

Tonganoxie Community Historical Society

P.O. Box 785 Tonganoxie, Kansas 66086

913-369-3835

July 1, 2009



News from the Board

- by Allan DiSanto, Chairman

Your Board of Directors has been quite active, as usual, on behalf of TCHS. Since our last newsletter, we have had several events and a lot of activity at the Site. The season Grand Opening attracted around 115 members and guests to the showing of our new museum exhibits and a successful bake sale.

We have had some excellent programs at our monthly meetings, each well attended by members and guests. And our participation in Tongie Days brought out what may have been one of the largest number of visitors we have seen. We urge everyone to come out and enjoy the programs and fellowship at the Site.

Some recent improvements around the Site include the new light dimmer equipment for the large overhead lights in the Reno Church, along with the new overhead projector screen at the front of the church. The driveway has been refurbished with new stone. Repairs to the Honey Valley Schoolhouse windows will soon begin, along with the painting of the building. Repairs to the silo are underway. This structure was erected in 1924 and through the many years of water penetration and the winter freeze/thaw cycle, the masonry has begun to deteriorate. The silo will be tuck-pointed to repair the masonry and it will be waterproofed to prevent future deterioration. Hopefully, we can preserve the silo for many future generations to enjoy as a piece of history at the Site.

The difficult decision made by the Board to cancel our annual picnic did not come about easily. We all look forward to this special day of

entertainment, good food, and visiting with friends. But it was not to be, as the intense heat and humidity took its toll on our area. We are hoping to re-schedule this event for sometime in September, weather permitting!!

Please take notice of the beautiful new "MUSEUM" sign at the Washington Street entrance. The sign is an excellent addition to the site, provided by a very thoughtful and generous donor who wishes to remain anonymous. Our sincere thanks!!

Fred Leimkuhler Receives Distinguished Service Award

Fred Leimkuhler, long-time member of TCHS, noted local historian, speaker, writer and artist, was presented with the Distinguished Service Award in honor of his service to our organization.



The Distinguished Service Award is the highest and most prestigious award given by TCHS. This Award, one of only a few that have ever been

given, was presented by Susy Ross at the May 26th monthly meeting. The Award reads: *“In grateful appreciation for your invaluable service to the Society, your unswerving loyalty to and love of history – especially the history of Tonganoxie and Leavenworth County, your guided tours to all the historical places in our area, your keen sense for separating history from myth, your guidance as the museum was put together, and for your stories, your wit and your wonderful sense of humor.”*

In addition to the various ways Fred gives of himself to TCHS, he has also donated many items to the Museum, as well as a number of his drawings and paintings. His artwork is featured on the TCHS note cards which are sold in our Gift Shop. Fred has also contributed many anecdotes and essays to this newsletter.

Congratulations, Fred. We are pleased to honor you, and we offer our gratitude for all you do for TCHS and for our community.

Museum News

Several new exhibits are now on display in the Museum. The Neibarger Family has donated the original printing stone from the *Tonganoxie Mirror*, which was purchased by the newspaper around the turn of the 20th Century, during the time William Heynen was editor. Also new is the Alameda Beauty Parlor exhibit, featuring items from the original salon. Fred Leimkuhler recently donated an old cider press and a “Dadant & Son” honey extractor to TCHS. The Museum volunteers are working to get the Leimkuhler items prepared for display.

If you have not been to the Museum lately, stop by on Sunday afternoon and see the new displays. Docents are available to answer your questions, and to show you around the Site, if desired. Susy Ross, Betty Englen, Laurie Walters, and Carol

Stouffer are there every Wednesday from 9 to 12 noon – year round – and their efforts are obvious. Our thanks go to these ladies, and to others who make our Museum what it is.

In the Museum. . .

Tonganoxie High School souvenir creamer, donated by H. Grant Ritchey. Tonganoxie High School souvenir vase and souvenir plate, purchased by First State Bank & Trust at auction of Leighty Trust, donated to TCHS by First State Bank & Trust.



The items in the photo are an opaque glass known as “custard glass.” As early as the 1880s, custard glass was produced in England. Glassmakers later brought the formula for the creamy ivory ware to America, and several companies eventually produced the product. The formula contains uranium salts which, when added to hot molten glass, imparts the cream color and causes it to glow when examined under a black light; the higher the uranium content, the more luminous the color. The glass was made into patterned tableware and as souvenir items and novelty pieces, often highlighted in gold and featuring many colors and stains. (Ref: [Schroder’s Price Guide 1987](#) and [Encyclopedia of Victorian-Colored Pattern Glass, Book IV](#))

“Events are mile-stones along the highway of life. We must carefully observe these events if we are to derive the greatest blessings life has to offer. - Mr. Stephenson, January 26, 1928”
(from Autograph Book of Helen Schilling, TCHS Museum accession)

Best Choice Labels Fundraising

Gladys Walters, in charge of Special Assignments, reports that TCHS received \$60 refund income this month for the "Best Choice" labels collected. Gladys asks that you continue to collect the labels and forward them to her for processing. If you have Best Choice labels to contribute, please contact Gladys at 913-845-2394 or gwalters@sunflower.com, or you may drop them by the Museum office any Wednesday morning between 9am and 12 noon.



Membership Report

Welcome to our new members and Thank You to everyone who has renewed their membership for 2009. Your address label indicates the year for which you are currently paid. If you are a new member and would like to know about volunteer opportunities at TCHS, please contact us at 913-369-3835 or 913-845-2477.

New members:

Tom and Cindy Murry	Tonganoxie
Jenny Sellmeyer-Alden	Tonganoxie
Beverly Bowman Wahlers	Independence, MO

New Life Member:

Ed Standish	Tonganoxie
-------------	------------

"Gold was just a windy Kansas wheat field,
Blue was just a Kansas summer sky."

- John Denver

Tongie Days at the Site

Saturday, June 13th was a busy day for the TCHS volunteers. While the entire Tongie area was engulfed with various activities, TCHS was abuzz with our own events, including two quilt shows, antique cars, and the unveiling of our restored fire truck.

For the first time since acquiring it in 2003, the newly restored fire truck was brought out of the firehouse for display. Now restored to its original glory, the 1936 pumper truck was the center of attention as it was driven to its place of honor in front of the Reno Church. Congratulations to all the volunteers who gave so much of their time and effort to see this beauty shine again.



Jean Pearson and Deloris White

Jean Pearson again organized the annual *Antique Quilt Show* held in the Reno Church, and Janet Stuke organized the *second annual TCHS/Sacred Heart Church quilt show*, which was held in the Fairchild/Knox barn gathering area. Both of these successful shows bring many visitors to the Site each year. A huge **Thank You** goes to all those who loaned their prized quilts to us for the day, and to the volunteers who gave of their time to see that these shows were successful.



Mary Ann Needham, Cleopha Hurley, and Mary Therof quilting demonstration

Also on hand at the Site were several antique

cars. Thanks to Delbert Felts for organizing this popular event, and to those who brought their cars for display.

Congratulations go to Mary Allen of Dennison, Kansas, winner of the quilt raffle held at the downtown TCHS exhibit booth. The free raffle was designed to attract people to our booth, and over 100 people signed up to win the crib-size “double wedding ring” quilt. The quilt was donated to the Society by Susy Ross. Our thanks to Bill and Cathy Peak for hosting the TCHS booth; they represented TCHS to all those who walked the busy street viewing the various craft and information booths. Good job, Bill and Cathy!!

Cathy & Bill Peak at the TCHS booth during Tongie Days. Displayed on the easel is the double wedding ring crib quilt which was won by Mary Allen of Dennison, Kansas.



The Fire Truck

- by Allan DiSanto

The regular Wednesday volunteer group started to refurbish the old Tongie fire truck a little more than three years ago. I’m very pleased to report that the project is nearing completion, and the fire truck is now ready to drive and show.



September 2003

The fire truck was built in 1936 by the Army Quartermaster Corp. at Camp Holobird near Baltimore, Maryland. Made for Fort Leavenworth and delivered that same year, it served at the Fort until April 1943. We have not been able to track the whereabouts of the vehicle from 1943 to 1951, but indications are that it was in the service of the Army Corp of Engineers during that period.

The City of Tonganoxie purchased the truck in 1951, and it served Tongie until retirement around 1962. During the intervening years it had some inside and outside storage, and when TCHS obtained it in 2003, time had taken its toll. It didn’t run, some parts had been removed, and it was badly deteriorated.

Bill Latham and I started the project and some of the others who soon joined us were Dan Carr, Delbert Felts, Larry Ross, and Ed Slawson. A good friend of mine, Dennis Rudder, was very instrumental in helping us over the rough spots by making and repairing parts that were unavailable, and he came to our rescue several times to offer his vast mechanical and electrical knowledge. A special thanks to Dennis Rudder.

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 did a partial overhaul of the engine and the first milestone was the successful start-up of that old honey. It was a joyous moment for everyone the day we pressed the starter and heard and saw the engine come to life. It was, for some, an almost unbelievable event.

We then dismantled the truck piece-by-piece until we were down to the bare chassis. All of the old oak wood for the cab frame was badly deteriorated and it was completely replaced. The running gear has been overhauled, and the paint and bright chrome work have all been restored. The electrical system - including the lights and siren - all function, and this old firefighter is now ready to go.



June
2009

We are very proud of this accomplishment and the truck is now restored to its original glory. The years of weather damage, rust and decay have been erased and it now shows and runs like the proud firefighter it once was.

Why?

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but they check when you say the paint is wet?

Why do people keep running over a string a dozen times with the vacuum cleaner, then reach down, pick it up, examine it, then put it down to give the vacuum one more chance?

In winter why do we try to keep our house as warm as it was in the summer when we complained about the heat?

Volunteer Spotlight

I first met Laurie Walters when I ventured out one day in search of fresh peaches. That's the day I found Wild Horse Orchard in McLouth – and some of the best peaches and apples I have ever tasted. Laurie and husband Perry were the owners/operators of Wild Horse. As I would later learn, their interests and their lives involved more than being successful orchard entrepreneurs, proud parents, and good neighbors. Since retirement from the orchard business last year, they have found time to devote to their love of history, and to service at TCHS and their community.



Laurie is one of our regular Wednesday volunteers, working in various capacities in the Museum. She also prepares special certificates and awards for TCHS, and is a member of the Board of Directors. Perry has photographed and made digital records of photos in the Museum, and conducted several research projects for TCHS. He is scheduled for a presentation of his research on "Ghost Towns" at our September meeting.

Laurie Clone was born in Chappell, Nebraska, the oldest of three sisters. She is a graduate of the University Of Nebraska College Of Pharmacy. She was staff pharmacist at Mercy Hospital in San Diego, California, followed by Kroger Family Center in Lawrence, and later at Children's Mercy and Research Hospital in KC. Following a position as Pharmacist at McLouth Drug, Laurie left to work the orchard business full time.

Perry was born in Lawrence and grew up in Tonganoxie. He earned his undergraduate degree at KU, then his DDS, MS, and certificate in Periodontics from University of Missouri in Kansas City. He served in the U. S. Navy, followed by private practice. He served as Director of Graduate Periodontics and Director of Dental Service at VA Medical Center in Leavenworth. He is a member of several professional organizations, active in his church, and the Kiwanis Club.

Laurie and Perry married in 1968 when she was a hospital pharmacist in San Diego and he was in the Navy. According to Perry, Laurie “convinced” him to get married after just six dates. He says, “Since I was the weakest sex what else could I do?” They have three children – each pursuing their own professional careers – and three grandchildren. Perry obviously made the right decision after those six dates.

Events Around Our Area

If you are looking for things to do this summer that will not involve lots of driving, we have some suggestions for you and your family to enjoy - almost in your own back yard! And be sure to check out the Tonganoxie Chamber of Commerce “(Day before) Friday Flyer” on their website at info@tonganoxiechamber.org, where you’ll find what’s happening around Tonganoxie all summer long. And don’t forget to check our own website for updates and to see what’s going on at TCHS: www.tonganoxiehistoricalsociety.org.

Now thru Aug 23 – “Elements of Lansing” exhibit at Lansing Historical Museum, 115 E. Kansas Ave, Lansing. For info contact Laura Phillippi, 913-250-0203

Now thru Sept 30 – “S” Gauge Model Railroad Display, presented by the Kansas City “S” Gaugers. Admission is free. Parker Carousel Museum, 320 S. Esplanade, Leavenworth. For further information call 913-651-3829.

Sept 11-12 – *First City Festival - “Dancin’ in the Streets”*. Festival for all ages: entertainment-food-drink-fireworks-artisans-vendor booths. Fri 3-11pm; Sat 8am-11pm. Info: Tonya @ Leavenworth Main Street, 913-682-3924.

Sep 13 – *Antiques Extravaganza*, an opportunity to have your antiques and old items appraised by local antique dealers. Presented by Wyandotte County Museum, held at George Meyn Community Center, 126th and State Ave, in the Wyandotte County Park in Bonner Springs. Fee charged for accessing antiques, as well as for individuals and businesses wanting booth space. Further information; contact Trish Schurkamp, 913-573-5002.

Aug 15 – Oct 31 – *Annual Quilt Exhibition: Quilt Strips*. Wyandotte County Museum, 631 N. 126th St, Bonner Springs. For info, or to participate or enter a quilt, call Jennifer Laughlin at 913-573-5007 or jlaughlin@wycokck.org.



Old cars on display surround the newly restored fire truck during Tongie Days at the Site, June 13th.



Quilts on display during Tongie Days.

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.)

July 28 – 7:00pm

The Rip Chords, a Barbershop Quartet

The Rip Chords Barbershop Quartet has been entertaining audiences since 1962. The Quartet has performed throughout the central United States and once shared the stage with Eddie Fisher and Henry Fonda. The group was featured at Missouri Silver Dollar City in their celebration of “Music Americana.” With a cumulative total of over 150 years of quartet singing experience, these retired professionals have found that there is life after work. Tom Knoebber, Bass, is retired from co-ownership of B&B Sign Company. Bill Hamm, Baritone, is retired from School District 501 as a music teacher. Herschel Stroud, Lead, is a retired Topeka dentist. Doug Exline, Tenor, is retired from the co-ownership of Salina Exline Manufacturing Company. With their unique musical skills, they enjoy sharing their love of four-part harmony with those who love live musical performances.

August 25 – 7:00pm

Swing Talk – Jump, Jive, and Swing – an Era in America

There had never been a popular music phenomenon like the Swing Era. Radio, newspapers, magazines, record stores, dance halls, movies - it was everywhere. But when did this era begin? Why and how did it happen?

Swing surged to the height of popularity in the late 1930s, 40s, and 50s. And it still exists today – at dances, in commercials, in movies. It has devotees of all ages.

Dr. Herschel Stroud has been playing swing music since he had his own dance band in high school. Sit back, listen to the origin, history, and

sound as Herschel takes a musical journey, with you as passengers, to learn about a true American phenomenon. *SWING!*

September 22 – 7:00pm

“Ghost Towns” by Perry Walters

Perry Walters has compiled a notebook of his findings and research data about ghost towns in our area. He has organized this information into a slide presentation, and will share some of his work with us this evening. If you have been curious about some of the towns and communities that once existed around us, this is the perfect time to come and learn about them.

October 27 – 7:00pm

“A Tale of Two Soldiers” – Spike Speicher

Join us for a unique look at the past as we view an interesting comparison of two soldiers during the Civil War; one Union, one Confederate. The story is one of contrasting yet similar views on food, health, guard duty, and camp life. It is amusing to observe the differences, and yet very emotional in the outcome. The presentation is based on 13 letters written by the Union soldier to his wife and three letters written by the Confederate soldier to his father. The original letters will be on display so that you may see and read them. This is a look at the war from the soldier’s viewpoint.

“Perfection consists in trifles, but perfection itself is no trifle. Helen A. Wilkin, February 28, 1928”
(from Helen Schilling autograph book, TCHS Museum accession)

Mark Your Calendars:

July 28 – Meeting 7:00pm – *The Rip Chords Barbershop Quartet*

August 25 – Meeting 7:00pm – *Swing Talk – Jump, Jive & Swing, and Era in America by Herschel Stroud*

September 22 – Meeting 7:00pm – *“Ghost Towns” by Perry Walters*

October 27 – Meeting 7:00pm – *“A Tale of Two Soldiers” by Spike Speicher*

**Tonganoxie Community Historical Society
P. O. Box 785 201 W. Washington Street
Tonganoxie, Kansas 66086-0785**