

Tonganoxie Community Historical Society

TCHS

September 25, 2007

TCHS Expansion to be Delayed

Submitted by George Cooper

For several months the Historical Society has been investigating the possible acquisition of the historic Fairchild-Knox home. Declared a historic landmark by the Leavenworth County Historical Society several years ago, the house sits on property that was purchased by a California group; their intent is to clear the ground for development. The last owner of the property offered the home to TCHS, to be moved at our expense.

After much deliberation and careful consideration of all elements involved in the proposed move to our Site, the Board has rejected the offer of the owner. Costs associated with moving and renovation of this structure would not be feasible for our organization.

Adequate space for expansion of Museum facilities - especially artifact display and storage, research and office space - remains a priority. We will continue to explore other avenues in order to obtain the much needed space for expansion. The Board will keep the members informed of any further developments.

The County Commissioners recently endorsed a new plan for requesting Cultural Grants. In addition to our fund-raising operations, donations, and memorials to TCHS, Grants provide a vital part of our organization's income. In 2007, we were awarded \$5,000 from the County Commission. This grant was used to hire our part-time Curator and for work on other museum projects. This grant will not be continued under the new program, so application for funds under the new plan is a priority.

Progress is being made with our two on-going restoration projects. The Evan's windmill is awaiting repair of it's gear mechanism, and work on the 1930 era Tonganoxie Fire Truck continues to move forward.

Our new part-time Curator, Rachel Saalweachter, has made some needed changes at the Museum, and has made suggestions for other areas at the Site. Rachel is proving to be quite an asset to our organization.

I would like to again say how very valuable all our dedicated volunteers are to the operation of TCHS. Without their talent, time, and dedication we would not be able to achieve our objectives to preserve Tonganoxie's history for future generations. * * *

City Pool Mementos

Tonganoxie City Pool is being demolished to make way for a new pool. In August, some items from the pool were obtained from the City by member Janet Angell-Felts, including about 80 of the wire baskets that had been in use at the pool for many years. One basket will be placed in our Museum, the remainder were made available for sale to the public. All of the baskets were sold within 24 hours of announcement, providing TCHS with \$400 profit. Something which may have been destroyed benefitted our Museum, and will now bring memories of fun times to the lucky few who purchased the baskets. * * *

From Our Treasurer

Through the efforts of our faithful workers and our Coordinator Connie Putthoff, we have just completed our yearly concession stand fund raising project. One of the more stressful fund raisers because it lasts from the end of May through mid July, the concession stand project is also our largest income producing project. This year, we cleared \$7,111.66 at the ballpark concession.

We continue to rent the barn and church for various functions. Two Grant payments of \$1250 have been received from the County and are much appreciated. One more large fund-raising project is scheduled in October, when a group of volunteers will work at the Renaissance Festival in Bonner Springs. Income as of August 31 - \$30,424.63. Expenses as of August 31 - \$20,774.65. - Carol Slawson, Treasurer

TCHS Board News

Nominations for officers and Board positions will be presented to members at the October 23rd meeting, with elections to be held in November. The positions of President, Vice President (one-year terms), Secretary and two Directors (three-year terms) will be open. If you would consider serving in any of these positions, contact George Cooper (913-845-3388) for further information.

Betty Englen, our Historian for several years, has asked that we find a replacement for her. Please, please consider volunteering for this important position which provides an on-going record of events at the Site.

The Board meets at 9 AM on the third Wednesday of each month. Contact George if you have something to bring before the Board.

Mark Your Calendars

We have a wonderful line-up of programs scheduled for the remainder of this year. All meetings begin at 7:00 PM.

October 23 - Don Mueller, published playwright, director, musician, former Baker University faculty member and Methodist minister, is well-known for his commissioned version of "The Wizard of Oz." Additionally, "The Ballad of Black Jack," written and directed by Mueller, recently played at the Lawrence Arts Center, and has been a success at Baldwin City's Maple Leaf Festival for over 30 years. This play brings alive the 1855-1856 period of racial conflict leading up to the Civil War. Mr. Mueller will be joined by Karen Stephenson of Tonganoxie, the leading lady in "Ballad" for nine years.

November 27 - Herschel and Jacque Stroud will entertain us with a presentation about the "Lincoln Family Album." The Strouds will be dressed in period costume as they present the program, based on a book written about the Lincoln album which had been lost for many years. Life-long historians and experts on Lincoln, the Strouds have traveled coast-to-coast to deliver papers, attend conferences, entertain and enlighten people about American history. In 2005, Herschel was appointed Kansas' liaison to the National Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission by Governor Sebelius.

December 18 - Ellen Bottorff of Tonganoxie, accomplished pianist and KU graduate of Music, will perform for us at our annual Christmas Party. Join us for an evening of festive food, friendship and entertainment as we celebrate the holidays.

If you have suggestions for programs you would like to see at TCHS, please contact me at the Museum office. - Julienne Kaslaitis, Program Coordinator

President's Report

For the past several months our focus has been the acquisition of the Fairchild/Knox home. Now that the decision has been made to reject this project, we must move ahead with other ideas for the much-needed expansion of the Site. Meanwhile, the daily activities around TCHS continues.

As always, our organization must continue to find ways to generate the needed funds for operation. We currently have two major fund raisers. The ballpark concession has been in existence for several years and provides our largest profit. In order to continue with this profitable venue, we need to have more volunteers willing to work the concessions.

The concession stand operation lasts from the last week of May through mid-July, generating between \$7000 and \$8000 profit for TCHS. Games are played four days a week and occasionally on Saturday. We need at least three people (sometimes four) from 6 PM to 10 PM each of these nights. There is always at least one experienced member in the booth.

Our other big fund raiser is the annual Renaissance Festival in Bonner Springs. This is a one-day-only operation for our volunteers, and generates \$1000 profit to TCHS for only five hours of easy work. Plus, the volunteers get to see the Festival for free, and lunch is provided. This event requires 20 volunteers, and as of this writing, we are still in need of five people in order for our group to participate and benefit from this opportunity

It is difficult to find enough people to volunteer for some of these events, and should we have to forego one or more of these opportunities to generate funds, our Historical Society and Museum would surely suffer. If you can possibly work at one or more of these venues, please contact me (913-845-2905, or via email at conputt@sunflower.com).

Another avenue for generating funds is the rental of our buildings. We currently have three area churches using our facilities for weekly services, and several "repeat" renters who utilize the Site for reunions, birthdays, business meetings, weddings and other events throughout the year. If you would like to know more about the availability of our buildings, please contact me at the above number.

While the regular Wednesday volunteers continue to do their weekly maintenance and grooming around the Site, you might also notice the addition of several new plants, trees, and shrubs. Cindy Murry of Lost Corner Farms in Tonganoxie recently donated a number of items to TCHS, and made other items available to us at a generous discount. The items have been planted and will surely enhance our grounds. - Connie Putthoff, President

School Days at TCHS

On September 24 and 25, TCHS will host the third grade students from Tonganoxie Elementary School. Helene Miller, our School Coordinator, reports that due to the growth of the event it will now encompass two days. Volunteers for these two days are currently being contacted.

There will be five sections for the students to visit: the Reno School will be in session with a teacher instructing the students in ways of the one-room school; a silent movie will be shown; a genealogy lesson will be presented; tools and other items from the past will be explained; and students will tour the Museum. Other educational programs are being planned as well. The children will bring their lunches and eat lunch in the barn. In October, Genesis Academy will be visiting the Site, and Linwood Elementary will also be returning at a later time. Having the students participate in events at TCHS brings our Site to life, and educates our children about the past.

Fire Truck Update

We are beginning to see noticeable progress in the fire truck restoration. After successful overhaul and start-up of the engine, we are now concentrating on dismantling the body. The cab and the front one-third of the body have been removed. Various pieces are now out for sandblasting and primer. The gas tank has been cleaned and polyethylene lining has been installed.

We have applied for a Grant from Leavenworth County to assist with the costs associated with the restoration of the fire truck. It is hoped that the County will look favorably on our restoration project, and that we will be able to stay on course with the work on this addition to our historical Site.- Al DiSanto, Project Manager

Out & About - -

The Tonganoxie Chamber of Commerce will hold their October meeting in the barn at TCHS. Apple Pies and/or Cherry Pies are needed for this event. Please contact Janet Angell if you are willing to help with pies for this luncheon. (913-845-3113)

The Carroll Museum in Leavenworth will hold an Afternoon Tea on October 13. Contact Janet for information and to purchase tickets.

Lansing, Kansas, will have "Autumn in the Grove" Fair on Saturday, October 13. TCHS will host a booth at the Fair. If you have fall items to donate for this sale (including baked goods), if you would like to volunteer for this event, or if you wish to learn more about the Fair, please contact Janet at the above number.

". . . We walk out on the prairie grasses, hear the wind, and imagine the creaks of covered wagons that once traveled this way. They are gone - as someday we also will be.

"But the plan is easier to understand now. It's not about how much activity or stuff you can fit into your small allowance of time and space on this earth. It's about how much you can be thankful for while you're here."

- Ann Guerin, Woonsocket, South Dakota

News From The Museum

TCHS is helping with and participating in a barn survey being done by the Kansas State Historical Society. The survey, announced in the June issue of Kansas Country Living, had a goal of 300 barns to be surveyed in this summer project. Their request for information was overwhelming, generating more than 500 responses within two weeks of publication of the request..

According to the Kansas Country Living article, the primary goal of the project is "to make it easier for owners of eligible Kansas barns to nominate their barns for listing on the state or national register of historic places." They are hoping to eventually document all barns built prior to 1945 in Kansas. If you have information about barns in our county built prior to 1945, please contact Susy Ross at the Museum.

We have applied for a Grant from the County Board of Commissioners for both Power Point equipment and Past Perfect museum software. The Grant is now ready for final

application and we hope to hear from the County on this valuable Grant within the near future.

Several items pertaining to the Alma and Hans Freienmuth family have been donated to TCHS by Shirley Freienmuth Kasper. There were 48 items donated, including hand-made bonnets made by Alma's mother; a Girl Scout uniform from Alma's childhood; photos and written materials; and many other historical items not yet catalogued. Alma and Hans Freienmuth owned the Many Oaks Farm and Orchard, one of the largest in the area.

Fred Leimkuhler has donated a family bowl and pitcher set, which is now on display. He also donated a red ribbon from the 1937 Leavenworth County Fair.

Deloris White has donated a history of Charles Green articles that were originally published in the Linwood newspaper, circa 1902.

The Museum has purchased a new digital camera, which is proving to be a valuable asset for documenting items. It was recently used to document the Fairchild/Knox house. The house is in disrepair, and will likely be demolished in the near future.

Rachel Saalweachter, our part-time Curator, works at the Museum on Saturdays and Sundays. Rachel is making recommendations for the artifacts in the Museum, and we are seeing her input in many areas. Her main focus has been organizing the Honey Valley School basement storage area. In July, four volunteers from the local Masonic Lodge came to the Site to help with this effort. Tables and cabinets were rearranged to make the space more user-friendly, and Rachel is now working to arrange the stored items in a more efficient order. "Along the way I am taking inventory and condition-reporting each object in the museum and the School basement," said Rachel. "This involves recording the object's number, a short description, and the overall condition of each object. Condition reports help to determine how stable each object is so that it can be kept as close to its current condition as possible. It is a slow process, but very worthwhile for a museum's records."

Rachel added as a side note that she is "very glad for the opportunity to practice my chosen profession and help Tonganoxie Community maintain a record of its history." I think we would all like to say to Rachel that TCHS is VERY thankful that she is with us, and that we appreciate all she is doing to improve our Museum and maintain our valuable artifacts.

Membership Report

Since last reported in our June Newsletter, we have six new members and four new Life Members. It is always exciting to see new faces among us, and especially gratifying to know that so many people share our passion of preserving our local history. With the continued support from our members, our efforts to preserve the history of Tonganoxie will continue.

As you read this Newsletter, you will notice our increasing efforts to keep our members better informed. We want you to know about programs and events at the Site, as well as any changes, proposed plans, and/or needs. Not only is it our responsibility to preserve local history, we also want to inform and educate those who visit our Site. We encourage you to let us know how we are doing in these areas.

**Tonganoxie Community
Historical Society
P. O. Box 785
Tonganoxie, KS 66086-0785
913-845-2960**

If you do not attend the monthly meetings, I encourage you to join us for a great night out, with informative programs, friendship, and refreshments. - Linda DiSanto