

Tonganoxie Community Historical Society

P.O. Box 785 Tonganoxie, Kansas 66086

December 10, 2009

Our Year in Review

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

It's time for a look back at the events of 2009, and to begin making plans for a successful 2010.

In **January**, our Board of Directors welcomed new members Jim Stuke and Laurie Walters. Restoration of the fire truck continued. The Wednesday volunteers found plenty to do around the Site with regular winter maintenance and a list of museum chores to be done. Susy Ross and Helene Miller represented TCHS at the Kansas Day learning program at Eisenhower School in Leavenworth. Our monthly program was *Reclaiming Leavenworth County's Lost History*, presented by Jim Claunch.

A cold day in **February** was the perfect time to gather for labeling, the first of many sessions for this fund-raiser that occurs throughout the year. It was also time for the annual Chili Supper, a yearly fund-raising event at TCHS. Mike and Janice Seymour presented information about the *Renovation of Fort Larned* at the monthly meeting.

March was filled with plans for our Opening Day event in early April. All the buildings at the Site were cleaned from top to bottom, and new museum exhibits arranged in preparation for the new season. The MUSEUM sign on the north side of the school building was installed, and re-roofing the museum has been completed. Our monthly meeting featured *Picturing the Dust Bowl*, a program from the Kansas Humanities Council, presented by Kate Meyer of the Spencer Art Museum.

April saw another successful "Opening Day at the Museum" which included refreshments and the annual bake sale. The newly-restored fire truck was on display. The Board announced Kathy and Bill Peak have assumed the duties of Program Chairman. Guest speaker for our April meeting was *Jan English, Chief of the Wyandot Nation*, who spoke of Wyandot history. She was assisted by genealogist Cheryl Armstrong. In **May**, TCHS received a beautiful new sign, erected near the street

entrance. A gift from an anonymous donor, the new sign significantly increases awareness of our Site entrance. Workers prepare for opening day at the baseball concession stand. Our monthly program was presented by Anna Smith, Kansas Alliance of Historical Performers, who portrayed *Deborah Samson, Revolutionary Soldier* while dressed in period costume.

June gave us more than our share of hot, stormy weather this year, with the intense heat and humidity causing the cancellation of our annual picnic. In conjunction with the local Tongie Days celebration, "Tongie Days at the Site" brought out one of the largest crowds we have seen. Fred Leimkuhler received the "Distinguished Service Award," the most prestigious award given by TCHS.

July saw further work completed around the Site – new driveway stone, repairs to the silo, repairs to the windows and painting of the school house, various improvements inside the Reno Church, and many other jobs being accomplished. The museum stayed busy with new donations and erecting new displays. The fire truck restoration is officially completed. We enjoyed *The Rip Chords, a Barbershop Quartet* at our monthly meeting.

In **August**, Laurie Walters announced that, in addition to our regular Sunday hours, the museum would be open on Saturdays for the remainder of this season. Each Saturday would feature programs relating to heritage skills such as sewing, blacksmithing, whittling, etc. Our monthly program was *Swing Talk – Jump, Jive, and Swing – an Era in America*, presented by Herschel Stroud.

Thanks to the beautiful weather in **September**, we finally had our Annual Picnic at the Site. Entertainment was provided by the band "Just Small Potatoes" and we're hoping for a return

engagement. Third graders from Tonganoxie Elementary School were welcomed for a “day of learning” at the historic Site. Melissa Sheinman, a graduate student at KU, began as a part-time employee in the museum. The Saturday programs featured: a day of “school in session” in the schoolhouse; fly-fishing demonstration by Stan Sibinski; heirloom needle arts; and Betty Englen demonstrating the almost-lost art of paper quilling. Our monthly meeting featured a presentation on *Ghost Towns* by Perry Walters.

The perfect fall weather in **October** allowed for lots of inside and outside work around the Site. Windows in the historic school are being covered with acrylic sheeting to aid in preservation. Walls are being erected in the fire house for a more pleasing display area. October Saturday programs included: woodcarver Dennis Bixby; a “What-cha-ma-call-it” board of things/photos for identification; and Closing Day featured our annual “Homemade Pie and Coffee” event, with Charles Dugan demonstrating his Civil War cannon. Our monthly program was *A Tale of Two Soldiers*, presented by Col. Spike Speicher.

The month of **November** should have been somewhat quieter around the Site; however, ongoing repairs and maintenance continued, as well as additional work in the museum. The “Wonderful Wednesday Women” gathered to create hand-made ornaments for the Christmas tree that TCHS donated to the Tongie Library’s annual Festival of Trees silent auction. The Board voted on new members for 2010. Mike Seymour presented *The Custer/Kansas Connection* at the monthly meeting.

December brings our annual Christmas Party, a time to come together with our friends at TCHS and celebrate everything good about our lives. Special guest musician will be Jan Schaffer, musician at the Christian Church in Tonganoxie. Bring your favorite holiday goodie to share. Guests are welcome; the festivities begin at 6:00pm.

This yearly look back at the jobs accomplished and a few of the wonderfully entertaining and informative events around the historical Site serve as a reminder of how fortunate we are to have volunteers who give so much of their time and of

themselves. It is also a time to appreciate all those who donate their precious mementos and antiques to be enjoyed by museum visitors for years to come. When you give or volunteer, no matter how large or small the job you are doing, it does make a difference. We offer a special *Thank You* to our Board of Directors and to the regular Wednesday volunteers who continue to make our organization what it is and what it will be.

* * * * *

News from the Board

-by Allan DiSanto, Chairman

It has been a while since my last communication in the Newsletter (so says our capable Newsletter editor), so let me try to cover some of the events at the Site.

The autumn weather has hastened the school house project of covering the windows externally with clear acrylic sheets to stop the relentless weathering of the original building materials from nature’s elements, including ultra violet rays. The project, led by Del Englen along with Howard Fields, Lloyd Pearson, and Jim Stuke, has been completed, and includes a new coat of paint on the south and east sides of the building.

Larry Ross is nearing completion of partitioning the Fire House to create a display area for the 1936 fire truck and the related photos and fire equipment. Assisting Larry with this project is Dan Carr. The “other side” of the partition will be maintained as a work area for equipment and to house items for general maintenance of the Site.

Ed Slawson is in the process of installing emergency lights in the barn, museum, and church. This lighting system will be a great addition for the safety of our people and visitors in the event of a power outage.

Laurie Walters initiated and managed the Saturday afternoon openings of our historic Site during the months of September and October, along with some special programs for each week. We think the additional Saturday hours are worthwhile; however, we are not sure of obtaining needed volunteers to serve as Saturday docents. If you would like to comment on the program, yea or nay, please contact

Laurie. Your input will be helpful in determining the future of the Saturday hours.

At every year's end we lose a portion of our officers and elect new ones. The retiring officers are:

George Cooper, Vice President
Del Englen, Director
Allan DiSanto, Board Chairman

New officers for 2010 are:

Ed Slawson, Director
George Anton, Director
June Hagenbuch, Vice President
Jenny Alden, Secretary

The remaining officers who complete the list are:

Connie Putthoff, President
Carol Slawson, Treasurer
Lloyd Pearson, Director
Jim Stuke, Director
Laurie Walters, Director

The Board Members will elect a Chairman when the group is seated in early 2010. This is a hard-working, dedicated group, and we wish them success and offer our sincere appreciation.

I have attempted to give a brief overview of some of the activities that go on within TCHS throughout all the seasons, but it is impossible to list all of the very important volunteers in this brief publication. Please know that you are all needed, appreciated, and cherished for all your accomplishments.

I know I can speak for all the members of the Board to wish our many volunteers, members, and visitors a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. Enjoy the Season and give thanks for all the blessings bestowed by our Lord.

* * * * *

Museum News

The museum workers stayed busy throughout this year, preparing several new acquisitions for display. Recent donations include several Tonganoxie business advertising artifacts donated by Bill and Kathy Peak. These various pieces of Tonganoxie history are being prepared for exhibit in the museum.

In November, volunteers met to decorate the TCHS Christmas tree which was donated to the Tonganoxie Library for their annual silent auction, a fundraising event which benefits the library. The ladies enjoyed holiday refreshments as they created hand-made ornaments for the tree. Candy canes were made using paper quilled pieces and glue; red peppers were transformed into mini-Santas; bottle tops, Cheerios, and birthday candles were turned into tree lights; and pine cones, nuts, and other natural items were transformed into an angel and other decorations. (See photo below)



Carol Slawson, Laurie Walters, Susy Ross, Carol Stouffer, Melissa Sheinman, and Betty Englen make decorations for TCHS tree donated to Tongie Library "Festival of Trees" silent auction.

The museum is officially closed for the season, but the work continues. If you wish to visit the museum during the winter months, if you would like to donate artifacts, or if you would like to learn about volunteer opportunities at TCHS, contact Susy Ross at the museum on Wednesday mornings, 913-845-2960.

From all the Wednesday museum workers, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

* * * * *

Schoolchildren Visit TCHS for a Day of Learning

On December 4th, the third and fourth grade students from Genesis Academy in Tonganoxie visited our historical Site. The program was organized and coordinated by Peachez Joles.

In the Honey Valley School, the third grade students listened to lessons taught by Sarah Kettler. Barb Dale exhibited her traveling trunk, which

included items that settlers would have taken on their journey to or across Kansas. The children also made period Christmas decorations.

The fourth graders learned about genealogy, a class session taught by Vernilea Fulhage. After their lesson, they viewed exhibits in the barn with Betty and Del Englen, and had a tour of the Museum with Connie Putthoff.

The students brought their lunches and were treated to Christmas music courtesy of Deloris Finch. Others assisting in the day's events were Carol and Ed Slawson and Melissa Sheinman.

The school events presented at TCHS are a resourceful way to expose our future community leaders to the importance of recognizing and preserving the past. **Thank You** to all the volunteers who made this "day of learning" possible.

* * * * *

Membership Report

During 2009 we had an increase of 12 new memberships and four new Life Members. As our membership rolls continue to expand, we are always looking for volunteers. We want to make sure that everyone who wishes to participate in any of the volunteer efforts at TCHS knows how to do so. If you have occasional time to spare, or if you would like to join the regular Wednesday volunteers, please contact Susy Ross at the Museum.

To determine if your dues have been paid, check the mailing address on your newsletter. "L" following your name indicates that you are a Life Member and that you owe no dues. If you have "(09)" after your name, your dues are paid for the year 2009. If you have questions regarding your membership at TCHS, feel free to call me at 913-369-3835.

New Members

Anna Landauer Basehor

New Life Member

Mary Denise Baker Tonganoxie

* * * * *

Upcoming TCHS Programs

In case of inclement weather, or for information about any of the programs, please call 913-845-2852 or 913-369-3835.

January 26 – 7:00pm: *History as a Hobby* – William Peak

February 23 – 7:00pm: Dr. Malinda Daniel, Author of "*Fallacy or Truth: The State of American Education Today*"

March 23 – 7:00pm: *Vintage Photography* – Lesia Winters

"He knows nothing and thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career."

-George Bernard Shaw

* * * * *

Howard Fields and Jim Stuke painting the Honey Valley School



* * * * *

How to Contact Us

Newsletter @ TCHS
P. O. Box 785
Tonganoxie, KS 66086
913-369-3835 (home)
913-845-2960 (Museum)
disanto@wildblue.net
www.tonganoxiehistoricalsociety.org

* * * * *

We wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year!