

Tonganoxie Community Historical Society

TCHS

December 7, 2008

Our Year in Review

With the close of another year, it's time for a reminder of what we have accomplished at the historical site during 2008.

January found the "every Wednesday" volunteers filling the shelves and spaces of the new barn enclosure areas. Although the Site is closed during the winter months, the museum work and routine maintenance continues. The McLouth third graders endured blizzard-like conditions on January 29 to learn about Kansas history in our Honey Valley School; our annual Chili Supper was held; and we welcomed Ross Marshall, past National President of the Oregon-California Trails Association and Santa Fe Trail Association as our guest speaker at our monthly meeting.

In **February** our long-awaited website went online for the first time. Members George Cooper, Bo Himpel, and John Lenahan were recognized by the Chamber of Commerce for their service to our community. And Stan Herd, author and Environmental Artist, known world-wide for his crop art, was our guest speaker for our meeting.

March saw the volunteers hard at work on a float for the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in downtown Tongie (we won 3rd place). Workers continued the KMA grant photo project in the museum. Our speaker for the March meeting was Michael McClellan, teacher at Tonganoxie High School, who informed us about the influenza outbreak of 1918. Al DiSanto elected as new Board Chairman.

April 6 we welcomed a large group of guests to the Site for *Opening Day at TCHS*. The new barn display areas were showcased, along with two temporary exhibits. Our speaker this month was Ben Saathoff of Tonganoxie, who discussed the religious history of our community.

May was busy at the Museum as Susy Ross continued work on the new PastPerfect software program recently purchased with money acquired from a County grant. Our meeting speaker was John Duncanson, instructor for the AARP Driver

Safety Program. Duncanson presented driver information as well as some history of law enforcement in our county.

In **June** TCHS hosted *Tongie Days at the Site*, which included display of old cars, two quilt shows, and featured a display of men's hobbies in the barn. June is also the time for our annual picnic, which includes lots of food and fellowship.

July saw the Wednesday volunteers busy around the Site with all the summer maintenance and grounds keeping. Work on the fire truck restoration project was in full swing, with some of the parts ready for paint and installation on the truck. Our July meeting speaker was Elizabeth Wilson-Agin, a geophysicist from Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Elizabeth explained how she uses ground-penetrating radar (GPR), GPS, geospatial software, and her expertise to locate lost burial sites.

August found the volunteer workers toiling away with changes and improvements in the Museum, and of course, the endless mowing and maintenance issues. Our speaker for August was Mary Kay Menard, Librarian for Leavenworth County Library. Mary Kay presented a wonderful program about women of Leavenworth County, including photos and stories of the area.

In **September** the KMA grant photo project was completed, and work on data entry for the PastPerfect program continued. This computer program is capable of handling all our Museum artifact records. Our program this month was *Alaska and the Arctic Circle in Model A Automobiles*, presented by member Delbert Felts and several of his friends who made this historic trip in 1988.

October found several volunteers working at the Renaissance Festival in Bonner Springs, earning money for our organization. The third grade classes from Tonganoxie Elementary School spent two days at the Site, with hands-on learning

in our one-room school house and Museum. TCHS hosted an AARP Driver Safety Program. Our monthly program was *History of Dentistry*, presented by Dr. Kelly Lineback. A Closing Day Party featuring "Homemade Pie and Coffee" was held on October 26th, the last Sunday the Museum will be open until next April. We will continue to be open on Wednesday mornings throughout the winter months from 9AM to 12 noon, or by appointment.

November seemed like a short month, due to the holidays, but the volunteers still found plenty of work to occupy their time at the Site. Our program was *Music of the 1940s*, and although one of the singers was ill at the last minute, the show went on! Don Mueller accompanied Karen Stephenson of Tonganoxie and Jim Tuchscherer of Topeka in big band era music along with several show tunes.

December 16th we will have our annual Christmas party at the Site. Member Fred Leimkuhler will receive the Distinguished Service Award for giving so much of himself and his talent to TCHS for many years. Special guest musician will be Jan Schaefer, musician at the Christian Church in Tonganoxie. Jan will share her musical talent with us and will lead us in a group sing-along. Members should bring their favorite holiday dish to share. Bring a friend, guests are welcome. The festivities will begin at 6:00PM.

This is only a small overview of the events at our Site for 2008. As we look back on what we have accomplished, let us also look forward to 2009 and what we have yet to do. And a special **Thank You** to all the Wednesday volunteers who give so much of their time and talent to make our organization what it is, and what it will be.

Closing Day Pie Party



Members Carol and Ed Slawson and their guests survey the vast offerings at the **Closing Day Pie and Coffee** gala October 26th.

News from the Board

- Al DiSanto, Chairman

The Community National Bank has given a donation to TCHS to become a Patron Member for the year 2009. This is greatly appreciated, and **Thank You, Community National** for your interest and generosity.

We have received a payment from the Pete and Margaret Leighty Trust. The conditions of the Trust are that the funds are to be used to honor the Leighty family with a special room in the museum to house the artifact collection from the Leightys. The amount of this very generous gift is \$125,000, and planning will be developed to fulfill their wishes.

We have received a Grant from the Leavenworth County Board of Commissioners for the purpose of restoring the Museum roof. We wish to thank the Commissioners for their generosity to TCHS.

There are two new Board of Director members elected at our November meeting. I would like to welcome Laurie Walters and Jim Stuke to the Board. We look forward to their input for Board matters. Bill Latham and Ed Slawson, both long-term Board Members, have stepped down for this new term. We extend a hearty Thank You to Bill and Ed for serving well on the Board.

Honey Valley School News

-Helene Miller, School Coordinator

On December 5th, we had 37 third and fourth graders from Genesis Christian Academy at TCHS for *Christmas of Long Ago*, held in our one-room school house. The students experienced how Christmas was celebrated at the turn of the last century as they decorated a live tree (from Susy and Larry Ross' farm) with popcorn, paper chains, pine cones, and other handmade decorations.

The children learned to make a "handkerchief" doll the way children did out on the prairie, since there were no stores nearby, and they had no way to order a doll. They also learned about Native Americans, and each child made an Indian item to take home.

Each of the students enjoyed a brown bag lunch, then sang songs and listened to a story.

In October, we had 135 students from Tonganoxie Elementary. This was a two-day event due to the number of students involved. As a thank you to TCHS the students created a poster, which is on display in the Reno Church basement. Take a look next time you are here - - it is fun to see!

In January, we are hoping to host another group of students to celebrate Kansas' birthday. We are discovering the children love coming to the Site!

Carol Slawson,
Carol Stouffer,
Betty Englen,
Laurie Walters
decorate a tree
for the Library
fundraiser



Buildings and Grounds Report

- Del Englen, Chairman

The 2008 mowing season is finally over. The guys that show up every Wednesday put in many long, hot hours doing whatever was asked of them. George Cooper was almost always on a mower when the rest of us arrived; Lloyd Pearson not only stocked the concession stand daily for two months, but also helped with the mowing. Dan Carr is always willing to tackle any problem that presents itself. Ed Slawson does most of the trimming and is our electrical and plumbing expert. Howard Fields also shares the mowing chores, but has taken on many painting jobs as well. Wayne Davidson oversaw concrete work on the church steps, and will be replacing the dead trees along the driveway. Larry Ross and Delbert Felts spend most of their time with Allan DiSanto on the fire truck project, and Larry has improved many of the museum show cases, while Delbert keeps the driveway graded.

Hopefully 2009 will see the completion of the siding on the east side of the hay barn, a new roof on the museum, and finally, a working windmill.

There is always room at our coffee table for visitors or new volunteers every Wednesday at 10:00 in the church basement.

Museum News

The end of season Closing Day Party which featured homemade pie and coffee was a huge success. We had a large number of visitors and members who came to tour the museum for the last Sunday of the season. They came to enjoy a slice of pie (or two) and to sit and visit for a while. Thank you to all the volunteer bakers for your delicious contributions.

The photo reproduction project in the Museum has been completed, thanks to Laurie Walters and Linda DiSanto, who spent many hours copying and replacing the photos on exhibit. This valuable project was possible due to a KMA grant which covered the costs for materials.

We have a new Wednesday volunteer. Carol Stouffer is a new TCHS member, and we welcome her to our Wednesday team of museum workers.

In October, TCHS donated a basket to the Chamber of Commerce for their silent auction during the Taste of Tonganoxie event. The basket was filled with small antiques, museum gift items, a one-year gift membership, and other items.

Museum workers also donated a tree to the Tonganoxie Library for their silent auction, which raised funds for the library. The TCHS tree was decorated as an old fashioned Christmas tree, with hand-made decorations.

Although the museum is open only on Wednesday mornings through the winter months, there remains a lot of work to be done. If you find you have spare time on your hands, call Susy Ross and see if she has something for you to do.

A very special Thank You to Bitler's Barbeque and Bichelmeyer's Restaurant for allowing TCHS to place table ads in their businesses. And also to the downtown merchants who allow us to place our program posters in their windows. We appreciate your support of Tonganoxie Historical Society's monthly programs.

Volunteer Spotlight

Delbert Felts is one of our "every Wednesday" volunteers. Along with wife Janet Angell-Felts, Delbert has been a long-time contributor to our organization in various capacities.

The couple has been instrumental in the creation and/or organization of many programs at TCHS over the past years, including the contribution of their labor for these events; programs like the annual "Autumn in the Grove" event in Leavenworth each year; planning and organizing the Chamber of Commerce luncheon this past summer, and an appreciation luncheon for the workers at the Good Shepherd Thrift Shop; in charge of the ballpark concession stand; and helping whenever and wherever they are needed.



Originally from Arkansas, Delbert moved to Kansas as a young child. Janet was born in Wichita but spent the majority of her life in Florida before returning to Kansas in 1965. Both lost their first spouses to cancer. Delbert and Janet married in 1994; together they have five children and seven grand-children.

Once Janet's children started to school, she worked for a guidance center, and later as Volunteer and Community Ed coordinator for the school system. She continues as a weekly school volunteer. She was a City Council member for 11 years, and chaired the City library building committee. Both Janet and Delbert are members of other various organizations, and very active in the community.

Delbert retired from Dupont after 27 years of service. Besides his volunteer work, he has a large collection of old cars. Janet says if he had more storage room, he would have more old cars. The couple is active in old car clubs, and recently organized and presented a program to the Historical Society about Delbert's 1988 trip to Alaska in the Model A. They enjoy touring in the old cars, sometimes for several weeks at a time.

The Felts enjoy travel to places like Yellowstone in the winter, viewing the fall foliage in Maine, skiing or white water rafting, and Disneyworld. They plan to keep traveling, especially in their Model A.

From our Program Chairman

- Julienne Kaslaitis

Finding speakers for our monthly programs has been a challenge and also a fun thing for me. I thank you for the privilege of serving our Society in this manner. Your thoughts and ideas for programs have been a great help, and I hope that you will continue to pass along your suggestions.

We have a great line-up of programs already scheduled for early 2009. We are fortunate to have presenters who volunteer their time to inform, educate, and entertain us. Plan to attend as many meetings as possible, and bring a friend!

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to Laurie Walters for the great job she does in preparation of the Certificates which are presented at the meetings.

Fire Truck Restoration

- Al DiSanto

Restoration of the fire truck is moving along in an orderly fashion. All of the component parts have been cleaned of rust and corrosion and painted with primer paint, and about 75% of the truck has been given its final coat of Fire Engine Red.

We have four new tires mounted on the truck, along with their re-worked rims. Most of the 'bright work' has been newly chrome-plated, and all of the wooden frame work has been replaced. And, the engine has been rebuilt and started.

Our friend, Doug Shoemaker of the DLS Sandblasting and Body Shop, has donated the labor to repaint the truck. Doug does excellent work for small car body repairs on up through large body restorations.

We have targeted the completion date of the project for the TCHS Grand Opening Day in the spring.

Membership Report

- Linda DiSanto

The second half of 2008 has seen our membership rolls expand, and we appreciate everyone who has chosen to join us. If you are looking for something to occupy your spare time, call or stop by the Site. We are always in need of more volunteers.

If you pay yearly dues, you will find a renewal card within this newsletter. If you are a Life Member, or if you have already paid for the year 2009, the card is not included. If there is a "09" beside your name on your address label, you are already paid for 2009.

New Members:

Jim & Deloris Edmonds	Tonganoxie
Robert & Olive Ann Holder	Austin, TX
Annie Johnston	Leavenworth
Mary Kay & Ed Menard	Leavenworth
Michael & Pam Smith	Linwood
Carol Stouffer	Tonganoxie
Connie J. Tornedon	Linwood

New Life Members:

Caralee Laming Greene	Overland Park
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New Patron Level Member:

Community National Bank	Tonganoxie
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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

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In Memory

We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of Jerry Salmon of Tonganoxie who passed away in November.

Events Around the Area

Dec 14 - 1-7PM - Leavenworth County Historical Society presents their *17th Annual Candlelight Vintage Homes Tour*. There are 7 homes on the tour, including the Carroll Mansion, Leavenworth City Hall, and Trinity United Methodist Church. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$15 day of the tour. 1128 5th Avenue, Leavenworth. For information, call 913-682-7759.

Now thru Jan 3 - Christmas Through the Ages display at Wyandotte County Museum, 631 N. 126th Street. Mon-Sat 10-4.

Exhibit time extended - Mugged! A Rogue's Gallery of Leavenworth Penitentiary Mug Shots. A traveling exhibit of the National Archives, the exhibit features mug shots taken from the early records of the famed prison. Also on display is the *Kansas Association of Wheat Weavers* display. First City Museum, 743 Delaware, Leavenworth. Contact Del Sanders 913-682-1866.

Did You Know

The Reno Methodist Church, located at our historical Site, was opened in 1891 in Reno, KS, at a cost of \$1,900. The original building was destroyed by fire in 1918 and immediately rebuilt. It officially closed in 1993. To save it from being torn down, the members sold the building to TCHS in 1993 for \$1.00, and then paid for the cost of moving it to the Site in the spring of 1994. It now stands as a testament of the religious history of this area.

The Reno Church was also used in the movie, "Where Pigeons Go to Die," produced by and starring Michael Landon in 1989.

The church is available for weddings, church meetings, and other social events. It has a small kitchen and meeting area in the basement.

Mark Your Calendars:

December 16 - *Annual Christmas Party*

It's time for some food, music, and holiday cheer at our annual TCHS Christmas Party. Each family should bring their favorite holiday dish to share.

This year, our special guest musician will be Jan Schaefer, musician at the Christian Church in Tonganoxie. Jan will play holiday music for us, and lead us in a sing-along.

A Distinguished Service Award will be presented to member Fred Leimkuhler for his years of contributions to TCHS.

Bring a friend, guests are welcome. The festivities begin at **6:00PM**.

January 27 - *Reclaiming Leavenworth County's Lost History*

In March 2004, Jim Claunch of Leavenworth began a research project which would locate and identify every burial site in Leavenworth County.

In 2006, he enlisted a few volunteers in his cause, which is an ongoing effort. The project includes the location and identification of burial sites, writing a history of these burial sites, developing a county-wide database of burials, and some restoration and preservation efforts. Some of these sites date back to pre-territorial days. More than half of the identified burial sites have already been lost to the elements and vandalism, and a fourth of the remaining sites are in immediate danger. Jim will share some of the photos and information from this project.

February 24 - *Renovation of Ft. Learned*

Mike and Janice Seymour of Tonganoxie will dress in 1850-1860s period costumes as they present information of the work done at Fort Learned. During the renovation a name was found etched into an old stone located in a high area of the walls. The history of this mysterious name was traced, and the Seymours will present their findings of this and of the reconstruction of the fort.

Tonganoxie Community Historical Society

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