As the second year of my presidency comes to a close, I feel as if I am leaving in the middle of the project. Perhaps that is as it should be.

We are living in interesting times, as the Chinese curse goes. The future is uncertain; the path is not always clear. I cannot help but think back to 1863 and the uncertainty facing Kansans during those trying times.

In 1863, Kansas had been a state but two years, a free state, finally. Yet that “free state” status would not be secured until the war was won. With the victories of 1863, the tide may have turned for the Union armies, but there were many trials yet to be faced. We take courage from their example.

As we look to 2014, we will mark such significant anniversaries: the 150th anniversaries of the Battle of the Blue and Mine Creek, in which so many soldiers from Shawnee County served; the Battle of Poison Springs where so many men from the 1st Kansas Colored were lost; the 100th anniversary of WWI; and the 60th anniversary of the Brown v Board decision. So many events are being planned and the on-going revamping of Kansas Avenue will feature our unique history and heritage in original and inspiring ways. Over it all, the dome of the statehouse is emerging more glorious than ever.

We live in interesting times. There are so many worthy projects, so many worthy causes. The SCHS should always enjoy a position of leadership in the community. As the entity most responsible for preserving and interpreting our past, we are also the entity most responsible for shaping our identity and our future.
President’s Message, cont.

It’s an awesome task and I am so proud to have played a small role. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as your president, and so encouraged to know that Dave Heineman will take the reins. Your board and officers are second to none.

I am most grateful that you have allowed me to make Shawnee County my home for these 20 years. I cannot think of a place with a more incredible story to tell!!!

SCHS Annual Meeting Plans
Sunday, December 8, 2013
2-4 PM, Hale Ritchie House, 1118 Madison

Make plans to attend the SCHS Annual Meeting at the Hale Ritchie house!

Outgoing SCHS President Debra Goodrich Bisel will recap the year’s events. Our very special program this year is a presentation by Sherrita (Sherri) Camp, author of the newly published, richly illustrated, African American Topeka, part of the “Images of America” series from Acadia Publications. Sherri, a longtime Topeka resident and descendant of Exodusters, and a Washburn graduate, will focus on her genealogical and historical research for this book, using the resources of many of our local institutions and libraries, as well as interviews with local residents. Signed copies of her book will be available for purchase.

Refreshments, door prizes and an opportunity to see the Ritchie houses and how we are using them to promote our Shawnee County history and preservation efforts. What could be a better way to spend a Sunday afternoon?

Walk-in Tours

Walk-in tours have been steady recently. Four families from various states have visited us while touring state capitols. Three of the families pulled up to the Ritchie House in RVs. Mostly retired couples, they enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and cooler weather. One lady though looked like she was ready to head home having explained that they had been on the road since May. Her husband however seemed content to read everything displayed in our Cox Center’s Museum Room. We’ll assume he was a “happy camper.”

Another young family with their small children set out on the road to tour capitols in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. They wanted to provide an educational experience for their children. They were having a great time of learning!

Ice Cream Social Wrap-up

Our August 4th Ice Cream Social, with special guests Topeka’s Santa Fe Band, was a rousing success. Stormy weather threatened at the time the concert was to start (7 PM), but rain never materialized. Treats were delicious, and the musical performance was superb. Thanks go to all involved with making the event enjoyable!
The staff and volunteers at the Historic Ritchie House are eager to see the school buses arriving again for the 2013-2014 school year!

The Ritchie House Partnership with the Brown vs. Board National Historic Site and the Kansas State Capitol is continuing to offer day-long field trips to all three sites for area schools. The signature “Rediscover Freedom’s Pathway” school fieldtrip offers again this year a free bus grant provided by the Brown vs. Board National Historic Site to any school that is within a 75-mile radius of Topeka. This has been a great incentive for teachers to bring their classes whereas it would have not been possible because of funding.

Exciting new lessons have been created to provide area students with a more hands-on, experiential approach to studying Kansas Heritage Education. Visiting students will find themselves involved in engaging discussions centering on the theme of the “Enduring Struggle for Freedom,” giving students a chance to participate with challenging topics that connect them with Kansas History.

Lively historic reenactments will initiate the curiosity of our visiting students by participating in a reenactment of an Underground Railroad escape. Also, “Mr. John Ritchie” (George Bernheimer) will bring students into his place in the past with historical stories told in the original 1856 home.

As always, these lessons correlate with the Kansas History, Government, and Social Studies Standards. Our goal is to help build a heritage culture with a connection to our Kansas History that will transcend their memorable visit as a student to a positive future role in their community.

The 2012-2013 school year brought nearly 1,500 students to the Historic Ritchie House on fieldtrips. Teachers were delighted to find such a treasure in Topeka where they could bring students to experience a part of Territorial Kansas history. For many teachers, the Ritchie House was unknown to them and after visiting, expressed their excitement about returning next year.

Through the help of our online survey website, teachers were overwhelmingly positive of the Ritchie House site as a valuable resource to school children. Also from this online survey tool, the teachers offered suggestions to help the fieldtrip experience expand even further by suggesting more hands-on objects for lessons during fieldtrips. We have decided to put the purchase of historic reproductions at the top of the list for our new format for fieldtrips. The planners have been in the process of acquiring some of the objects to enhance the lessons and through monetary donations are still adding to the collection.

The online resource page (shawneecountyhistory.org) on-line has been very popular with teachers and students alike. Teachers have asked for a quick place for their students to access primary sources concerning the Ritchies and Territorial Kansas information. Teachers, too, can access lesson plans created to accompany the Ritchie House visits.

Facebook has also been a great tool for showcasing school fieldtrips by allowing the Ritchie House to thank students and teachers for visiting us. Every class has been full of wonderful students full of enthusiasm and ready to learn!

The next project is the preparation of next year’s summer’s History Camp for Kids. Last summer the Ritchie House partnered with some of the area’s community centers. They made History Camp for Kids part of their summer program. For seven weeks staff and volunteers saw a record-breaking 500 campers on the Ritchie House doorstep! These summer campers learned a different Kansas related history theme each week. Staff and volunteers provided lessons, reenacting, campfire cooking, crafts, projects, singing and much, much, more. This summer the Education department wishes to meet or exceed last year’s attendance. Many of the community centers said that they were interested in returning next year!

With all that is happening at the Historic Ritchie House, it is vital to have willing volunteers. If you like being around some pretty great kids and enjoy Kansas history, then volunteering would be a great fit!

The Ritchie House also hopes to have more people invest monetarily in Heritage Education. The Education Committee would like to thank those who have helped in any way with our programs. Each and every contribution has made a difference!
Project Archaeology

by Melinda Abitz, Education Program Developer

Project Archaeology, a national heritage education program for educators and their students, came to the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center in July with ten teachers from Kansas participating in the workshop.

Virginia Wulfhuhle, Public Archeologist for the Kansas State Historical Society, led the workshop and was assisted by Nathan McAlister, teacher, Royal Valley Middle School, Annette Roach, teacher, Royal Valley Elementary School and Douglas Roach, teacher, Hayden High School. Melinda Abitz, education program development for the Historic Ritchie House, also participated by taking the teachers on a tour of the Ritchie House and introducing them to programs and online resources.

Using Project Archaeology materials, participants investigated a slave cabin at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest Plantation in Virginia with data from an actual excavation.

The visiting teachers also learned how Kansas-specific units on shelter, early agriculture, and migration incorporate elements of the new State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy, with emphasis on the integration of Science and Social Studies.

Participants also took part in a controlled dig at a turn-of-the-19th-century urban site which involved teachers performing test excavations, screening dirt, and filling out records involving found artifacts.

It was a great time of learning how to incorporate archaeology in the classroom.

KSHS Ancestor Fair

The SCHS participated in the 4th annual Ancestor Fair at the Kansas State Historical Society on Oct. 19. Over 360 people attended. Our table displayed our brochures about the Ritchie house and our educational programs and bulletins, which were well received.

Bulletins — a reminder

Eighty-five SchHS Bulletins were published between 1946 and 2011. Some are still available for sale. Prices vary between $5 and $30 per item, and include the cost of postage. Visit http://skyways.lib.ks.us/orgs/schs/history/bulletins.html to see a listing of past Bulletins.

Jeanne Mithen at SCHS table. Photo by Charity Rouse.
The story of Topeka artist Lenore Doster Cook (1871-1918), has been researched by a Topekan who purchased an oil painting, “Girl with a Violin,” at an estate sale in 1985. At the sale she also acquired an accompanying gold wedding band engraved with the artist’s initials and a date. She bonded deeply with the painting, focusing on the signature in the upper left-hand corner, “Lenore Doster, 1898,” and has spent nearly three decades researching details about Lenore Doster, her life as an artist, and her Kansas family roots.

Lenore was a student of the renowned American Impressionist painter William Merritt Chase (1849-1916), who founded the Shinnecock Summer School of Art in Southampton, New York. The first out-of-doors art school in the United States, it opened to allow amateur and professional art students from all over the country to study outdoor plein air painting, under the tutelage of Chase. From 100 to 150 students attended each summer program.

The painting’s new owner was delighted to also discover that Doster had been hired by the New York Academy in New York City, founded in 1892 also by William Merritt Chase, where she taught watercolor—working there as a peer with Chase.

Lenore’s personal history indicated that she was born Marion, KS, in May, 1871. Her mother was Caroline Riddle Doster, and the 1880 census records Caroline as an artist. Lenore’s father was Frank Doster. He was a populist, who became Chief Justice of the Kansas Supreme Court, serving from 1897-1903. Frank Doster was born in Winchester, VA, and served as a private in the Union Army. In the summer of 1865 his company was sent to serve along the Santa Fe Trail in Marion County. He had received his education in Indiana, attending Indiana State University and Benton Law Institute. In 1872 he was elected to the Kansas State Legislature. Frank had also become a practicing lawyer, and was the first Democrat to be elected to the office of Kansas Supreme Court. (Frank Doster was an interesting character and has a long personal story of his own.)

Lenore had several siblings. One census shows the Doster siblings as being: Lenore Doster, Colonel Chase Doster, Karl Doster, Hume Doster, Captain Wade Doster, John Doster, and Irma Doster.

The family moved from Marion to Topeka in 1896, purchasing a home at 131 SW Greenwood in the Potwin neighborhood.

Research found that the date in the gold ring was the date of Lenore’s wedding to Harry L. Cook: September 25, 1899. Lenore and Harry were married in Washington D.C., where he attended law school while she taught with William Merritt.
Chase. After their marriage the couple moved to Tennessee. Lenore also taught art in Tennessee, but Harry died suddenly there in 1905. She returned again to teaching in New York.

An article in the September 8, 1907, Topeka Daily Capital indicates that Lenore had moved back to Kansas. The article states:

Mrs. Lenore Doster Cook, daughter of Judge and Mrs. Frank Doster, who for the past seven years has made her home in New York returning to Topeka to spend the summer with her parents, has returned to Kansas to remain permanently. Mrs. Cook says her reason for making the change is that she would rather identify herself with the art of her own State, and the West is far more attractive to her than the East, and the field for work is far broader.

Mrs. Cook’s work has attracted considerable attention, especially her portrait painting to which she gives all her time when not teaching.

Mrs. Cook is a pupil of William M. Chase, and for the past few years has been a teacher in the New York School of Art, popularly known as the William Chase School, for it was founded by this artist about fifteen years ago. Mrs. Cook was one of the water color teachers in the school and assistant in the department of normal training and design. This department was created for the purpose of preparing students for work in public schools, and in it they are taught the theory of design and color applicable to both industrial and the fine arts.

Mrs. Cook went to Kansas City, Mo., September 6 to take up her work as director of the art department in the Central High School. She will have an assistant and there are two teachers in the department.

Research shows that Lenore’s sister, Irma, was an accomplished violinist. The painting “Girl with a Violin” is believed to be of Irma. The question remains: was the painting done in the Dosters’ Potwin home? If so, research shows that the windows have been replaced. Greenwood Street as the setting for the painting therefore becomes harder to verify, although the article in the Topeka Daily Capital hints that it could have been painted at the Doster home.

Other paintings by Lenore have surfaced over the years. Two watercolors are “Butter Churning” and “Mums.” The color in the mums painting is vibrant. The control of the medium of watercolor in “Mums and in “Butter Churning” is apparent.

A pen and ink drawing, “Broadway actor, Fred Thorne,” apparently drawn when Lenore lived in New York City, shows her solid control of that medium also.

Lenore eventually moved to Pasadena, California, because of health concerns. She died there, in 1918, of pulmonary complications. She was only 48 years old. William Merritt Chase had moved to California also. He died two years previous to Lenore, in 1916.

Questions remain about Lenore’s life and work. What has happened to the bulk of her work? Will more of it come to light through research and growing popularity? Perhaps television dramas such as Downton Abbey, set in turn-of-the-20th-century England and including some colorful American characters, will stir renewed interest.

Will Topeka artist Lenore Doster Cook, as a leading female artist and teacher, gradually gain the recognition her work so richly deserves?
Established in 1859, Historic Topeka Cemetery is the oldest chartered cemetery in the state and the longest continuously operated business still at the same location, in Topeka. Among its notable burials are Vice President Charles Curtis, four governors, one Territorial governor, senators, mayors, inventors, publishers, philanthropists, businessmen, circus owners, housewives and journeymen. Its picturesque setting offers an unique view of the Topeka skyline all these souls helped create.

Both an open-air museum and an ongoing enterprise, Historic Topeka Cemetery is in need of preservation, interpretation, and renovation. Friends of Historic Topeka Cemetery (FHTC) will facilitate events and programs to further these goals.

The Friends’ mission: To support Historic Topeka Cemetery in its missions to preserve its grounds and buildings, promote Topeka and Kansas history, and educate Topekans on the legacies created by their forebears – the extraordinary and the ordinary, the famous and the infamous, the entrepreneur and the artist.

For more information, contact:
Friends of Historic Topeka Cemetery
1601 SE 10th
Topeka, KS 66607
(785) 233-4132

More Cook artwork.

Also shown: Lenore Doster Cook article from the Topeka Daily Capital, September 8, 1907.
Our second annual Attic Sale and Auction was held on September 28, 2013. We were so fortunate to have a venue this year with room to sort and display the generous donations of our members and friends for our annual fundraiser.

Many thanks to Mike Fox for the space in his building at 109 N. Kansas, the former International Harvester warehouse. Mike also donated food for our gala members’ sneak peek party Sept. 27th.

Thanks, too, to our trustees and members who lent a hand in making this event happen.

What is even more exciting: We have new partners in Jeff Hisey and Geri Hastings Cummings of Trails Market and Gallery, who have developed the 109 N. Kansas location as an art gallery, flea market and farmers’ market. (Site is still south of the Kansas River, near the edge of the Kansas Avenue Bridge, on the west side of the avenue).

Jeff and Geri have generously given us a booth in the flea market area so that we can continue year-round to promote and support the SCHS with sales of your donations.

Come see this amazing gallery space and our SCHS booth!

The Trails Market and Gallery is currently open Thursday through Saturday, 9 AM-5 PM, and participates in the First Friday Art Walk each month, 5-9 PM.

For more about this wonderful gallery, see their website: http://www.trailsmarket.com

At the Auction:

SCHS’s Trails Market & Gallery Flea Market booth space:

Booth photos by Jeanne Mithen
Event photos by David Heinemann
Kansan Hotel Building, 100 E. 9th St. (b.1924)
The Kansas City firm of Sheparde & Wiser designed the 10-story, U-shaped hotel for the reputed cost of $1 million. It featured a luxurious lobby with fireplace, 300 guest rooms, banquet rooms, several stores, a roof garden ballroom, and a coffee shop called the “Purple Cow.” Its most prominent exterior element is the columned portico or “Greek Temple” high up on the south façade. In 1925, George Polley, a daredevil known as “the human fly” scaled the hotel’s exterior to the delight of the crowds below. (Topeka State Journal, June 6, 1925). Closed in 1968, the hotel was then converted into offices and apartments.

Promoting the Kaw River at Willard, Kansas Tourism wrap-up:

Mike Calwell, Friends of the Kaw, delivered a program on developing boat access to the Kaw at Willard. Also, Linda Craghead, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, spoke on developing a commemorative park at the site of the Willard Bridge across the Kansas River. This was the final of four summer programs (May, June, July & August) focusing on the rich history of the Willard/ Rossville Kansas River Crossing area.
Extending a tradition started in 1988, descendants of the Potawatomi tribe, historians and people interested in the history of American native populations traveled in a caravan the 660 miles from near Ft. Wayne, Indiana, to Linn County, Kansas, near Osawatomie — a route known as the “Trail of Death.” Potawatomi ancestors had been force-marched across Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and into Kansas territory during the fall months of 1838. The move forced involuntarily relocated people into what was then known as Kansas Territory. [Read more about the Potawatomi Trail of Death in our November, 2010, Historical Highlights newsletter, available on the SCHS web site. Links to Historical Highlights newsletters, Oct./Nov. 2003 to the present, are available on the site’s “About the Society” page: http://skyways.lib.ks.us/orgs/schs/aboutus.html].

All four state legislatures agreed to pass resolutions declaring the Trail of Death to be a Regional Trail. The trail winds down at Paola, Osawatomie and St. Philippine Duchene Memorial Park, formerly Sugar Creek Mission, where the Potawatomi lived for ten years after their emigration journey.

Descendants of various Potawatomi tribesmen and women were present at the Kansas commoration ceremony, held on Sunday, September 29th, 2013, at St. Philippine Duchesne Memorial Park, formerly Sugar Creek Mission, where tribe members lived for ten years after their emigration journey.

There Gov. Sam Brownback joined the group and toured the park with some caravan members. After a Mass was held, the Kansas governor offered his proclamation, asking the Indians to forgive the sins of the the land—sins of the people and the government against Native Americans., then shook hands with Jon Bour-saw, the Potawatomi representative. (Jon is a newly-appointed SCHS trustee. He provided the photos shared on this page’s review of events.)

Next Brownback offered the tribe and their ancestors a mounted deer. The deer was accepted and Brownback was given a gift of a blanket in response.

For a more complete accounting of the trip and its Kansas stops, read the newspaper article by Amber Coul-ter in the Wednesday, October 3, 2013, online publication of the Linn County News. http://www.potawatomi-tda.org/carav13/moreinfo.htm
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Our membership year is Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 annually.
Make check to “Shawnee County Historical Society” and mail form w/ your check to:
Shawnee County Historical Society, P.O., Box 2201, Topeka, KS 66601-2201
PLEASE PRINT or TYPE info requested.

Choose type: ___ Regular / $35. ___ Patron / $50 ___ Renovator / $100

PERSONAL MEMBERSHIP

Name __________________________________________ Email: _____________________________
Address ______________________________________ City __________________________ State _____ Zip ______

GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Name __________________________________________ Email: _____________________________
Address ______________________________________ City __________________________ State _____ Zip ______

Tax Deductible 501 (c)(3) DONATION Indicate amount: $ ____________

I wish to join this/these SCHS committee(s): ___ Nominations ___ Membership ___ Publications
___ Annual Meeting/Socials ___ Public Relations ___ Historic Preservation ___ Education/Communications

---

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.

Consider updating your membership or joining us as a 2014 member by using this payment option. Also, come to our Annual Meeting, Dec. 8, and advance-pay for 2014!

---

Upcoming Event

Festival of Trees, 2013

For the second year, the SCHS has decorated a tree and wreath for the Festival of Trees. This will mark the 36th year for the Sheltered Living fundraiser, always a popular event. The theme of this year’s tree is “Celebrating the Irish in Shawnee County.” Board member Doug Wright donated a pre-lit tree and Mike and Brenda Fox have donated the ornaments. Participating in this fundraiser not only supports the efforts of Sheltered Living in working with their clients, but offers greater public awareness for the SCHS as well. The Festival of Trees is held at Ag Hall, 17th & Topeka, from December 5 through December 8.

---

photos by: Carol Yoho
Mark Your Calendar!

Annual Meeting 2013

Sunday, December 8, 2013
2-4 p.m.
at the Hale Ritchie House
1118 SE Madison
Historic entertainment and tours, great door prizes, and refreshments! Read details on p. 2.

____________________

December 1855 -
After opening mild the weather this month turned freezing on the 8th. There was considerable snow and on Christmas day the thermometer fell to 30 degrees below zero. At the end of the month teams were crossing the Kansas River on the ice. The settlers suffered in their cabins and worried over the gloomy political outlook. [SCHS Bulletin v.1, n.3, June 1947, p.91]