

**TONGANOXIE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
3RD QUARTER, Sept, 2019**



**LIKE FATHER (BILL STEPHENSON, Sr);
LIKE SON (BILL STEPHENSON, Jr)**



**Bill
Stephenson.
Sr.
1929**

This newsletter has previously written about Bill Stephenson, Sr. See 4th quarter newsletter, 2016.

William Stephenson, Sr. became part of the U.S. Army, 2nd Division (The Indianhead Division) on July 30, 1917, when he enlisted in the army at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. The units began arriving in France on June 27th, 1917. The last units arrived in France on March 15, 1918.

The Artillery units began arriving in December and January. They were sent to **Valdahon** for more training. **Wm Stephenson belonged to Battery F, 17th Field Artillery Unit. He was a forward spotter for the heavy artillery. This unit was heavy artillery.**

Stephenson was made corporal at Camp Robinson, Wisconsin, and promoted to sergeant at the Troyon sector, Verdun. This Troyon sector was held by the French. It was somewhat of an introduction to WW I for the Americans. Let's say it was an initiation to the War. At this time the Troyon sector was not involved with fighting.



WWI U.S. Army 2nd Division five bar victory medal



WW I Second Division Medal

The Second Division consisted of the 3rd infantry regiment and the 4th Marines regiment plus a few other groups. At different times, it was led by three Marines, Brigadier General Wendell C. Neville served for 5 days as a temporary commander, Brigadier General Charles A. Doyan, and 1 Major General Charles A. Lejune. Major General Lejune served 17 months and was in charge of the 2nd Division for most of its battles. **During WW1, it was the only time in U.S. military history when Marine Corps officers commanded an Army Division. Also It was the only American unit formed outside the United States. In this case it was formed in France.**



Battle medal for Chateau-Thierry

First battle of the AEF

The 2nd Division was three times awarded the French Croix de Guerre for gallantry under fire at Belleau Wood, Soissons, and Blanc Mont. Stephenson received a Croix De Guerre (Cross of War) on the Champaign front for distinguished service at Mont Blanc, France. It was said that he also has three certificates of citations for bravery in action.

Battle of Belle Wood

On July 9th, 1918 the unit was relieved after 40 days of action. The Battle of Belle Woods lasted almost the month of June.

The Battle of Belle Woods was generally a Marine battle against the Germans. It was extremely costly in casualties. The general thought was a rifle was accurate to ca. 250 yards. The Marine rifle was the Springfield '03. It was accurate to 800 yards and even up to 1,000 yards. Plus they had been taught how to be accurate in their shooting. Although they were severely outnumbered, their accurate shooting plus the addition of machine guns allowed them to be successful in this battle. 55% of the units were killed or wounded. The battle lasted about one month, but in the end, the marines occupied the Belle Woods area. For this action the men were awarded the French Croix de Guerre.

After the battle of Belleau-Wood, the French renamed it, "Wood of the Marine Brigade" in honor of their galant effort.

The 2nd Division drew its first blood in the Belleau-Wood. It helped shatter the four-year-old stalemate of trench warfare during the Chateau-Thierry campaign.

Total United States casualties were 9,777 with 1,811 killed. Today this battle still is remembered by all the marines, especially those in boot camp.

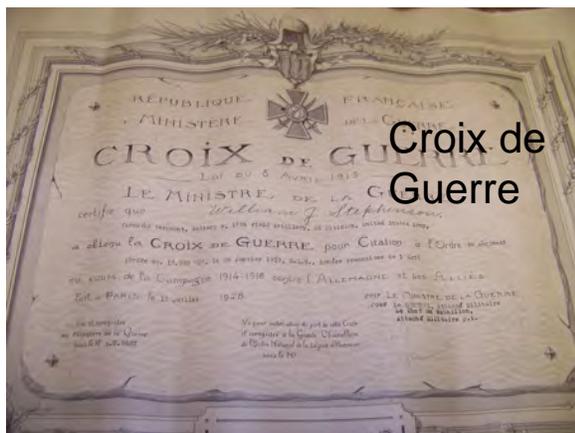
Battle of Soissons July 18-22, 1918.

This was a battle under French Control with support by 2 English units and the America 1st and 2nd Division. The area had been under German control for a long time and the Germans were able to have strong fortifications. The one significant problem was, although the French knew about the planned attack, they did not make the Americans aware of the plan until 2 days before the attack. The result was the American Divisions were quite confused and quite often were mixed together. When the mixing was between the Marines and the Army, things became very difficult because they hated each other. Quite often they refused orders. All this led to excessive number of casualties.

The second division was fatigued from the Belleau Woods battle and soon had to be relieved. Many of the French retreated early in the battle. In passing the Marines, they suggested they retreat too. The Marines refused and said something like they just got here, why retreat.

The Germans finally removed themselves from the battle and the French claimed victory. The victory removed a significant supply line for the Germans. The Germans also became aware the Americans could fight and shoot. The last attempt to turn the tide for Germany was the result.

The Battle of Blanc Mont 3rd October-27th October



Mont Blanc was a large hill that was surrounded by large fields of wheat and grass. While standing on the top of the ridge or hill, you could see for many miles in all directions. The Germans had prepared a complex defense system in this area. Although, the U.S. Marines fought bravely, it was considered suicidal while exposed on the lime slope. The French who were in charge of this battle attempted several times to get to the top of this ridge, but they failed. The battle was won by the 2nd Division Marines. One of the things the marine relied on once again was their ability to shoot their rifles accurately and shoot them accurately around 800 to 1,000 yards. In the end the German

withdrawal was considered one of the largest of the war.

Casualties were huge. The French lost 95,000, the Americans lost 12,000 and the Germans lost 168,000 casualties. **The casualty rate was 8,958 people per day.**

On the 26th of September the Meuse-Argonne offensive began. The 2nd Division was placed under the French. This would be a long battle, lasting until Nov 11, 1918 and ending with the treaty of Versailles.

From Oct 3 for the next 4 days the 2nd Division made steady progress. They were relieved by the 36th Division **. On the 10th of October the relief was completed except for the artillery which remained. The artillery was being used with a large barrage, especially at night. This nighttime war lasted until the war was over. At this time the 2nd Division was placed in the occupation of Germany. They entered Germany by crossing the Rhine River at the city of Remagen.

On 11 November 1918 the Armistice was declared, and the 2nd Infantry Division marched into Germany where it performed occupational duties. Later, he was sent to Fortress Ehrenbreitstien on the Rhine River where they remained until July, 1919. Bill Stephenson returned to the United States August 4, 1919. He was mustered out at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

Wm J. Stephenson fought in many more battles than were mentioned here. The battles noted above were the three for which the 2nd Division received the Croix de Guerre.

The 36th Division was from Texas and Oklahoma. I wrote about the 36th Division in the WW I Blog that I had about WW I. One of the members (Cecil Biirkhead) of the 36th Division eventually moved to the Lawrence as his wife taught school in Reno. He and Archibald Hart who wrote the book (Company K of Yesteryear**) about the 36th in WW I, were close friends

during and after WW I. Thanks to Donna Wiley, she had a copy of the book and let me read it. The people in Company K were impressed with the confidence and pride the Marines exhibited. Although the marines had won the battle, they also suffered numerous casualties, which didn't seem to bother them. The marines just talked about winning the battles and not their casualties.

BILL STEPHENSON, Jr



Not much is really known about Wm J. Stephenson, Sr. and what he did in the war. Even less is known about Wm J. Stephenson, Jr. The members of the Stephenson family do not recall either their father or grandfather discussing what they did in the Wars. This shouldn't be a surprise because of all the interviews that our historical society has accomplished, only two talked about actual battle situations. Most of the veterans talked about activities not related to battlefield activities.

The material we have on "Little Bill" as he was sometimes called, generally comes from Newspapers. com. and the Tonganoxie Mirror.

After graduation from Tonganoxie High School in 1943, he joined the United States Army Air Corp and became a gunner in a B-25. In Sept., 1943 we learn that he will leave for Biloxi, Mississippi where he will begin his preflight training.

In October 1943 we learn that he is now at Albright College (Pennsylvania) for a course of instruction lasting 5 months. He will study many academic courses as well as elementary flight training. After this training he will be classified as a pilot, navigator, or bombardier and go on to school at the flight training command. He was a bombardier. Bill wanted to be a pilot. He his landings were good, but his take-offs were rough. The school would not let him be a pilot. He then became bombardier. He also liked shooting and was good at that.

On November 1944 we learn that Bill, Jr. has graduated from the AAF Training Command's Flexible Gunnery School and at Buckingham Field near Fort Myers.

On the 30th of August 1945 we learn that Bill has been over the China Coast. Before this he was stationed in the Philippines. How long he had been in the Philippines or flying over the China Coast is not known. However, I don't know much about flying over the China Coast, but I do know that the battle retaking the Philippines lasted a long time and was intense. We think that Bill Stephenson Jr. and the members of the plane's crew, received a Silver Star for landing their B-25 plane in an area where there were numerous American wounded soldiers. The members of the



plane were able to load these men into the airplane and get them to safety. For this effort every member of the flight crew received the Silver Star.



City of Naha,
Okinawa
right after WW II
Flattened

Before he went to Japan as part of the occupational forces we have information that he was stationed in Okinawa, shortly after the war, when the island was hit by Typhoon 'Louise'.

On 4 October 1945, a typhoon "Louise" was spotted developing in the Caroline Islands. The storm unexpectedly veered north toward Okinawa. The sudden shift of the storm caught many ships and small craft in the constricted waters of Buckner Bay (Nakagusuku Wan), and they were unable to escape to sea. A total of 12 ships and craft were sunk, 222 grounded, and 32 severely damaged.

Personnel casualties were 36 killed, 47 missing, and 100 seriously injured. Almost all the food, medical supplies and other stores were destroyed, over 80% of all housing and buildings knocked down, and all the military installations on the island were temporarily out of action. Over 60 planes were damaged as well, though most were repairable.

Bill Stephenson reports that when the typhoon hit it was 3:30 PM, and he was in the mess hall working. Sections of the tin roof were blown away and he knew it was time to leave. Tents were flying everywhere. He made it to a protected area. All who could make this protective area were protected from the excessive wind. They all were soaked from the rain.

He notes that he is getting ready to go to Japan for occupation. He tells his folks that many of his friends have been to Japan and all thought the Japanese were friendly.

After WW II Bill returned home and graduated from Baker University. He then became employed by the Tonganoxie First State Bank. He and his father operated this bank until Bill Sr. retired. Bill Jr. then became main man in this bank.

Not much is known about his military career.

Sunflower Growing Contest, August 31, 2019

" On August 24th, 2017, Monica Gee with the Tonganoxie Business Association told the City Council on Monday of plans to entice visitors to the Grinter Farm's sunflower fields to stop in Tonganoxie after their visit to the global attraction.

Gee said the stroll was an effort to get something started in Tonganoxie around the time sunflowers are in bloom. She hopes the stroll grows into a festival or some time of event as time progresses."

2019 will be the third year of Tonganoxie's Sunflower Stroll. It will also be remembered as a year with much more rain than we needed, often at the most inconvenient times.

The problem caused by the weather pattern was reflected in the 2019 annual Sunflower Growing Contest. The Tonganoxie Historical Society plays a significant role in this contest. Kris Roberts, President of TCHS, is the driving force that organizes this contest.

Isaiah Manus had a difficult time getting his sunflowers for the competition this year. Of the eleven seeds that he planted, only one came up. Planted on July 9, the plant should have been in full bloom on August 31. But the plant was only 2 foot tall, with a bud developing, but no bloom. Isaiah also entered a sunflower in last year's contest.

Isaiah was awarded first place for Most Unusual Sunflower in his age group. Isaiah's prizes included a T-shirt from Sunflower General and a Sonic ice cream cone coupon.

The Sunflower Growing Contest was developed by Donna Wiley, a TCHS member, and the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society. It is sponsored every year by the Tonganoxie Business Association, the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society, Sunflower General, Grinter Farms, the Tonganoxie Public Library and Sonic Drive-In.

The Sunflower seeds were furnished by Grinter Farms and were available to young growers at the public library in early July.



The Grinter farm has been growing Sunflowers as a commercial crop for years. It has become very well known in the region. Many people are aware of the large Sunflowers grown a few miles south of Tonganoxie. This is the first year that the Sunflowers growth pattern did not respond favorably. Too much rain and cold weather. I believe Ted Grinter replanted Sunflowers several times and he believes he will have a poor crop about the first week of October. As noted above in the Sunflower growing contest his plants suffered in the same manner.

THE SUNFLOWER STROLL, 2019

There were many activities planned for this years stroll. For example there were sunflower runs planed for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Sunday run was actually a 5-K walk that

ended at Gallagher Park. Here one could watch the movie *Grease*. The film starred John Travolta as Danny, Olivia Newton-John as Sandy, and Stockard Channing as Betty Rizzo, the leader of the Pink Ladies. It was released in 1978 and was extremely popular. I remember it well. Olivia Newton-John was recently interviewed on television. She seems to be struggling health wise.

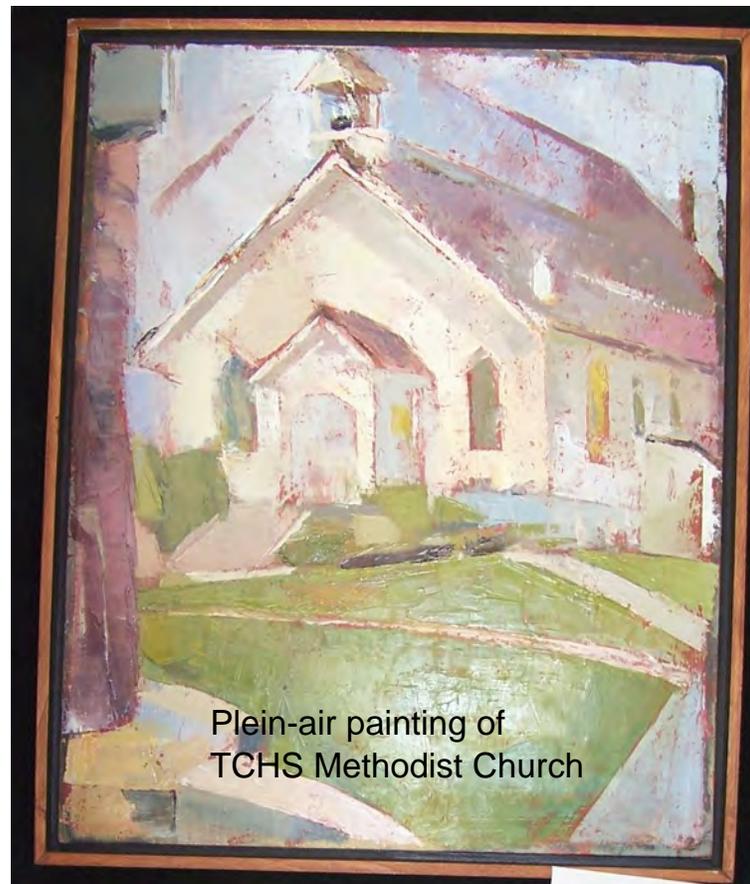
There were fine art/crafts for sale on 4th street in the 500 block. Now if you're like me, I'd like the description to be in the drug store block or old post office block. Most of these pieces were paintings. Many were quite good. I took some photo of those pictures, but my Nikon died and I wasn't able to use them. However, I did talk to some of the vendors and they seemed quite pleased with the sales activity. One gentleman was offering for sale some very nice wooden bowls.. He lives northeast of Tonganoxie out county road 5, near Trieb's corner. He also was quite happy with the activity he had. Rumor has it the Keyta Kelly, was very pleased with the fine arts and the Plein-air activities.

The Plein-air artist were separated from the group just discussed. This group of painters had been painting for several days that led up to Saturday when there would be judging at 6 P.M. Plain-Air denotes a 19th century style of painting out doors. It emphasizes open air. I first became aware of this term in California when I was watching a friend of mine



Plein-air painting of the Fairchild Hay barn

paint a sea-scape. It seemed to me that the Plein-air painters liked to complete their paintings in one day. The Plein-air paintings could be seen in the Village Event Venue. A good number of these paintings were marked sold long before the judging took place. One of the paintings that I saw and admired was valued a \$1,200.00. I believe it sold early too.



Plein-air painting of TCHS Methodist Church

Street dancing was on the street where the Pocket Park is located. There were two different bands which the crowd seemed to enjoy. I never saw any adults dancing (I didn't see the last band so that may have changed), but there was group of 5-8 children ca. the age of 5 or 6 who DID seem to be dancing. They were not dancing as couples, but were dancing as a group of kids moving and swinging around as 5 or 6 year old kids would. There was a good crowd of adults who listened to the music. I, therefore, would classify this as a concert and not a dance. Nevertheless, all the people seemed happy and all were having some fun. Some were even talking to each other.

Mel Ramseier had his group that provided small engines for the public to view. Now all of these small engines were small replications of larger engines, and these engines all operated. To me some of them were slightly weird. For example when Mel's group demonstrated their



Mel and Pat Ramseier

engines at the historical site, the one that caught my eye was the small one cylinder engine. It would go "POP" ———POP=====POP and so on. If you didn't see what was happening with the engine you might think the engine was on it's last leg.

Mel's group of old engine operators have a lot of knowledge about their engines and they are very willing to discuss their engine with anyone who comes by. They put on a good demonstration, with good knowledge. It is a fun thing to see and LISTEN.

The Sunflower Stroll was spread out over the city, but there was always a steady stream of people through the fine art area, and while the band was playing there were always a good number of people around. Some came and left only to come back. I think those who attended had a great time. There was something for every age-young or old.

The Fairchild Spring Project by Joy Lominska



The staff has been busy working on the Fairchild Spring Project, funded by Humanities Kansas. A major task was hauling away the wood from the dying mulberry tree that had grown out of the spring area. When the area was cleared of wood, we needed to address the weeds, including tree sprouts and poison ivy, growing around the hole.

In order to protect the water course into which the spring flows, we opted to start with non-chemical approaches. Vinegar had little impact on the weeds. Black plastic was more effective, but when it was removed, the weeds sprouted back. The plan for the fall is to re-apply vinegar, followed shortly afterwards by the black plastic. In the spring we will evaluate the weeds and decide whether chemicals are necessary.

Thanks to our mowing volunteers, we have a mowed path from the driveway to the spring. When our signs are complete, there will be directional signs pointing from the driveway to the access paths.

The likely footprint of the spring house has been identified by the metal in the ground, probably the nails from the roof. Our student volunteer and metal detector enthusiast, Garrett Seuser, flagged the area and also discovered square nails and an iron ring. These artifacts will be part of the museum display about the spring.

We know that the spring house was built of stone. It seems likely that the stone was not transported a long distance. J.W. Evans is going to show us the quarry up the hill to the west of the museum, and we hope to be able to determine if that was the likely origin of the rocks in the spring area.

We met with the graphic designer, Nate Forsberg, to plan the outdoor signage. We will get the final material to Nate in December, and he will begin laying out the signs. We hope to have the concrete base for the outdoor signs poured this fall.

There will be an indoor display about the spring near the south wall of the museum. We have begun designing this display, which will include historical text, maps, drawings or photos, and perhaps an interactive element. One panel will contain general information about springs and spring houses, and one will have more specific information about the Fairchild spring. Our newest volunteer, Natalie Vondrak, is helping to design this display.

Presentation Explores Early Irrigation Crusade

The 4th Tuesday program of the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society was a program about “The Irrigation Crusade,” a presentation and discussion by James Sherow held on Sept. 24 at 7:00 p.m. at the Historic Site.

From the 1880s to the earliest days of the 20th century, the “Irrigation Crusade” was promoted as a way for grassland farmers and community boosters to continue thriving during droughts. The presentation focused on colorful Kansas frontiersman, Charles “Buffalo” Jones, and how he led the crusade in western Kansas by organizing water diversion projects to land in and around Garden City.

James Sherow teaches Kansas and environmental history at Kansas State University. He has authored books and articles about people living in the region, including *The Grasslands of the United States: An Environmental History*, and John Charlton’s and his award winning *Railroad Empire Across the Heartland: Rephotographing Alexander Gardner’s Westward Journey*.

“Waging an ‘Irrigation Crusade’ implied nothing less than a holy endeavor to transform what at the time many Americans saw as a heathen, wild landscape into cooperative, civilized, Christian communities and productive farms,” explained Sherow. “The question is: does the legacy bear out the results of the conquest?”

“The Irrigation Crusade” is part of Humanities Kansas's *Movement of Ideas* Speakers Bureau, featuring presentations and workshops designed to share stories that inspire, spark conversations that inform, and generate insights that strengthen civic engagement.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS in 2019

Note that there will be no program in November, due to the fourth Tuesday falling in the week of Thanksgiving.

October 22, 2019 - Brady Mikijanis, local collector of Kansas license plates, will talk about the history of automobile license plates in Kansas. Brady has donated a set of Kansas license plates to TCHS and we are planning to have a display of these plates ready for preview that night.

December 17, 2019 - Our Holiday Dinner will start at 6:00 pm. Join us for a special holiday exhibit and good conversation. Please bring a side dish or a dessert to share - meat will be furnished.



IDENTIFY THIS

Take a look at this recently donated artifact. What do think it is? Come to the holiday dinner on December 17, 2019 to find out. (photo)

BARN QUILT CLASS

The next Barn Block Workshop is scheduled for Saturday, October 5 from 9:00 to 3:00 in the Hay Barn at the Tonganoxie Historical Society site. If you are not taking the class, but are curious, stop by and check out the colorful action. (photo)



LIGHTING UP OUR BUILDINGS

Last November, TCHS was awarded a grant from the Pete & Margaret Leighty Trust to update aging fluorescent fixtures in the hay barn, museum, and firehouse to LED fixtures. The work was so necessary! The fluorescent fixtures were becoming unreliable and the lighting levels were dark. Fluorescent lighting is also damaging to artifacts - LED lighting is not.

The work is complete. Stop by to check out our new lights. We are grateful that Pete and Margaret Leighty chose to endow our community with the means to make improvements to our facilities.

KANSAS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION GRANT

As a member of the Kansas Museums Association, we applied for and received a grant to purchase over-sized archival folders to use in our map case. Where once our maps were rolled and folded, they now lay flat, protected within acid-free folders, out of the light. And now, we can add to our collection of maps and increase the value of our research facilities. We are

most appreciative of the Kansas Museums Association for making funds available for special projects such as preserving our collections.

THIRD GRADERS STUDY LOCAL HISTORY

The Third Grades are coming! Since 2006, TCHS has hosted the third graders from USD 464 in order to enrich their study of local history. The students, accompanied by parents and teachers, spend time in all of our historic buildings. Our volunteers provide a unique experience for the students.

From seeing and learning about Native American artifacts to sitting down in the Honey Valley one-room school house, the students experience some of what previous inhabitants experienced here in Tonganoxie. An enhanced covered wagon exhibit, examining tools & equipment from the 19th century, and playing games from yesterday all give the students a deeper understanding of what life might have been like 150 years ago. The museum is also explored by the students.

SHARING OUR HISTORY WITH FREEDOM'S FRONTIER SUMMER CAMP

On July 22, we hosted a Day at the Tonganoxie Museum for a summer day camp from Lawrence. Twenty-five youth in grades 4 & 5 spent two hours at the museum along with camp counselors. TCHS volunteers Janet Burnett, Lynn Jennings, Marie Brockhoff, Garrett Seuser and Kris Roberts were on hand to create an experience for the youth.

IS THERE ROOM FOR YOU??

Last month, we talked about Volunteers in Action and noted that our work days are on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings every week to create museum displays, mow the grass, weed gardens, building maintenance, clean and perform any of the miscellaneous chores that come up in five historic buildings on ten acres.

Is there room for you? Absolutely. In addition to the various grounds and maintenance chores, we make time for coffee.

Are you interested in spending some time in the museum? You could do some proofreading or editing; work with artifacts; or become a docent and give tours of the museum

Are you interested in programming for youth educational programs? You could volunteer to help out with the third grade program or help create new programs for youth.

Do you have any special skills that you can share? There are many skills that you may not even know are special. For instance, are you a photographer - we need good photographs to share on our website and in the newsletter. Are you a videographer? Can you help us create educational videos?

We need someone to oversee the restoration of the Royal Theater Sign, including research of what it looked like, refinishing, and restoring the electrical lighting on the sign.

Do you know how to Instagram? Want to help us learn how to take advantage of Instagram? Do you like to create posters and other publicity items? Would you like to get into a bit of journalism and be part of the crew that prepares the *Remember When for the Tonganoxie Mirror*?

You can become a Volunteer in Action. Talk to us. We can overcome timing issues. You have skills that we need and want. Check us out - if you like us, stay for a while.

NEW VOLUNTEER

Natalie Vondrak has just started as a volunteer on Tuesday mornings. Natalie is a first-year student in the KU Museum Studies master's degree program. Natalie is a native of Sioux City, Iowa and has an undergraduate degree in history from Iowa State University.

Natalie brings a love of history and some solid skills in the preparation and presentation of exhibits. We are lucky to have her volunteering this semester!

DID YOU ATTEND THE PICNIC IN JUNE?



Cora Wellhouse Bullard

If you did, you were treated to a presentation by Olga & Kent Porter, "Saving Stonehaven." (You were also treated to a heavy rain and near flood conditions outside.) Olga and Kent showed slides of the home they have painstakingly and lovingly preserved and restored. Their efforts to complete this renovation in the face of many unique challenges, have landed the home on the National Register of Historic Places.

The home was designed by Cora Wellhouse Bullard. Her design completed in 1893, she went on to supervise the construction, even doing some of the interior rock work herself. She and her husband, Henry Bullard, moved into the home in 1903.

Cora was the daughter of Frederick Wellhouse, also known as the "Apple King," for his vast holdings of orchards. In 1875, when he began the planting of commercial orchards, and up to 1903, he had planted the following: Glenwood, Leavenworth county, 117 acres; Miami county, 160 acres; Fairmount, Leavenworth county, 160 acres; Osage county, 800 acres; and Summit, Leavenworth county, 400 acres. Cora was born in Fairmount in Leavenworth County. Her brother died at an early age. After his death she participated in the orchard business, working as her father's full time assistant and business partner. She was active in the Kansas Equal Suffrage Movement and was a long-standing member of the Kansas Livestock Association. She also was active in getting a military deferment for young farmers who were in the age bracket to serve in the military.

Looking for a Gift????

Our gift shop has some wonderful gifts for the history-loving friend or relative, at prices to fit every budget.

"Traditional Tales of Tonganoxie," a 30-chapter, 4-DVD set of history and stories, created in the "Ken Burns" style of documentary.

"Ghost Towns," a DVD that relates photographs and stories of 25 towns (many of which are no longer in existence) and the railroads that connected them.

Barn Quilt Workshop Gift Certificate. Give the gift of an experience and a hand-made treasure for the farm or home. Classes are offered in the spring and fall of each year. Gift certificates include a class at the TCHS hay barn, with paint, primed signboard, tape, paint and brushes required to make a 2' x 2' barn quilt or a 4' x 4' barn quilt.

These items and more are available in our gift shop. Come check it out. Your purchases contribute to the operating costs of the museum and grounds. (All prices include sales tax.)

