

# Tonganoxie Community Historical Society

TCHS

May 1, 2008

## George Cooper Steps Down as Board Chairman

George Cooper, Chairman of the Board at TCHS for over ten years, has chosen to step down from that position. Allan DiSanto has been elected by the Board as the new Chairman. Cooper will remain as Vice President of the organization and will continue as a Board member and a regular Wednesday volunteer.



George and wife Ruth are active in the Congregational Church, where George has served as Moderator and Treasurer. He has also served as past Chairman of District 9 Water Board. Cooper was a school volunteer for about 20 years, where he tutored students in geometry and algebra, and assisted third graders with their studies.

During World War II, Cooper served in the Army Air Corp, and saw action in the South Pacific as a pilot and as a Flight Commander, flying 55 missions in B-25's. His group was sent to Japan as part of the occupation forces at the end of the war. On return home, he entered KU and graduated with a degree in Mechanical Engineering (BSME). He enjoyed a rewarding career as a Mechanical Engineer, and retired as Vice President, General Manager of Puritan-Bennett Corporation in 1986.

George and Ruth retired to their 160 acre farm north of Tonganoxie, where they raised cattle until the year 2000. They have been married for 66 years and have six children and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

“My years with the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society have been fulfilling,” Cooper says, “not only for the physical accomplishments made but for the people with whom I have worked.” With all the “spare” time he will have, George can now focus on a few personal things he has wanted to accomplish, while also remaining active at TCHS. Thank you, George, for a job well done as Board Chairman of TCHS.

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## Opening Day a Success

Our Opening Day on April 6 proved to be a great day for TCHS. The buildings were filled with visitors throughout the afternoon as we opened our doors to show off the new display areas and exhibits that were completed during the winter months.

All items donated for the bake sale were sold, and we realized a profit of \$112.50. It was a pleasure seeing everyone enjoying the historical Site, *and* the refreshments and social time.



Janet-Angell Felts preparing for bake sale.

## Volunteers Needed

We are in need of volunteers to help staff the museum on Sunday afternoons, from 1 – 4pm. If you are able to help on one or more Sunday afternoons during the year, please contact Carol Slawson or Susy Ross at the Museum.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the ballpark concession stand. This is our largest fund raiser and it is important that we have enough people to continue to make this a successful venue. We currently have an “in charge” person for each shift, and we need additional volunteers to help in the booth each night. If you are available one or more nights to help with this effort, contact George Cooper (913-845-3388).

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*(The following item was written around 1990 by Edna Swain, a lifetime resident of our area. Mrs. Swain still lives on a part of the original Miller Orchard property where she was born. A copy is provided from the files of Fred Leimkuhler, and is reprinted here with her permission.)*

## Missouri Valley Orchard Company Tonganoxie, Kansas

-by Edna Swain

Apples have been well named the King of Fruits.

This tract of orchard is one-half mile wide and one and one-half miles long, and planted in 1898 and 1899 with two year old trees, there now being 30,000 living trees, principally Winesap, Jonathan, Mammoth Black Twigs and Missouri Pippins, with enough Ben Davis Willow Twigs and Payne’s Late Keepers to make a good assortment.

Some forty-five years ago there was planted a small orchard. Most of the Jonathan and Winesap are now alive, and in 1910 the Jonathan trees produced an average of twenty-eight bushels per tree and the Winesap fifteen bushels. In 1900 at the Paris Exposition, the apples from the Jonathan trees won the Gold Medal.

My father, Richard Keck, was Foreman at this orchard from 1911 through 1918. And Mother did the cooking for hired help which was quite an undertaking. She did have help.

*Additional attached note written by Fred Leimkuhler:*

“In 1919, Charles Miller, owner of Missouri Valley Orchard, bought the apple crop of the Many Oaks Orchard. The pickers were standing around waiting to be taken in the back of a truck to the Many Oaks Orchard. Charles Miller came out with a basket of apples. He passed it around for each of the men to try. Then he said, “Boys this is one of the apples you will be picking today.” It was a Red Delicious, the first mention of the Red Delicious apple in our area. One of the pickers that day and the one who told the story was John Winfrey from McLouth, Kansas.”

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## Tongie Days at the Site

Tongie Days at TCHS will be held Saturday, June 14 from 9AM to 4PM, and will include something of interest for everyone.

This year’s celebration at the Site will feature two separate quilt shows; an array of men’s hobbies (collections and demonstrations); and we will have several Model A automobiles on display in the parking area. These activities will run for **one day only**, so plan to stop by the Site on Saturday during Tongie Days.

**The Vintage Quilt Show**, organized by Jean Pearson, will be held in the Reno Church. Special exhibits will be a collection of sampler blocks, a Smith’s Ladies Aid quilt, and a genealogy quilt that does not meet the age requirements but contains a wealth of family history. This pictorial quilt includes four or five generations of the Doege family. For additional information about this showing, contact Jean Pearson (913-845-3228).

For the past several years the “Sacred Heart Quilters” from Sacred Heart Catholic Church have

teamed up with the Historical Society to sponsor a quilt show during Tongie Days. *The Quilt Show in the School* will feature quilts of any size - new or old - and “quilted” articles of clothing. If you would like to participate in this event, contact Janet Stuke (913-369-3189) for more details.

Check-in times for both shows will be 2-6pm on Friday, June 13. Quilts may be picked up from 4-5pm on Saturday, June 14, following the show.

*Men’s Hobbies/Collections/Demonstrations* in the Fairchild/Knox barn will feature stained glass, wooden toys, wood carving, building muzzle loading rifles, and more. Any men who wish to contribute or take part in this event should call or contact Susy Ross (913-845-2477).

Take time to review the antique cars which will be parked on the grounds.

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## Volunteer Spotlight



This month we turn our spotlight on two of our dedicated full-time volunteers – Del and Betty Englen.

Del has served as president of our association, and has been a member of the Board of Directors for many years. He oversees the maintenance and upkeep around our historical Site. Betty can be found working in the museum every Wednesday and always willingly volunteers when needed. She has compiled and managed our yearbooks for the past 13 years, documenting every event of our organization, and only recently turned this assignment over to another volunteer. If you wish to view the yearbooks, they are currently located in

the church basement.

Del was born in Missouri; his family relocated first to South Dakota then to Denver during his childhood. He served four years in the Air Force, and remained in the Air National Guard until 1972.

Betty was born and raised near Denver, and graduated from Colorado State Teacher’s College in Greeley. She and Del met while Del was working for her father. They married and lived in Arvada, Colorado, for 20 years, where they raised their daughter. Del was active in the local Jaycees organization, and Betty taught third grade.

The Englens relocated to Cheyenne, Wyoming, where they began a partnership with Betty’s brother and his wife in a motel. The four partners would eventually sell this business and move to Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming to own and operate a lodge. The business included the lodge, a bar, motel, cabins, grocery store, and a café. This was a lot of hard work, but they “met a lot of good people” during this period. They sold this business and relocated back to Denver to be near their daughter and her husband – and their new grandson!

In 1990, again to be near the children, Del and Betty moved to the McLouth area, where they lived on a 20-acre farm with the children. Betty’s mother would later join them on the farm. Betty relates that “it was a glorious experience” for her to be able to help raise her grandchildren in a place where they could experience living on a farm and having animals to care for, as their own daughter had done as a child. Again, a lot of hard work they say, but well worth the effort.

Betty’s many artistic abilities and talents are evident throughout both the museum and their home. Her favorite pastime is reading and playing games, either on the computer or with friends. Del has made many lovely stained glass items, but is happiest when he is fixing something. One member stated that Del could “fix anything except a broken heart.” The couple enjoys travel, and has been to Alaska, Canada, San Diego, Washington, D.C., Miami, Hilton Head, Panama Canal, Mexico, and other places. This month they will be heading to Hawaii for two weeks.

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## Museum News

- by Susy Ross, Museum Director

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, Larry and I attended the PastPerfect workshop in Norfolk, Nebraska (Note: *It snowed all day!*) The workshop was a training session for cataloging and researching our museum collection on the new software program which we purchased with our County Grant money.

This computer program will hold all our artifact records (whether an object, photo, archive or book) and all pertinent information associated with each item. The program has the capability of handling all the necessary requirements for our museum and organization, and can be expanded to allow our information to be accessed through the worldwide web. We will be spending many hours entering information into this data base and correcting mistakes that occurred during conversion from the previous program. The new PastPerfect program will allow for much better access to information and make collection management a more accurate process.

TCHS hosted a luncheon for approximately 60 Good Shepherd Thrift Shop Volunteers in the Fairchild/Knox barn on April 17. Thank you to all the TCHS volunteers who worked and/or provided food for this successful event. We hope to provide this service again in 2009.

Open House was a huge success with good attendance. The photo project continues in the Museum. And plans are being made for Tongie Days at TCHS on June 14.

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Marie Huey,  
Betty Englen,  
Harriett Mark  
At  
Open House



## In the museum . . . .



Delaware Tomahawk/Pipe.  
From the estate of Margaret and Pete Leighty.

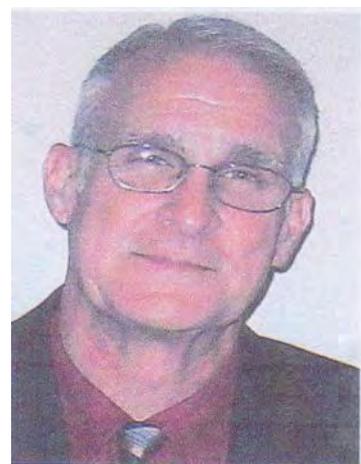
The following account comes from *The Tonganoxie Mirror*, dated February 27, 1941:

“In 1867 when the Phenicie boys were getting out ties, the Indians camped on Nine Mile went on a ‘toot.’ They lost a scalping knife and tomahawk and one of the Phenicies came into possession of them. . . . It is inlaid with silver, had been made in France, brought over here by some French trader, perhaps being traded for a lot of buffalo hides.”

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## Preview of Coming Attractions

May 27 – John A. Duncanson



## Historical Events around the Area

John Duncanson is a retired Patrol Division Commander of the Leavenworth County Sheriff's Department and is currently an instructor for the AARP Driver Safety Program. He is a superb teacher and presenter. He will inform us about defensive driving techniques for seniors, present facts and figures regarding accidents and mishaps, and he will mix it up with facts and figures regarding the history of Law Enforcement in Leavenworth County.

John is a graduate of Tonganoxie High School. He and Nancy have two children. He has safety instructor training in AAA Drivers Improvement Program and Emergency Vehicle Operator Defensive Driving, National Safety Council. John was with the Leavenworth County Sheriff's Department from 1972 to 2003.

### June 28 – Annual Picnic 6:00PM

Time once again for our annual TCHS picnic. Meat, drinks, and service materials will be provided, and each family should bring their favorite picnic dish to share with the group.

The event is open to all members and guests. This is a perfect time to socialize and enjoy a great evening of visiting with friends.

### July 22 – Elizabeth Wilson-Agin

Elizabeth Wilson-Agin, a 1994 graduate of Tonganoxie High School and a geophysicist based in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, will be our guest speaker for July. Elizabeth uses her expertise to locate lost burial sites for cemeteries and construction survey teams, and has identified hundreds of unmarked graves using a combination of ground-penetrating radar (GPR), GPS, geospatial software, and a very sharply trained eye. She has been featured on the Yahoo home page regarding her research, and has spoken before audiences across the country about her fascinating work.

## Happy Mothers Day – May 11

**May 10 thru June 14** – Wyandotte County Museum presents “Code Blue,” a Wyandotte County Medical Community exhibit. Open Mon-Sat from 10AM to 4PM. 631 N. 126<sup>th</sup> Street.

**May 15** – May meeting of the Fort Leavenworth Historical Society presents “Behind the Scenes of the Frontier Army Museum.” Only 5% of the museum's collection is on display at one time. Explore the other 95% with us at our May meeting, 7:00PM at Fort Leavenworth Army Museum.

**June 7** – Basehor Historical Society presents “Dairy Days,” a community sponsored annual event which celebrates the dairy history of the Basehor area. 9AM-4PM. Further information, call the Basehor Chamber of Commerce.

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### A Special Thank You

. . . goes to Life Member Bill Jones for the volunteer work he has done on sandblasting and primer painting body parts for the fire truck. Bill's primary business is Eagle Memorials, Inc., of Tonganoxie and Lawrence. He serves the area for memorial monuments.

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## How to Contact Us

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(Please mention TCHS in the subject area so your message will not be automatically deleted)

Web: [www.tonganoxiehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.tonganoxiehistoricalsociety.org)

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**Mark your calendars:**

**May 27 – Meeting 7PM. John Duncanson/Defensive Driving/Law Enforcement**

**June 14 – 9AM-4PM - Tongie Days Celebration at the Site**

**June 28 – Annual Picnic at the Site – 6PM – Bring covered dish**

**July 22 – Meeting 7PM – Elizabeth Wilson-Agin – Lost burial sites/unmarked graves**

**Tonganoxie Community**

**Historical Society**

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