involved and the battle was difficult. Stanley didn't discuss this but he did discuss the Typhoon known as Cobra that hit the Philippine area in December of 1944. HE WAS SCARED! He said the biggest problem was when the boat propellers hit the water before the nose of the ship came up, the ship was driven deeper into the water for at least a short time. He said there was nothing one could do to change the problem.



The reason they were in this situation was Admiral Halsey had been given incorrect information about the characteristics of this typhoon. Although the sea was becoming rougher all day, the nearby cyclonic disturbance gave relatively little warning of its approach. On 18 December, the small but violent typhoon overtook the Task Force while many of the ships were attempting to refuel. Many of the ships were caught near the center of the storm and buffeted by extreme seas and hurricane force winds. Three destroyers, USS Hull, USS Spence, and USS Monaghan, capsized and went down with practically all hands, while a cruiser, five aircraft carriers, and three destroyers suffered serious damage. Approximately 790 officers and men were lost or killed, with another 80 injured. President to be Gerald Ford was on another ship in this typhoon.

The next stop was Iwo Jima. You could smell the sulphur emanating from Mount Suribachi long before you saw the island.

It was stated by intelligence that the battle for Iwo Jima would be completed in 1 week. It took 5 weeks from 19 Feb to 26th of March 1945. This error by intelligence caused the leaders to decide to take Iwo Jima. The attitude seemed to be, If it was only going to take a week let's do it. After the battle, the outcome



became very controversial. The US didn't need the island for any Naval or Army base. They did restore the air fields so B-29s might use the base for emergencies. All but 216 Japanese of 21,000 Japanese were killed. 3000 Japanese continued fighting from the caves for several months after the official battle was ended. Eventually most of them gave up for different reason. This action where many of the Japanese continued to fight after the bulk of Japanese quit fighting also happened elsewhere. ***In 1967 while I was in Okinawa, two Japanese soldiers in Guam at different times (about 1 month apart) gave themselves up to the U.S. command. It appears that for them the war had not ended. Speculation was they must have been hiding in caves and harvesting food to survive. They were in their 70's as reported by the Stars and Stripes. When they returned to Japan, a hero's welcome awaited them.***

Stanley didn't have much to say about the battle directly on the island of Iwo Jima. He was standing watch on the Evans, when the first flag on Mt. Suribachi went up. Ships started blowing their horns in celebration. A marine colonel wanted that first smaller flag for the marine museum so it was soon taken down. The second flag, the one most known and larger, and used as a model for the marine statue seen from the District of Columbia on the south side of the Potomac River, was raised and photographed. All but three of these marines were eventually killed. Stanley was looking through some binoculars and saw the entire event. His ship, the Evans, was engaged in the battle.

Large ships of the navy are never without a destroyer escort. The destroyers are fast, had great fire power,, very maneuverable, and they had the sonar that provided information on enemy submarine activities. When a task force left, a ring of destroyers surrounded it for protection along the entire trip.

During the battle for Iwo Jima, the Evans and all the destroyers were the closest ships to the land. They fired shells (called 5 inchers and weighting 65 pounds) and much fire power to the land in support for the marines and army. One time they were supporting a specific group of marines on land with their destroyer gun fire. This firepower was controlled by a marine spotter on land. This spotter controlled where the shells landed and how rapidly they fired. When this action was over, they were absolutely out of shells of any kind. When firing any of the guns on a destroyer, after so much time you had to be relieved by one of your support group. The battleships would be the farthest from the island. And of course their shells were quite a bit larger. Some suggest the size of small Volkswagen. The big 16 inchers on battleships were capable of shooting 30 miles with accuracy.

Okinawa which was part of the Japanese homeland was the last battle that Stanley was in due to the war ending in early August, 1945. This battle was similar to Iwo Jima, except this was probably the deadliest battle in the Pacific War. One of the significant issues was that the Japanese had forced over 100,000 Okinawa civilians to fight. These people had no training or experience in war or use of war time equipment. Almost all were killed in the war. The Japanese were heavily dug in with caves and tunnels and were well prepared for the onslaught. As in previous battles, the Japanese had informed the Japanese soldiers and civilians, that the Americans would kill, rape and beat up all the women, children and beat up and kill any soldiers. Consequently, the Japanese soldiers resulted in desperation battles called Banzai Attacks. They expected to be killed for the emperor. ***I have seen a military documentary movie that shows a mother throwing her baby over a cliff down to some seaside rocks. A few seconds later she jumped to the same spot.***

In Stanley's case during the battle for Okinawa, his ship was near the north side of the island about 45 miles north of Okinawa. It was somewhat like a picket line. They were to put out smoke to make it impossible for the Kamikaze airplanes to do any damage to the larger ships and those which were closer to Okinawa. In doing this the destroyers became duck soup. Therefore, the Kamikaze airplanes attacked the destroyers. They were the only ships visible. The destroyers wanted more ships on the picket line, but they were only allowed two ships per position. There were several positions for destroyers along this picket line. Having two ships per location helped, but Stanley's ship coupled with another ship shot down 40 Kamikaze Airplanes in this battle. They were all decorated with a presidential citation. His ship was hit by 4 Kamikaze planes.

Stanley's ship was sinking and he thought it would be abandoned. But tug boats showed up and their large pumps began to get the water out of the ship and it began to rise. Stanley was a ship fitter so he was on the ship making sure the boat would stay afloat. Many of the wounded and others who were not needed were removed from the sinking ship by "Vultures", LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry). Stanley believed that the only thing

Evans ship damaged by 4 Kamikaze airplanes



that saved this ship was the fact that the sea was totally calm. No water coming over the gunnels.

Bottom line the ship was saved and towed 8,000 miles back to San Francisco for repairs. All of the crew got 30 days survivor's leave. Stanly spent all his money because he believed as did others that the invasion of Japan would result with him not needing any more money.

He served on a troop carrier ship until 1947 when his

tour of duty was over. He did not re-enlist.

FRED "PETE" ANGELL

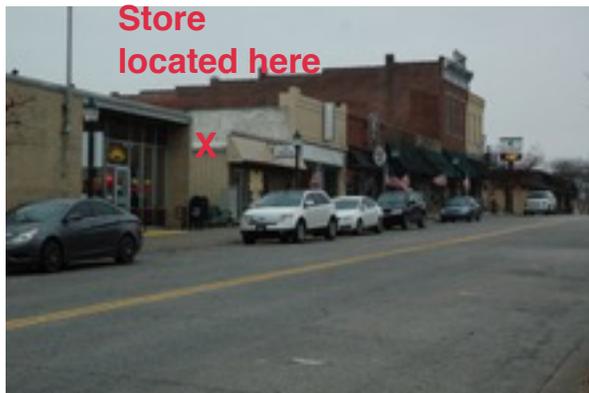
Pete was the son of Fred Angell, a direct descendant of Magdalena Bury and a noted barber in Tonganoxie. He was the brother of E.K. Elston. He loved sports and hunting. His favorite sport was football in his younger years and trap shooting in his older years.

Later in my life I fished, waterskied and hunted on Pete's farm. Together we also hunted pheasants in north central Kansas. He never discussed his war time experience with one exception.

Pete was in the European war in France. Evidently he was a railroad engineer in the army. He firmly believed after the war, he was the engineer for a train that hauled some of the European GOLD. Many times Pete related to me that the train he believes hauled the gold was the heaviest pull he every had.

Over the years he repeated this story many times.

BERT GREMS AND MUNRO ZOELLNER



Bert Grems operated a grocery store in Tonganoxie. This store was located 2 businesses east of the drug store, now called "The Downtown Drug Store operated by Sarah Breuer. The grocery store had burned and most of the land space today is still empty. The Mirror owns a little building which sits on a portion of the space.

Bert worked for John Bartlett. Bert took over the store when Bartlett died. Bert was drafted into WW II at ca. age 34. Bert served with the 104th Infantry Regiment; 26th Infantry Division. Quite often the 26th fought against a Panzer Division.

He was killed on the 25th of November 1944 at age 35. There were quite a number of people in Tonganoxie who were upset because they thought Bert was too old to be drafted into WW II. Looking on the list of veterans who were from Tonganoxie and were killed in action, Bert was the oldest person in that category to be killed.

Walt Zoellner was a member of the draft board and a merchant in Tonganoxie. He took the brunt of criticism on Bert's being drafted into the military. Bert Grems was killed in the European war and his body is buried in Lorraine, France.

A short time later, Munro Zoellner's name came up to be drafted. He was in college and a gifted student. With all the criticism from Bert Grems being drafted, there was no avenue open to give Munro Zoellner. Walt Zoellner's son, a reason not to be drafted.



Walt
Zoelner

Pvt. James Munro Zoelner was killed in the Japanese war on March 25, 1944. He was part of the 1st Cavalry Division. His unit had moved to Australia in preparation for fighting the Japanese for the Admiralty Islands, where Munro was killed.

Adrian Zink, *Hidden History of Kansas*

The Tonganoxie Public Library and the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society hosted a light lunch and book presentation event on October 4. Adrian

Zink, author of *Hidden History of Kansas*, works for the National Archives in Kansas City. There he has found the archival treasures that he has included in his book – like the story about the game of Auto Polo, invented in Topeka, Kansas. This game led to the patenting of the first roll-bar – all of this before 1920!

If you are now interested in Adrian’s book, look for him on Facebook or on the web - <https://www.adrianzink.com/>



Adrian Zink

Barn Quilt Workshop

What can you put on your barn or shop to make it just a little bit special? **A Barn Quilt.**



Jean
Pearson

Six barn quilts were painted on October 20 at the Fairchild-Knox hay barn at the Tonganoxie Historical Society. The barn quilt workshops are held twice a year at the barn, taught by Jean Pearson, with assistance from other members and friends of the historical society.

October’s workshop yielded three two-foot-square blocks and three four-foot-square blocks.

Participants are invited to join the Glacial Hills Quilt Trail, which can be accessed at: www.tonganoxiehistoricalsociety.org/glacial-hills-quilt-trail.htm

The Glacial Hills Quilt Trail starts at the Tonganoxie Historical Society and Museum with three blocks which are easily seen from Highway 16 at the intersection with 24-40.

Jean Pearson is truly the “QUILT LADY” in this region. For many years she has been involved in Quilts, having many quilt shows at our historical site. Now she is bringing to this area another variation on quilts, The Barn Quilt—There are more and more of these seen on barns, homes and out buildings in our area.

Third Grade Field Trip

Since 2005, the Tonganoxie Historical Society has hosted the third graders for a field trip in the fall. On October 15, seven classes of third graders with parents and teachers came to the museum for a unique adventure in local history, with an emphasis on the early days in Tonganoxie,



Joy Lominska Type

before the turn of the century (1900).

This year, 14 volunteers came out for the day: Peachez Joles, Sarah Kettler, Janet Burnett, Laurie & Perry Walters, Jean & Lloyd Pearson, Jim Stuke, John Walter & Kris Roberts, and Joy Lominska. New volunteers this year were Dorothy Resco as bell ringer; Lynn Jennings presented native American artifacts with Joy Lominska, and a KU graduate student, Katelyn Trammel joined us for the day presenting old fashioned toys.

Many thanks to Susy Ross, who has been a part of the third-grade program, since the years before it was a third grade program (second graders used to travel to Fred Leimkuhler's farm for a day of living history). Susy is continuing to work with us by assembling a collection of artifacts for us to use with third graders in the years to come.



TCHS Members Inducted into The Tonganoxie USD 464 Education Foundation Hall of Fame.

Sarah Kettler was inducted as a Hall of Fame Honoree. Sarah taught second grade at TES for 29 years. Bill New received the Alumni Achievement Award. Congratulations to both of them!

2018 Leighty Grant

TCHS is the recipient of a \$7,400 grant from the Pete and Margaret Leighty Trust. We will use these funds to update lighting in the hay barn, museum, and fire house from fluorescent to LED. LED lighting is more reliable and more energy efficient.

We are grateful for the assistance we receive from the community.

Upcoming Programs & Events in 2019

Fourth Tuesday, January 22. Barbara Higgins Dover, Lawrence, will show portions of the movie she wrote and produced entitled "When Kings Reigned." Barbara will talk about making the movie, which tells the true story of Abe Burns and Jake Washington, fishermen who risked their lives on the Kansas River at Lawrence. The story of Abe and Jake starts shortly after the civil war in 1870 and continues into the mid 1900s.

Annual Chili Supper, February 21. Mark your calendars for this annual lunch and dinner. We will be looking for volunteers and hungry people!

Fourth Tuesday, March 26. Leanne Chapman, President of the Jefferson County Historical Society, will talk to us about Orphan Trains.

Visitors to the Museum

We have just counted the visitors who signed our book in the first eleven months of the year. By the Numbers 1,362 people visited the museum and attended events sponsored by the Historical Society in 2018. We will make the count official in January, but this is a great number!

Board Members

At the Holiday Party, we took the time to hold Board elections.

Connie Putthoff and Tony Johnson were re-elected as Board Members;

Connie Torneden was re-elected Secretary;

Kris Roberts was re-elected President;

Janet Burnett was re-elected Vice President.

We welcome one new Board Member – Mike Megee, who steps into an open seat on the Board.

These board members join Jean Pearson, Ray Stockman, and Theresa Megee.

NEW ITEMS IN THE MUSEUM



One recently acquired file of artifacts made its way to us along a surprising pathway. Pictured is a baby book found rain soaked in a field close to West Valley City, Utah. It was mailed to the state historical society in Topeka who forwarded it to the Leavenworth County Historical Society who contacted us here in Tonganoxie as it was the book of Greg Salmon from Tonganoxie. Greg Salmon was the son of Gerald Salmon and the nephew of Roy Salmon. Greg and his near relatives are all deceased so it was accepted to our archives. Due to the poor condition of the book, it has been quarantined in an archival box after the pertinent photographs and hand written entry were removed or transcribed. Our thanks have been sent to all those who sent this missile along its way.



Another artifact arrived via its owner from Buffalo, Mo who donated the pristine thermometer given as a promotional item from Dale Rawlings. Along with it she included this note: "The Dale Rawlings store is where I earned my first "real money" when I was nine. My mother bought chicks through the mail every spring. That spring she bought a batch of chickens just for me. I took care of them, doing all the work (I think) and she kept track of expenses, so that when we sold the fryers at Rawlings that summer I got all the profit. Deciding how to spend it was very exciting.

Arriving on one cold icy day was a beautifully framed check from the Farmers and Merchants State Bank and another from the Jarbalo Bank. Both banks no longer exist.



Welcome additions to our volunteers are Donna and Don Talbott. They are relatively new to our community and bring with them many welcome skills. Donna is transcribing original surveyors notes from the first survey of the state of Kansas. (They are NOT easy to read!!!!!!) Don helps out with anything, from mowing to wielding



a hammer. Turns out he is quite a carpenter and will be constructing display cases needed for our military section. We are grateful to see them every Wednesday

9The TCHS Christmas Party. It was great food with ham supplied by Charles "Tuna" Conrad.

This is a photo of Kris Roberts, President of TCHS. She is telling to the group about all the great things that have happened at TCHS. New roofs, exploring old spring, increased attendance, Great programs on 4th Tuesdays.

WORLD WAR II REMEMBERED BY THE EDITOR

I used to have nightmares on a regular basis about this war. It went something like this. I was on the ground in my back yard crawling towards some German machine guns which were firing bullets over my head. I was quite a distance from the guns. If I raised any part of my body the bullets would have hit me. This was a no win situation for me because following along behind me were many RATTLE SNAKES These snakes were after me! They were large and some were rolled in a ball like worms. I did the only thing that would save me.. I woke up.

From the Museum

IT IS THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN WE RENEW MEMBERSHIP AND WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (ACTUALLY, WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ANYTIME).

OUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS A PRIVATELY FUNDED ORGANIZATION – WE RECEIVE NO TAX DOLLARS. THE EXPENSES TO KEEP THE MUSEUM OPEN ARE FUNDED BY YOU – YOUR VOLUNTEERING AT EVENTS AND YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES.

SO, TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO BECOME A MEMBER, RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, OR JUST UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION (EVEN IF YOU ARE A LIFE MEMBER). YOU CAN MAIL YOUR DUES TO US OR STOP BY THE MUSEUM TO BRING YOUR DUES IN AND SAY HELLO.

2019 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

NAME _____ DATE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE No. _____ EMAIL _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPE:

STUDENT \$ 5.00 _____

INDIVIDUAL \$ 10.00 _____

FAMILY \$ 15.00 _____

INDIVIDUAL LIFE \$ 100.00 _____
(NO RENEWAL REQUIRED)

CONTRIBUTOR LEVELS:

SUPPORTER \$100.00 _____

SPONSOR \$250.00 _____

PATRON \$500.00 _____

BENEFACTOR \$1,000.00 _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO TCHS AND MAIL TO:

**Tonganoxie Community Historical Society
P.O. Box 785
Tonganoxie, Ks. 66086-0785**