

TONGANOXIE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1st QUARTER NEWSLETTER, March, 2018



(Little Stranger
Christian Church)

Huge Walnut and Oak Trees along Stranger Creek

Prior to 1900 Oak and Walnut trees were a prized commodity. It seemed like most of the very large trees grew around a water supply like Stranger Creek. In fact it was said the the first owner of the Kenna Farm (Just north of US 24/40 highway east of Tonganoxie) made a



Stranger Creek at
the Kenna Farm

“fortune” from the trees along Stranger Creek,

The photo above is not a very good photo, but it does represent what Stranger Creek looked like before all the trees were cut along its banks. One can get a visual idea of how large some of those trees had to be.

Today Stranger creek does not look anything like it did before it was channelized and clear cut after the 1951 flood. All the vegetation was removed and the stream was straightened to help control flooding.

When the Boy Scouts used to fish on that creek, the trees were still large enough to provide adequate cover and shade so that grass did not grow along the banks. There were still some large trees, but probably not



Dr. Boling's large Oak
Barn

oak and walnut.

Additional proof of huge trees in the Stranger Creek area is Dr. Boling's barn which is still being used today. Large Oak trees were used in this barn. I don't remember when it was made, but it was before 1900. The timber structures in this barn are so large that the logs and boards couldn't be cut by mechanical equipment. All the boards were cut and shaped by hand.

On January 3, 1974 Walt Neibarger printed a story about a huge Walnut log. The tree was located 6.5 miles SE of Tonganoxie on the W. Gowell farm. The tree was 75 feet tall and lived on Stranger Creek. The log weighed 40,000 lbs., was 15 feet long and yielded two carloads of lumber. **NOW GET THIS!!!** The log was 72 inches in diameter at the top end and 84 inches in diameter at the butt end. That is 6 feet diameter and 7 feet diameter. The tree



Huge Walnut Tree on the W. Gowell farm along Stranger Creek 6.5 miles SE of Tonganoxie

contained 3,500 feet of inch board measure. J.H. Rudrow from Lawrence was the exporting firm who cut the huge tree in 1893. It cost about \$300 to get the tree cut and out of the forest. It was hauled to Reno where it was loaded on a flat car to be shipped.

The Chicago Worlds Fair was held at this time and, Mr. Rudrow sold this tree to the Kansas Commissioners for exhibition purposes. The price paid was \$600.00. Walt Neibarger made a point that the tree caused quite a bit of excitement because it came from Kansas which in many people's eye was treeless.

A fellow from Paris, France saw the tree and purchased the tree for the purpose of making fine furniture. The cost was \$1,200.00.

The age of the tree was of interest. This was determined by a forester who counted the growth rings of the tree. It was finally determined to be around 1421 when the tree began its growth.

BARN QUILTS

The spring barn quilt class was held on March 24th in the hay barn. This was the 9th class held at the barn. There were only 7 barn quilters, but the barn was full. Everyone elected to make a barn quilt 4 X 4 instead of

the usual 2 X 2. The doubling in size of the barn quilt filled up the barn. Once again people came from some distance to participate. A John Deere block is now included in our



Tracy Wagner & husband



Laura Arnold & Ginny Fuhrer

tractor gallery which had included only Farmall blocks. The count is now 3 to 1 in favor of Farmalls.

It was another great class with several returning on Sunday afternoon to finish their block. The blocks being made now are so detailed that completing them in one day is almost impossible. All the blocks turned out great.

Everyone went home after having a great experience at our site which is what we want. A huge "thank you" to Janet Stuke, Kris Roberts, Janet Burnett, and Lloyd Pearson.



Barn Quilts of the past

Also, a huge "thank you" to Jean Pearson for all the work that she does in overseeing these barn quilt projects.

ALL VETERANS



Kathy Stockman and Connie Putthoff continue to work on our files of WW II veterans from Tonganoxie. The Count is over 150, but we believe this count is considerably lower than the number of people who served in that war. If you moved here after WW II we still want you to be part of this effort. We Need your names.

Kathy reminds me that we need not only a name, but also the name of the unit and the service the veteran served. We like any stories about their service; any photos during that time, and a history of what they did during their military experience and what they did after the war.

The reality of this situation is there aren't very many veterans of WW II still alive. SO IF YOU KNOW OF one, OR IF YOU are a descendant OF A VETERAN PLEASE LET US KNOW THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE.

We also want information on other veterans who are associated with Tonganoxie who served in the other wars that the U. S has been involved.

Upcoming Hosts & Hostesses

April 24 – Jim & Janet Stuke, Dan Carr,
Kris Roberts

May 22 – Maryann Needham, Connie
Torneden, Janet Burnett

MUSEUM HAPPENINGS

Visitors to the site continue to increase and this is due to our docents who log many hours keeping the museum open. It seems that our visitors are researching our hours of operation on our web site and indicate that their visit was because they knew we would be open.

One visitor was photographing a “flat Stanley” project and made three trips on three different days to get her project completed.

New accessions to the museum include an extensive archive of material from Helen Schilling who many may remember as the “News Lady” from the Mirror. She was known to take innumerable photos at many events around town. Unfortunately, she failed to label many of these photos so Kay Soetaert and Mike Emery volunteered to look through the archive and have devoted many days identifying the material. Included in the archive is a letter from Malcom Marihugh who was from Tonganoxie and was the butler and the double for Cary Grant, a signed photo from Barbara Stanwyck, and an unopened letter from Ed Willert, a WWII veteran you have read about in the newsletter before. There remains two large boxfuls of material to identify.

Joe Sheriff's daughter, Mary Paul (Pauline) Williams from Oklahoma provided some photos of the Chevrolet dealership, floats in parades, and memorabilia from her father's ownership of the Chevrolet dealership in Tonganoxie.

Videos by WW II Veterans

TCHS has oral interviews from the following WW II veterans:

George Lengenfelser, Harold Denholm, Phil Boatwright, Loran Thomas, Wallace Deckard, Stanley Stanhope, Jack Wolf, Philip Baer, Gene Forshee, Walter Denholm, John Lenahan, George Cooper, William Freienmuth, and Dave Underwood. Most of these were done by the VFW in 2009.

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS GETS INVOLVED !!

Our museum hosted three graduate students from the KU museum studies program. Thursday, March 29th, Jessica Heck, Conner Mulkey, and Jackie Porcello joined Kris Roberts and Laurie Walters for a complete look at our museum and site to access curating methods, storage processes and facilities disaster plan, procedures in place for handling materials, etc. The students will be preparing an assessment of our site and will publish a paper containing their findings and recommendations which will be shared with us. It was an enjoyable learning experience and we await the findings.

GHOST TOWNS

**(THE DVD ON THIS SUBJECT WILL SOON
BE AVAILABLE)**

About nine years ago TCHS produced a book about the Ghost Towns around Tonganoxie. The term Ghost Town was liberally interpreted because Jarbalo, Linwood, Reno, Fall Leaf, and Fairmont are communities that are in serious decline, but still exist. All but one of these towns have no business and all are unincorporated. Anyway these towns were included in the manuscript which was 83 pages.

A Keynote (Apple's equivalent to Powerpoint) program was given at the TCHS site. It was very well received and many people wanted to know if the book was available and how much it would cost. TCHS never sold any of the books nor did they intend to. The producer did his own printing of the book and the cost for the ink was over \$80.00. It was determined that the production cost was too much which made the purchase price more that one could be expected to pay for such a book.

Fast Forward to 2018 and TCHS is now in the process of producing a DVD of Ghost Towns. In fact by next week this project should be completed.

This DVD is in the style of a "Ken Burns" project. It



Historic downtown
Linwood

is narrated so that one can "look and listen". You can look at the movie and listen

to the description of the photos. Also, many things about these ghost towns have been added to the project as new information about a ghost towns is discovered.

The Ghost Town DVD runs over 2 hours and has chapters which allows one to start at various locations within the DVD.



The towns covered in this project are:

1. Little Stranger & Little Stranger Christian Church which is now being restored.
2. Boling which is

not close to what was the Boling Grange & is now a water district.

3. Jarbalo, Ackerland, Lenape, Fall Leaf, Reno, Summt, Stranger Station, Hoge, Fairmont
4. Seifert's Station, Administer, Neely, Springdale, Alexandria, Stanwood,
5. Glenwood. Dafer and Daisy

Special things to be discussed will be Lincoln's Rest, the Cliffs, the Bullard/Meritt home, Summitt Cemetery, which has been restored, the Wright Brothers and gliders and the Wright Brothers near Jarbalo whose mill blew up killing several people, and Mrs. Timmons of Glenwood who played a significant roll in the development of the Mother/Daughter Cooking Clubs



This DVD will be available for the public to purchase as soon as it is completed and we can get the packaging of the DVD completed.

**(A BUS TRIP IS BEING PLANNED TO VISIT
SOME OF THESE GHOST TOWNS)**

TCHS is currently planning a bus tour of the Ghost towns north of old 40 highway, now Evans road. If we can get enough people to commit to going on this tour we hope that May 5th, 2018 will be the day. Kris Roberts is working out the details as I write this newsletter. We expect the tour to be 3 hours with a stop for necessary things.

Reno's first school



And there will be “experts” on the bus to discuss each location and time will be available for additional comments and questions.

If you have any interest in being part of this adventure, please call TCHS telephone number and leave a message.

In addition if you want to preview the DVD which is also a preview of what will be on the bus tour, here are some links to youtube movies that tell a short story. These moves are small clips of the total subject. These short movies are so you can have some understanding of the subject.

- Town of Dimon <https://youtu.be/Uvjs3MtJ5aE>
- Coffin Family https://youtu.be/CxO_3bnd7K8
- Fall Leaf <https://youtu.be/0-SlwVoQum4>
- Jarbalo <https://youtu.be/L5x2r-qysTM>
- Stranger Station <https://youtu.be/SP2GMYbPAHk>

Al DiSanto Tribute

Allan DiSanto will be remembered by many for his years of volunteer service to the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society. The restoration of our 1936 fire pumper truck was spearheaded by Al. He had a degree in mechanical engineering and a life time hobby of antique car restoration. He assumed leadership in the fire truck project, which occupied Al and many of our volunteers for several years.

Al was a board member of TCHS for three years, from 2007 thru 2009, serving as chairman of the board for several of those years. Among the projects that Al took on was the emergency exit survey of the site with Jim Stuke. This survey resulted in panic bars on some exit doors, as well as emergency lights and exit signage. Al assisted his wife, Linda in collating, folding, and mailing of over 200 newsletters.

We were the beneficiary of his many talents. A celebration of life for Al will be scheduled this spring by Rumsey -Yost Funeral Home in Lawrence.

Caryle Carr Tribute

Caryle Jean Bender Carr was a lifetime member of the Tonganoxie Community Historical Society. She was educated at Emporia State University (BS) and the University of Kansas (PhD). Caryle worked in healthcare education, mostly at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She and her husband, Dan, lived in Overland Park, before they “retired to the farm” in Leavenworth County in 2001.

Caryle had a lifelong passion for giving back to the community. She was active in various civic organizations in Overland Park, as well as the KU Medical Center Auxiliary, and several historical societies, including ours.

Caryle left our organization a generous contribution, which is a reflection of her desire to support museums, churches and charities. We are blessed to have had Caryle as one of our members and we will miss her.

4th Tuesday Programs

Fourth Tuesday Programs start at 7:00pm and are held in the Reno Methodist Church on the historical site. The programs are free and open to the public.

There are no 4th Tuesday programs in June, July or December. June is the summer evening picnic, July would interfere with the Leavenworth Co. Fair and December is the Christmas party. In July TCHS is represented in the fair as our old historic fire truck is always in the fair's parade

April 24 – **“Five Years of Mondays with Timeline Radio.”** Clenece Hills has been working in radio since she was in seventh grade in McPherson, Kansas. Her program airs on KLWN in Lawrence and has had over 200 guests to date. Clenece will talk about the process and challenges of a weekly live radio program.

Ed note: This lady interviewed me and Kris Roberts and I can tell you, she does her homework and knows what she is talking about. It will be a program well worth seeing.

May 22 – **“Show’n’Tell.”** Bring an historical item from home – a photo, a tool, an old letter - and share the story of that artifact with our group. There is never a dull moment at these programs. Bring a treasure from home and join in the fun.

June 16 – **Annual Picnic.** There is no Fourth Tuesday program in June. Instead, we hold our picnic, which will start at 6:30pm this year. The picnic is held just north of the barn unless there is rain, in which case we move inside the barn. Meat and drinks are furnished by the society – bring your own utensils and a covered dish to share.

Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars!

Saturday, May 5. **Bus Tour of Ghost Towns and Railroads and Hidden Gems of History.** We are still working out the details, but the tour will last about three hours (1 pm to 4 pm) with stops and there will be a nominal charge.

Monday, May 28. **Memorial Day Biscuits & Gravy Breakfast at the Museum.** This will be our second annual Biscuits & Gravy Breakfast on memorial Day. This year, we will start serving breakfast immediately after the Flag Ceremony by the American Legion at 7:30 am (donations appreciated).

A REVIEW OF THE 1ST QUARTER

It was a busy first quarter. Members gathered in the barn in January and March to **label union newsletters** – a fund raising activity that has been on-going for many years. Many thanks to Denise Rodgers for her work in setting up this fund raiser and doing the prep work behind the scenes. Thanks also to Mike Rodgers and Floyd Olson for setting up the work area and transporting the newsletter and, of course, to all the volunteers who show up on short notice.

Our **Annual Chili Supper** on February 15, 2018 was a great success. This year, we served 304 meals, an increase of 60 over last year, and the most meals served since 2013.

Fifty-four (54) volunteers prepared vegetables and meat ahead of time; prepared soup and chili and baked potatoes on site; baked almost 40 pies, plus brownies and cakes; set and bussed tables, served relishes and drinks, washed dishes, and visited with our guests.

We were very fortunate this year to have the assistance of several Boy Scouts from our local troop, who put tables and chairs away and helped with general clean-up.

John Callaghan drove our 1936 Fire Pumper Truck in the **St. Patrick's Day Parade.** John drove the truck to the fire station, where it was cleaned up and worked on. After a few days of spa-like treatment, the truck ran like a charm! Many thanks to John Callaghan for making this happen.

After the parade, **Boy Scout Troop #357** camped out on the museum site on March 10. We are fortunate to be able to share our site with them.

The **Fourth Tuesday Programs** in January, February, and March were engaging, educational and fun. Our

speakers were all local residents – many thanks to Christine Henderson, Joy Lominska and Mike Seymour for their efforts. Tony Johnson, our Program Director is always willing to hear your suggestions for future programs.



Joy Lominska discussed a book that she had written about the history of the farm she and her husband now live. She related how she discovered the history of the farm and how she used various resources. TCHS sells this book if you are interested



Mike Seymour, a native Tonganoxie boy who loves history and works and the Larned



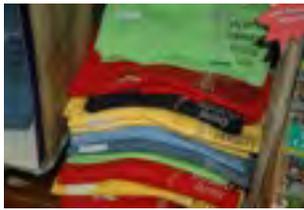
Tony Johnson program coordinator for the 4th Tuesday programs. Here he is helping Mike Seymour set up his display.

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ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A GIFT, A PRESENT? ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LOCAL HISTORY? WHY NOT THINK OF OUR HISTORICAL GIFT STORE?



Browse our selection of T-shirts, sweat shirts, denim shirts, visors, ball caps, and aprons.

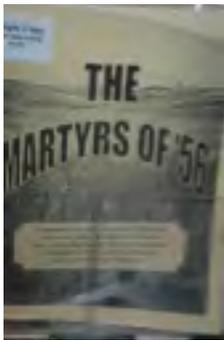
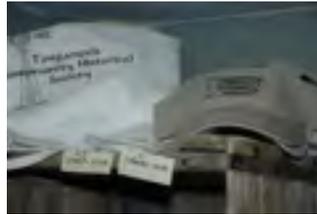


They sport an embroidered logo of the Tonganoxie Historical Society. They will last many washings.

The T-shirts and Sweat shirts come in different colors, Take your pick



“Traditional Tales of Tonganoxie” a 4 DVD set about Tonganoxie history from the Delaware Indians through WW II. It is selling very well and we are down to our last 50 sets.



The Martyrs of '56, a true story about 3 men traveling from Leavenworth to Lawrence who were attacked by Border Ruffians. All were severely wounded and one lived to tell this story.



A limited supply of John Cass Lenahan's, “Yesteryears” remain. Each contains many old photos of buildings, and places around Tonganoxie



Joy Lominska's “The Old Home Place”, The story of a Kansas Farm. an engaging account of the people who lived on this farm during the past 100 years. This farm is 8 miles west Tonganoxie.

The Kansas Guide Book 2 for explorers, a guide book for day trips throughout Kansas. It provides information about historical places and events throughout the state of Kansas. The editors are Marci Penner and Wendy Rowe.

If you are unable to make your purchase in person, please contact us and the sale and shipping can be arranged.



Note card featuring pen and ink drawings of local landmarks. by local artist. Fred Leimkuhler, a noted historian of Leavenworth Co.