I was studying at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in the summer of 1994, when Robert Utley was the featured speaker. Being two or three feet taller than I, he peered through his bifocals at my nametag. “Toe-pe-ka,” he enunciated each syllable and proceeded to tell me about his research forays into the Kansas State Historical Society.

Toe-pe-ka is a distinctive word, reminiscent of our American Indian heritage. In answer to the oft-asked questions, “How did we get that name and what does it mean?” Barbara Burgess offers an interesting answer on page 5.

On page 3 you will find the details of our second annual Shawnee County Attic Sale on September 28. A combination of Antiques Road Show meets Estate Sale, the event will be bigger and better than last year. We are fortunate to have secured warehouse space which enables us to begin taking donations now. You still have time to join so that you can take advantage of our Members Only Early Bird Sale and Party on September 27!

Donate items and volunteer your time to this important fundraiser. Visit us on Facebook, on our website, or browse this newsletter and you will find the evidence of the important work these funds make possible. See you in September!
2013 Preservation Awards:

SCHS Annual Preservation Awards were bestowed on Sunday, May 19, 2013, at Sommerset Hall Café, Dover.

SCHS President Deb Bisel presented awards to:

- **Ross Freeman**, Pioneer Group, Inc., 1200 S Kansas Ave. for renovation of the Motive Power Building and adaptation to affordable housing; renamed Motive Power Place, 1001 NE Atchison Street.

- **Sommerset Hall Café** (former IOOF building) in Dover, KS

- **Terry Humphrey** and the Friends of Historic Preservation for advocacy on behalf of historic preservation issues in the Legislature

- **Combat Air Museum**, Forbes Field, Topeka

- **Christine Steinkuehler** for restoration of 1272 SW Western Ave

- **Yeldarb Gallery**, 909 N. Topeka

- At a later date **Robert Bugg** accepted an award on behalf of Living the Dream for its work in preserving the Topeka Colored Womens Club, 1149 Lincoln. **Diane Bernheimer** presented the award.

Our thanks to **David Heinemann**, who provided photos of this event and the properties honored.
Upcoming Events:

► SCHS Attic Sale, Sept. 28th

The Second Annual Shawnee County Attic Sale will be held September 28 at Trails Gallery and Market, 109 N Kansas Ave. (on the south side of the river), from 8 AM - 2 PM. The more valuable items will be auctioned beginning at 1 PM. A members-only preview sale and party will be held Friday evening, September 27, from 7-9 PM.

We are accepting tax-deductible donations of your gently used items especially: collectibles, antiques, books, coins, militaria, etc. Any items not deemed appropriate or unsold will be donated to Findables, the resale store operated by Midland Care.

The Shawnee County Attic Sale will be a combination of Antiques Road Show meets an estate sale as we will have appraisers on hand to help you place a value on your treasures.

Lt. Co. (ret.) Dave Chuber, historian from Fort Leonard Wood, MO, will once again lend his expertise as an auctioneer and appraiser. Dave is an avid collector of Primitives, textiles, and militaria, and is himself an antique dealer. Members of the Topeka Antiques Association will be lending their expertise as well.

To donate items, please call the Shawnee County Historical Society at 785-234-6097 and leave a message. We will return your call and arrange for pick up or set a time for delivery.

We would like to express our appreciation to business owner Jeff Hisey for the use of his warehouse.

There will be some parking behind the building and we are arranging other parking nearby.

► Books!

The 2013 Kansas Book Festival, a free event open to the public, will be held Saturday, September 7, at the Kansas State Capitol grounds, 300 SW 10th St., Topeka, from 9 AM to 4 PM. For lists of authors-presenters, vendors and entertainment schedule visit www.kansasbookfestival.com/

The Topeka/Shawnee Co. Public Library’s 2013 Friends of the Library Book Sale will be held Friday through Sunday, September 20-22, Ag Hall, Kansas Expocentre, Topeka. For event hours and details, see www.tscpl.org/friends/book-sale/

► Thacher Building Open House

On Sunday, September 29, former SCHS board member Jeff Carson will be celebrating his historic Thacher Building’s birthday with an open house. This will be the perfect capstone to an absolutely historic September weekend. Check Gizmo’s web site for time and details. www.gizmopictures.com/

► History Geeks Walking Tour

Christine Steinkuehler has organized a walkable tour of four downtown buildings on Saturday, September 7. There is no charge. The schedule is:

9:00 a.m. Group gathers at GEM Building, 510 SW 10th St.; Jan Leuenberger will speak about his grandfather, one of the builders and original owners.

9:45 a.m. Ben Swinnen’s law office, 921 SW Topeka.

10:30 a.m. The Dillon House, 404 West 9th; Ross Freeman will speak about the history of the house and his group’s plans.

11:00 a.m. First Presbyterian Church, 817 Harrison.

These are all close in proximity and it is walkable.

No reservations are required. Find “Topeka History Geeks” on Facebook.

Candids Preservation Awards, Sommerset Hall Café
John and Mary Jane Ritchie would be thrilled to see the buzz of activities that took place at their Historic Ritchie home for this summer’s History Camp for Kids. This year’s programming reached out to Oakland, Central Park, Garfield, and Velma Paris Community Centers; Logan and Indian Creek Boys & Girls Clubs; Williams Magnet School and the Leading Edge Academy as part of their summer programming. A total of 511 campers took part in this six-week program of studying Heritage Education lessons and activities.

Themes covered Territorial Kansas and Bleeding Kansas stories. Campers took part in an Underground Railroad interactive experience on the north grounds of the complex. Artifacts from the Ritchie House were studied, along with several lessons in archaeology; wagon trails were studied and kids even had a visit from a wagon master who treated them to apple cobbler from a real cookfire! During the Stars and Stripes Week, campers learned to correctly fold the United States flag and heard many patriotic stories of our country.

As a new component this year, we offered lessons to the primary-age campers, including lessons about farm chores of early Kansas farmers. They washed clothes, swept the Ritchie House, and planted flowers. In another lesson, the little campers learned to count rings of tree growth and interpret the stories the trees had to tell.

Volunteers helping Melinda Abitz with camp this year were Katie Huffman, Melinda’s daughter, who brought music and singing to our program; George and Diane Bernheimer, who developed interactive lessons and activities for the campers; and Susan Hudgens, stepping in wherever needed and helping with traveling trunk lessons. Bill Wagnon and Paul Metzenthin helped with the campers in a variety of ways and also took care of walk-in tours for the public when needed. Also, Alan Shirrell took part in an interactive experience as a slave catcher.

Thanks go to Security Benefit, and the Security Benefit Trust for funding this year’s History Camp for Kids.

Basement Classroom

Our downstairs classroom has a new Dry Erase White Board installed, and now provides a place for students to create projects and learn from projected videos. At right: Campers watched a military band play “Stars and Stripes Forever” during our Stars and Stripes themed History Camp.
Topeka — a good place to dig potatoes

Topeka’s roots grow deep in the Kansas soil, and in this case the roots really are roots, known to scientists as *Psoralea esculenta* and to pioneers and Indians as “prairie potatoes” or “prairie turnips.” The word “Topeka” comes from Indian words meaning “a good place to dig potatoes.”

Founded on December 5, 1854, Topeka was officially named on January 2, 1855. Fry W. Giles, one of the city’s founders, wrote that the Rev. S.Y. Lum proposed the name Topeka on January 1, 1855, and Giles said that the founders of the city chose the name because it was “a name not found in the list of post offices of the United States, nor in any lexicon of the English language. It was novel, of Indian origin and euphonious of sound.” Giles said they liked the idea of the name being composed of three consonants alternating with 3 vowels and that it was a good name because it should be easy to pronounce. He said that the name was unanimously adopted by the founders of Topeka on January 2, 1855. (Giles 27)

While the city’s founders may not have known the meaning of Topeka, they did not invent this word. They may have found the name on the map drawn by missionary Johnston Lykins who drew the map while he was living at the Potawatomi Baptist Mission in 1849. His map was published in a book by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft in 1853. On this map, Topeka was the name of the Smoky Hill fork of the Kansas River. Topeka’s founders likely had seen copies of this map. (Howes 106)

Even earlier Major Angus L. Langham, who was surveying the Kaw lands in 1826 for the government, referred to the Kansas River as the Topeka River in his report. (Howes 105-106) Other people have presented evidence that the name Topeka is similar to the Native American word for the prairie potato. Fry Giles explained that a Col. W. A. Phillip, a scholar of Indian languages, said that Topeka was related to the Potawatomi word “Topheika” which meant “mountain potato.” Giles also said that the half-breed Kansa Indians living in the area said that the Kansas River Valley was called Topeka because it was a good place to gather the little *esculenta* tuber known to whites as the wild potato. (Giles 28)

“Topeoka” was the Indian name for the Kansas River (Konzes River) according to Thomas Say, who was with the 1819-1820 expedition commanded by Major S. H. Long. Say included the Oto word “to-pe-ok-a” and its meaning “good potato river” in his list of Indian words. He explained that he recorded each word on the spot as it was pronounced by an Indian or interpreter. (Barry 322) John Dunbar, Washburn University professor of Greek and Latin in the 1870s, also reported this definition. Dunbar wrote that the name Topeka is made up of three words common in the languages of the Iowa, Omaha, and Kansa Indians. “To” means potato, “pe” means good, and “oke” means to dig in these languages. He said that the word Topeka literally means a good place to dig potatoes. (King 133, Howes 105-107)

Native Americans also reported that the word Topeka means “good place to dig potatoes.” White Plume, a Kansa leader, said that the river and the adjacent bottom lands were called ‘Topeka’ by Native Americans which meant “a river upon the banks of which wild potatoes grow.” (King 133) Joseph James, called Jo
Jim, was another Kansa man who reported that Topeka meant “a good place to dig wild potatoes.” Jo Jim was part French and part Kansa and was married to a Potawatomi woman. He lived in the area of Topeka in the mid 1800s. William Connelley, secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, reported that Jo Jim said this but was skeptical about Jo Jim’s reliability. (Connelley 591 footnote)

In his history of Shawnee County published in 1905, James King echoed Giles’ version of the naming and quoted the same sources. (King 133) Connelley disagreed with these theories suggesting that this interpretation of the meaning was “claptrap.” In 1927 Connelley pointed out that the word Topeka came from the division of the Pawnee Indians known as the Tapage Pawnee who lived along the Kansas and Smoky Hill Rivers. The word Tapage was a French word meaning noisy. “And again Tapage may mean Smoky Hill. Its real meaning has not been established. But, whatever the meaning, Tapage is the word from which the name ‘Topeka’ is derived.” (Connelley 591)

Connelley’s theory about the meaning of Topeka was repeated by later local historians, and his interpretation led others to decide that the meaning of the word can never be ascertained. As recent as 1972, John Rydjord wrote that there has been considerable controversy about the origin and meaning of Topeka in his book Kansas Place Names. He repeated Connelley’s theory about the Pawnee band and the other theory about the “good place to dig potatoes” and never concluded what the meaning of the word Topeka is.

**Explorers and Pioneers and Prairie Potatoes**

While some controversy over the meaning and origin of the city’s name exists, the fact that wild potatoes grew in the area and were harvested and consumed by the Native American residents in the Kansas River Valley adds supporting evidence for the “good place to dig potatoes” theory of the meaning of the name Topeka. Explorers, adventurers, soldiers, missionaries and emigrants all document the fact that the Kansa Indians dug the prairie potato in the Kansas River valley, and that prairie potatoes were important in their diets in the 1800s. In historic times, the Kansa people lived in the Kansas River Valley and early Euro-American travelers in the valley described the harvest and consumption of the prairie potato.

**The Kansa People and the Prairie Potato**

On May 5, 1837, Indian agent Richard Cummins said that Reverend Thomas Johnson met some 400 or 500 Kansa Indians going to the white settlements to beg for provisions, for they had nothing to eat at home; and those who had not gone to the white settlements to beg were nearly all scattered over the prairies digging wild potatoes. (Barry 322)

Pierson Reading was heading for Oregon in 1843 when he tasted the prairie potato and then described it in his travel journal. While camped on the Kansas River near Papan’s Ferry, Reading wrote, “May 27, 1843. Found the (Kansa) squaws engaged in dressing skins. They gave me to eat a root growing on the prairie which is about the size and shape of a hen’s egg. It is both palatable and nutritious and serves the Indians as an excellent substitute for bread. It is very white and is called by the French, ‘le pomme blanc’ or white apple.” (Reading 150)

In the same year, Lt. John Fremont was exploring and mapping the land along the Oregon Trail for the government when he saw Kansa women digging the prairie potatoes along the Kansas River about 20 miles west of Papan’s Ferry. He had scientists in his party who helped him carefully record scientific names for the flora and fauna as well as recording the survey descriptions of the place where the specimen was found. “June 4, 1843. We met here a small party of Kansas and Delaware Indians, the later returning from a hunting and trapping expedition on the upper waters of the river (Kansas River) and on the heights above were 5 or 6 Kansas women, engaged in digging prairie potatoes (Psoralea esculenta).” Fremont used the scientific names for the plants he mentioned in his journals. (Fremont 237)

Frontiersman and trail guide James Clyman saw
the Kansa Indians digging roots near Papan’s Ferry in 1844. Although he did not name the plant, it seems likely to have been the same plant. Others saw them digging the prairie potato in this same area. Kansa Indians gave Oregon emigrant Edwin Bryant prairie potatoes to eat while he was camped near the Kansas River. He described the plant in his journal. “May 23, 1846. Several of the Kansa Indians followed us from our last encampment. One of them presented to me a root or tuber of oval shape, about 1 1/2 inches in length and an inch in diameter. This root is called the Prairie Potato. Its composition is farinaceous (rich in starch) and highly nutritious, and its flavor is more agreeable than that of the finest Irish potato. I have but little doubt if this plant was cultivated in our gardens, it would be an excellent and useful vegetable for ordinary consumption and probably would be so improved as to form a substitute for the potato.” (Bryant 54)

The evidence is overwhelming in favor of Topeka meaning “a good place to dig potatoes.” These potatoes however are not the Irish potatoes or sweet potatoes found in our gardens and grocery stores. Instead, the potatoes are the species native to the Kansas prairies, the Psoralea esculenta. Explorers, military surveyors, missionaries, travelers on the trail to Oregon and California all described this plant and its importance in the diets of the Native peoples living on the Prairie. The presence of these native plants growing on the prairies add support to this theory about the meaning of the word Topeka.

The Prairie Potato in the 21st Century

Topeka’s roots are still growing in the Kansas prairie. Psoralea esculenta can be found in undisturbed native grasslands throughout the Great Plains region. In Kansas as in other locations, the elusive prairie potato only appears above ground for a few weeks. The plant appears sometime in late April or more often in May, depending on the date of the last frost, blooms in June and then forms seeds and dries up and blows away. While the root remains in the soil, the dried and stiff plant breaks off, blows away and spreads the seeds. People who are looking for this plant must do so sometime between early May and late July before the tops are gone.

Flower

One to five light blue flowers appear at the top of the plant usually in early Spring. Each flower is composed of 20 or more flowerets, which bloom in succession. In Kansas the prairie potatoes begin blooming in late May or early June. This is the stage of growth during which the plants are easiest to find among the prairie grasses. The blue flowers are distinctive and the hairy appearance of the stem and leaves make the plant easier to recognize at this stage. In the next two or three weeks, the flowerets fade to a pale yellow. As the surrounding grasses grow taller and tower over the potato plants, it becomes difficult to spot the prairie potato during the last weeks before the plant separates from the root.

Selected Bibliography


www.barbburgess.com/
Topeka Cemetery Is Coming to Life!

Since Topeka Cemetery’s announcement of its multi-million dollar endowment kickoff, lots of good things have been happening. The idea of building a resource—a searchable website database—in order to preserve a resource is brilliant and is a model that will be used by other cemeteries. A group of volunteers is researching the internments to find descendants and relatives that might be interested in telling the family’s story. If you would like to join in, email debbisel@yahoo.com or call ASA Marketing at 785-273-5411.

As we approach the 150th anniversary of Quantrill’s Raid on Lawrence, the stories of two of the survivors have come to light, two who rest today in Topeka Cemetery. One was an 8-year-old girl at the time by the last name of Patton. The other was a storekeeper named Guild who barely escaped as his shop was consumed by flames. There are other connections to the raid as well and Deb Bisel will lead a cemetery tour on Saturday, August 24, 10:30 AM. $10 per person, to talk about the Topeka connections to Quantrill’s raid. Find her on Facebook, email, or give her a call at 785-783-1532 to reserve a spot. Deb has an article in the August issue of Armchair General Magazine (available at Barnes & Noble) about the raid.

Lawrence will be marking the official observance at South Park on Massachusetts Street, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 18. There are events throughout the month. Check http://www.visitlawrence.com/

Picnic in the Park will be held at Topeka Cemetery, 10th & California, on Sunday, September 8, from 11 AM-6 PM. The event is FREE…but donations will be welcome. There will be food vendors, booths, and music with the band CyrusK performing. There will also be a silent auction. Our garden cemeteries were the precursors of public parks so this is a fitting use for this beautiful space! Call the cemetery office for more information: 785-233-4132. Visit www.topekacemetery.org

2013 Kansas Hall of Fame Wrap-up

The KHOF stretched its wings this year as the 2013 Laureates were inducted at Washburn’s White Concert Hall. “By moving the ceremony to a larger venue we provided the opportunity for more people to attend, and we really appreciate the partnership of Washburn in making it possible,” explained KHOF Co-Chair Beth Fager. The 3rd Annual Kansas Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony saw Clark Kent/Superman, Dr. James Naismith, the band KANSAS, Drs. C.F., Will, and Karl Menninger, and the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry join the ranks of the previous Hall of Fame Laureates. Among our guests were John Montgomery, Publisher of the Hutchinson News; Laura Siegel Larson, daughter of Jerry Siegel; Drs. Roy and Walt Menninger, Phil Menninger, Rosemary Menninger, and their families; General Roosevelt Barfield; numerous descendants of soldiers from the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry; Jim Naismith; Max Falkenstein; Dr. Jerry Farley; Mayor Wolgast; and members of the band KANSAS.

To see photos of the celebration, visit www.blackwoodmusichistory.com/scrapbooks/khof2013/

Living History Walks

“Forging Freedom’s Pathway: Living History Walks” will occur on Saturday, October 19. Tour buses will leave from Topeka’s Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, 1515 SE Monroe St., making runs to the Ritchie properties, beginning at 9 AM and continuing until noon. Unloaded attendees will amble back toward Monroe School while encountering reenactors along the route: abolitionist Mary Jane Ritchie, pro-slavery politician David Rice Atchison, free-stater Jim Lane, women’s rights advocate Clarina Nichols, Exoduster Nelson Holder, Topeka school board member Chester Woodward and African American teacher Julia Roundtree. Their stories about the conflict over the extension of slavery into Kansas and the later debates over issues of integration and segregation illustrate the central role Kansas played in the enduring struggle for freedom in America. This event is free and everyone is welcome to attend.

KHC Funding Okayed

SCHS will receive grant funds from the Kansas Humanities Council toward accomplishing a pilot project, “Oral History of the Kansas Legislature.” This project is to be implemented throughout the coming year, in recording histories of individual Kansas legislators.
A series of public programs raising awareness of the history of western Shawnee County and eastern Wabaunsee County have been held during the summer months of 2013, with an additional event planned for **Wednesday, August 14**, at the **Citizen Band Potawatomi Community Center, Rossville**, beginning at 7 PM. **Mike Calwell**, Friends of the Kaw, will deliver a program on developing boat access to the Kaw at Willard. Also, **Linda Craghead**, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, will speak on developing a commemorative park at the site of the Willard Bridge across the Kansas River.

The series began on Saturday afternoon, May 11, at the Kansas Museum of History, with talks on documenting and marking pre-territorial trails throughout the state. Presentations were by **Duane Ilse**, President of the Oregon California Trails Association and **Rick Anderson**, historian with the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office. This program was arranged by the KANZA chapter of the Oregon California Trails Association. Following the talks, **Doug Mauck** led a field trip to the Uniontown area at Willard to view the existing swales and the Kaw River ford. **Jon Boursaw** spoke of his family’s cemetery plot near the Uniontown site.

The second program was held on Wednesday evening, June 5, at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Community Center, Rossville. The program focused on the history of Uniontown and the Potawatomi settlement in the area. **Michael Stubbs**, Wabaunsee County Historical Society, spoke of the site that is now Willard as an Oregon Trail river crossing, and **Jon Boursaw**, Citizens Potawatomi Nation Tribal Member, on the history of the Potawatomi tribe, how they came to Kansas, and how the natives interacted with white settlers traveling along the Oregon Trail.

On Wednesday evening, July 10, **The Long Trail**, a movie starring **John Wayne**, directed by Raoul Walsh and released in 1930, was shown. The movie realistically portrays the struggle involved in making the trip to Oregon in the 1840s. The showing was also held at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Community Center, Rossville.

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**Photos by Carol Yoho**
Debra Bisel: Distinguished Literary Artist

Topeka celebrated its arts community, patrons and artists on Wednesday evening, July 17, with a red-carpet treatment at the Topeka Civic Theatre and Academy: part fundraiser, party and part show of appreciation to the arts community for all it does for quality-of-life in Topeka. After a cocktail hour with live music, about 200 attendees entered the auditorium for ArtsConnect’s Third Annual Arty Award presentations.

Deb Bisel, current president of the Shawnee County Historical Society, was winner of the Arty Award for “Distinguished Literary Artist.”

Deb has been a long-time journalist, presenter and writer of historical non-fiction, including Kansas Forts and Bases: Sentinels on the Prairie; The Civil War in Kansas: Ten Years of Turmoil; Stories in Stone; The Darkest Dawn: Lincoln, Booth, and the Great American Tragedy; and The Day Dixie Died: Southern Occupation, 1865-1866.

There are a variety of links online to information about Deb and her writing, including:

- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/dgbisel
- Deb’s personal blog: http://www.blogger.com/profile/10277040884782060495
- Deb’s history blog, Mason-Dixon Wild West: http://masondixonwildwest.blogspot.com/
- Deb’s Amazon.com author’s page: http://www.amazon.com/Debra-Goodrich-Bisel/e/B007Z0JP36
- “Meet Local Historian,” a twelve-minute online interview with Deb by Chris Schultz (posted May 12, 2012): http://talkabouttopeka.wordpress.com/2012/05/31/meet-local-historian-deb-bisel/

According to her online biography, Deb is working on these writing projects:

“Armchair General Magazine will feature her article on the 150th anniversary of Quantrill’s raid on Lawrence, Kansas, in summer, 2013, and she is writing the dual biography of the Civil War’s First Ladies, Mary Lincoln and Varina Davis, as well as a one-woman play, Mary Lincoln: Unhinged and Uncensored, to debut in Topeka in August, 2013.”

Congratulations, Deb!

Tidbit:

Other interesting lives that have come to the surface in recent research:

William Tweeddale (1823-1900): This native of Scotland served in the Civil War as an engineer, and served the city of Topeka as an engineer and surveyor. He was the “man behind the construction of the Melan Arch Bridge on Kansas Avenue,” according to the cemetery’s longtime superintendent, Lowell Manis. Manis said that Tweeddale’s Civil War service included design and construction of the New Madrid Canal in General Sherman’s March to the Sea. At Vicksburg, he built a canal between Ducksport and New Carthage by cutting down trees in the bayous, four to five feet below water level. At the time of his death, he was introducing his patented process for the softening and purification of water, the perfection of which took him 30 years.

Section 43, Lot 15, Space 2

Summer Work on the Copper Dome of the Kansas Capitol:
Photos taken June 10, 2013, by Carol Yoho
SCHS has gone High Tech AND is saving members money by teaming with PayPal on-line to accept memberships and donations. We also hope to offer sales of our inventory of Bulletins with on-line payment via PayPal. Links now appear on-line http://www.shawneecountyhistory.org to allow payment transactions via PayPal by secure credit or debit card transaction.

SCHS dues year runs from January 1 to December 31, each year.

Anne Hawkins Performs as Mary Jane Ritchie

Anne Hawkins has performed as Mary Jane Ritchie for six years. On Tuesday, July 23, Anne reported on her work:

“I’ve performed as Mary Jane in Matfield Green, KS, at Pioneer Bluffs heritage center, for a bus tour of approximately 65 tourists (in an un-air conditioned barn at 106 degrees! Nearly fainted in my corset!)

I also performed at five libraries around the state ((Parsons, Independence, Cimarron, Meade, and Ashland) as part of the state’s summer reading theme, “Go Underground/Dig into Reading.” Youth and adult audiences (totaling 250+) were astonished to learn that Kansas had an Underground Railroad, and they had lots of questions and stories to share with me. At the conclusion of every performance I give, I tell folks about the Ritchie House in Topeka and point them to the website.
Mark Your Calendar! 2nd Annual SCHS
Estate Sale Meets Antiques Road Show
Saturday, September 28, 2013
@ Trails Gallery & Market from 8 AM-2 PM
with a Sneak Preview Fri. evening. Read details on p. 3,

Topeka’s Top Ten: FLOODS
Historically, Topeka’s floods have occurred in May-July.
Now that that time frame has passed, let’s look at Topeka’s ten worst floods:

1. June 1844  Topeka’s (greatest?) legendary flood. The Kansas River Valley was sparsely inhabited, mostly by Indians and fur traders.
2. July 13, 1951
3. May 30, 1903
4. June 30, 1951  The Kansas River reached its highest stage since the 1903 flood.
5. June 9, 1908
6. June 5, 1935
7. October 12, 1973  A fall anomaly?
8. June 17, 1943
9. June 12, 1941
10. June 21, 1967