



Historical Highlights

v. 1, n. 2



June 2012

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President's Message

by *Debra Bisel*, SCHS President

Members and Friends,

The first ever Shawnee County **Attic Sale** is history and thanks to the hard work of many volunteers and the donations of generous souls, it was a great success. We hope to build on the partnership begun with the Topeka Antiques Association and want to thank them for being on hand throughout the day for appraisals, as well as making donations of items and gift certificates. **Nancy Harms** at Findables was also a great partner in both donating and accepting items. She appeared with Dixie Lee Jackson on WIBW to promote the event on the Kansas Midday Show with Amanda Lanum/Chris Fisher, and did much to advertise the event through the shop. Special thanks to **Dave Chuber** who drove from Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to offer his skills as an appraiser and to be our guest auctioneer. He brought expertise and fun to the event!

Having the ability to host the Attic Sale on site was truly a blessing. Not since the Ritchie family lived in these buildings has this property hummed with so much productive activity. While **Melinda Abitz** was upstairs devising plans for furthering our educational programs, volunteers were on the main floor sorting and pricing donations. Our PhD janitor, **Bill Wagnon**, was mowing and weedeating and generally spiffing up the place for company. **Robin Shrimplin** and **Bill Wagnon** have had several tours or classes in the past weeks, and **Anne Hawkins** is teaching once a week. I hosted a group from Leadership Topeka just weeks ago -- none of whom had visited before. These houses are full of life, exactly as they were intended to be!



The **2012 Preservation Awards** were a truly moving event. Hosted by board member **Jeff Carson** at the Blue Planet Cafe, the awards were well attended and the atmosphere and commitment to the cause were palpable in the room. Kudos to **Carlton Scroggins and committee** and

—continued, p. 2

thanks to the **Landmarks Commission** for partnering in this important recognition.

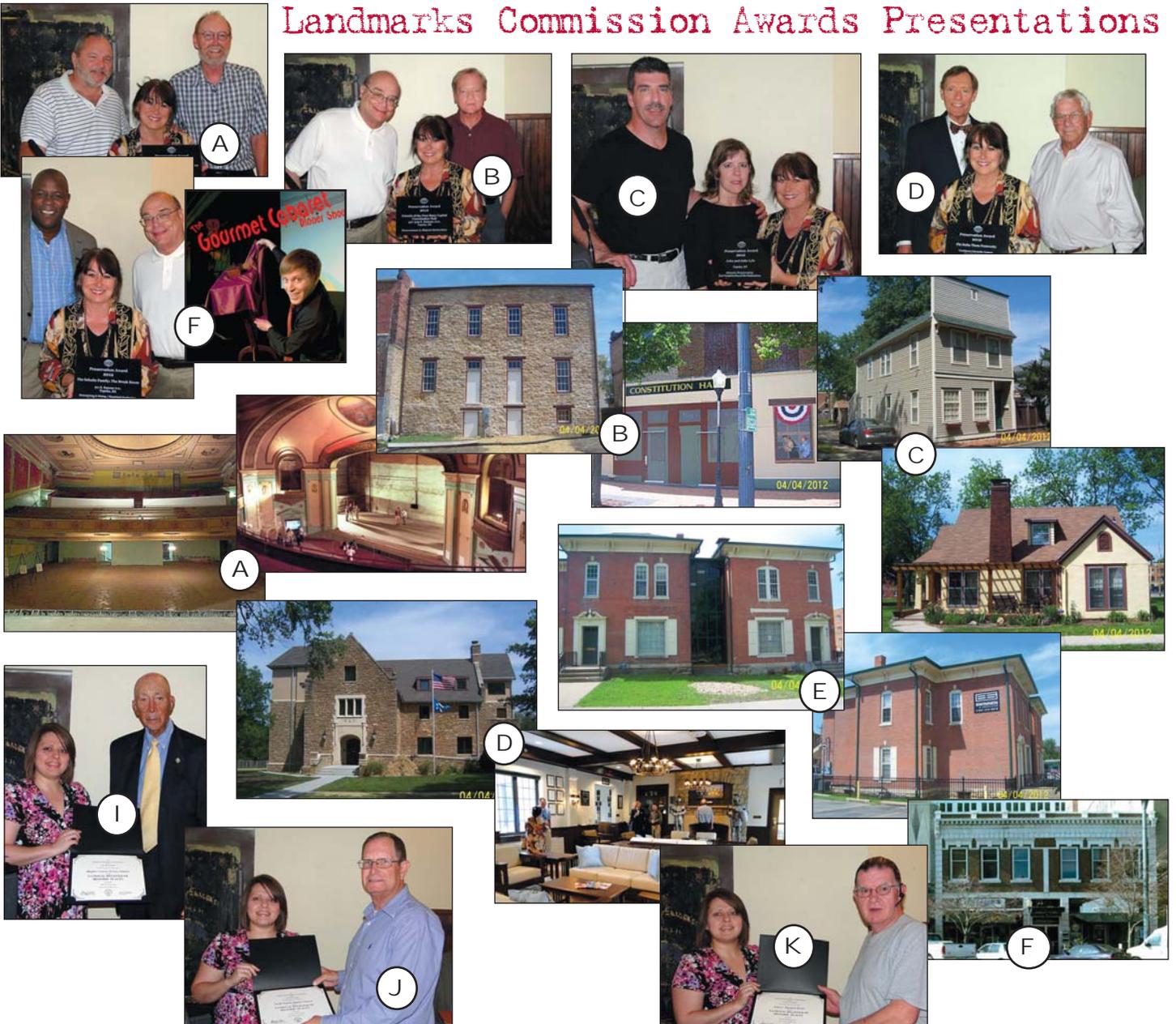
In planning for our May events, I was constantly shocked by how many people are unaware of the Shawnee County Historical Society—who we are, where we are, what we do. There seems to be a general awareness of the Ritchie Houses and a general awareness of the Preservation Awards. As we look toward the second half of this year we need to contemplate all the possible collaborations and opportunities for visibility that might appear. Name recognition not only furthers our fundraising but helps us serve our mission.

The more people understand, the more they want to join our ranks.

This is an exciting time for Shawnee County and for the SCHS. We have built up momentum and our job is to keep moving forward! Make it your personal goal to recruit someone to the society. We need a broader geographic representation as well as some young blood to keep us lively and relevant (not to mention to do the heavy lifting!). So when you are out recruiting, be selective! Get more of the same kind of quality folks we are so proud to count among our current members!

Go forth and conquer!

2012 SCHS Preservation Awards & Landmarks Commission Awards Presentations



2012 SCHS Preservation Awards & Landmarks Commission Awards Presentations

by *Carlton Scroggins*, Preservation Committee Chair

On Sunday May 6th, the Shawnee County Historical Society (SCHS), in conjunction with the Topeka Landmarks Commission, held their 6th Annual Awards Presentation Ceremony. The event is held every year in May, which is National Preservation Month, usually at an historic venue within Shawnee County. Along with the Shawnee County Historical Society's Annual meeting in December, the Awards presentation ceremony is one of our organization's defining events. This is our opportunity to celebrate and recognize those individuals who are working hard in our community and selflessly giving of themselves in order to maintain, preserve or restore our essential historic and unique edifices and landscapes. In doing so they contribute to insuring that the distinctive and historic character of our community is protected and will be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

This year's event was held in the beautifully restored **Historic Thacher Building** at the **Blue Planet Café**. The Thacher Building is owned by **Jeff Carson** who also runs Gizmo Productions on the second floor.

The Thacher Building received a SCHS Preservation Award in 2011.

With approximately 50 people in attendance as well as local press coverage, the SCHS and Topeka Landmarks Commission presented several awards and certificates. Shawnee County Historical Society President **Debra Bisel** served as Master of Ceremony, with **Jeff Carson** giving an overview on Gizmo Productions. **Stacey Keller**, Chair of the Landmarks Commission presented certificates for 2011 Landmark Designations, while I, as Chair of the SCHS Preservation Committee, presented six Preservation Awards. It was an enjoyable afternoon filled with many moving testimonies of personal fulfillment and sometimes strife, which were unique to each individual's or group's preservation efforts.

A good time was had by all and we all left feeling a little "richer" for having shared in the exchange. We thank all who attended and look forward to seeing everyone back next year! *Tell a friend!* Below is a list of the Award recipients and their Award:

- A **The Historic Jayhawk State Theatre**: "Persistence in Historic Restoration Efforts"
- B **Constitution Hall, Friends of the Free State Capitol**: "Perseverance in Historic Restoration Efforts"
- C **John and Julie Lyle**: "Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Revitalization" (The Elmhurst Neighborhood)
- D **Phi Delta Theta Fraternity**: "Preservation of Historic Property" (Washburn Campus)
- E **Benoit Swinnen**: "Adaptive Reuse of Historic Property" (917-921 S. Topeka Blvd.)
- F **The Schultz Family**: "Maintaining & Dining/Theatrical Production Excellence in an Historic Building" (911 S. Kansas Ave.)

The Topeka Landmarks Commission Presentations

Local Landmarks Designations - **William Crosby House**, 1109 S. Topeka Blvd., home of William Crosby, founder of the Crosby Department Store in Downtown Topeka. The home is currently used as the local headquarters of the Kansas State Nurses Association.

National Register of Historic Places Recognitions

- G **William Crosby House**, 1109 S. Topeka Blvd.
- H **ATSF Motive Power Building**, 1001 NE Atchison Street
- I **Hughes Conoco Service Station**, 400 SW Taylor Street / **Edwin Hughes** accepting
- J **North Topeka Baptist Church**, 123 NW Gordon Street / **Darrell Linquist** accepting
- K **John C Harmon House**, 915 SW Buchanan Street / **Garth Combs** accepting

Tu. & Th., June-Aug, 10AM/2PM

Public walk-in tours for the **Historic John Ritchie House** at 1116 SE Madison will be every Tuesday and Thursday at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. during the summer months, June through August. Special tour times may also be arranged by calling SCHS at 234-6097.

The **Great Overland Station Museum**, located in Topeka's former Union Pacific Railroad Station, 701 N. Kansas Avenue, is dedicated to celebrating the rich history and heritage of Topeka and the State of Kansas. The Museum is also home to the Kansas Hall of Fame, the All Veterans Memorial and the Corridor of Flags.

The mission of the **Kansas Hall of Fame** at the Great Overland Station is to recognize great leaders, innovators, historical giants, artists and entrepreneurs who have a direct connection to Kansas and who have made significant contributions to our state, the nation, or the world.



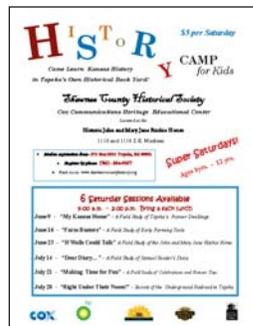
The 2012 Laureates:

- ▶ **Governor Alfred M. Landon**
- ▶ **Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum Baker**
- ▶ **Cyrus K. Holliday**
- ▶ **The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway**
- ▶ **Edward Asner**
- ▶ **George Washington Carver**
- ▶ **William Allen White**

The Kansas Hall of Fame at the Great Overland Station will hold a **Ceremonial Induction Gala** on **Friday, June 15, 2012**. See their website for more information. [www.greatoverlandstation.com] **An exhibit celebrating the lives of the inductees will run through July 15, 2012.**

Like Ice Cream/Music?

SCHS is planning a **Summer Ice Cream Social**. Mark your calendar for Sun., Aug. 5 @ 7 p.m.! Santa Fe Band will play for us live. Come. Enjoy!



Summer plans include **Kids' History Camp "Super Saturdays."** Camps will be held Saturdays in June and July. Lessons target kids ages 8 through 12. Each camp costs \$5 per child. A mail-in registration form is available on our web site, linked from the

Education page [<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/orgs/schs/>], or call the Society at 785-234-6097.

Camps will feature:

June 9, "My Kansas Home" We'll study the building materials of the homes of our first settlers in Topeka and investigate a log cabin, sod house, frame house and stone house, hands-on. We will use primary source documents as evidence for a follow-up, completing our investigations by examining artifacts found in or around the John Ritchie house.

June 16, "Farm Busters" We'll welcome special guests as we study lives of early farm families in Kansas. We'll discuss the weather and other hardships affecting early area farmers. We'll try out several early farm tools and use primary source documents as follow-up to complete our study.

June 23, "If Walls Could Talk" We'll study the John and Mary Jane Ritchie House as an artifact and investigate its special parts that tell us stories. We'll discover why Mr. Ritchie made certain decisions concerning its building, why this home still stands, and why preserving important buildings is important. We'll also examine artifacts uncovered at the Ritchie House and study primary source documents as a follow-up to complete our study.

July 14, "Dear Diary..." We'll study the diary of early settler Samuel Reader, and entries covering the territorial days of Kansas. Special guests will direct us in military marching drills and insights into a soldier's life as a member of the volunteer free-state militia, like Samuel's. We'll also create diary pages with watercolor paintings, again like Samuel did. We will examine a miniature log cabin, a small replica of Samuel's home in Indianola, and follow-up with primary source documents to complete our study.

July 23, "Making Time for Fun" We will study community celebrations and children's toys like those enjoyed by our ancestors during the 1800's. We'll investigate how children once made toys by making toys of our own, and examine antique toys and how children played with them. Primary source documents will be used as a follow-up to complete our investigations.

July 28, "Right Under Their Noses!" We'll study the Underground Railroad in Topeka and Missouri, concentrating on activities of John and Mary Jane Ritchie and their friends. We'll reenact the true story of Reverend Lewis Bodwell as he led a family of escaped slaves to freedom. As a follow-up, we'll use primary source documents to complete our investigations.

SCHS Biography: Joseph C. Miller Topeka's First Industrialist

by Douglass Wallace, SCHS Board Member

The stories of Cyrus K. Holliday or Charles Curtis or Georgia Neese or Alf Landon or Karl Menninger are well known. However, with this “mini-biography” on **Joseph Miller**, the Shawnee County Historical Society’s Newsletter begins a new series on the lives of lesser known men and women who played a part in developing Shawnee County and Topeka—

Technically not a Topeka founder nor one of its wealthier residents, Joseph C. Miller nevertheless enjoyed status as an early leading citizen. His obituary, perhaps the closest account to a biography, appeared in the May 10, 1879, *Topeka Daily Capital*:

Squire Miller, by which name he was best known in Topeka and vicinity, died about five o’clock yesterday evening, at the residence of his son Joseph....

Mr. Miller was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in the month of December, 1820,¹ and was therefore past fifty-eight years of age at the time of his death. He lived on a farm in the southern part of Rhode Island until he was eighteen years old, and then took up his residence in Providence, where he learned the tinner’s trade. After learning the trade he carried on business there for himself until early in the spring of 1855, at which time he took his departure for Kansas. He was one of the early settlers of this city, opened the first tin shop and hardware store in Topeka, and under some trees near the bank of the Kansas river he made the first tin ware that was ever made in the State. This was early in April, 1855. He was also the first Justice of the Peace for this town, and before him the first city officers were qualified. It was before him that General John Ritchie was tried and acquitted for the shooting of [U.S. Marshal Leonard] Arms. He held the office of the Justice of the Peace at the time of his death, having been elected at the recent city election. Mr. Miller was a leading member of the Baptist church; also of Topeka Lodge No. 40, I.O.O.F....

That same day’s *Commonwealth* added:

“His wife [Sarah] died some three or four years ago. He leaves two children, Joseph Miller and Marion, the wife of Hiram McArthur....”

Miller left Boston, bound for Kansas Territory, on March 13, 1855, as a member of the New England Emigrant Aid Co.’s first spring party for that year.² Under the leadership of Charles Robinson, the conducting agent, the group arrived at Kansas City on March 24th. The Rhode Island native then reached the young settlement of Topeka around April 1st. The hamlet then consisted of a handful of shakes and semi-permanent log structures; thus, Miller initially set up his business on the banks of the Kaw. In his diary³ entry for May 4, 1855, he noted: “Fixed me a sort of bench under a shady tree and manufactured a few articles of tin ware”—Topeka’s first industrial venture!

Two weeks later, May 17th, he described the town’s



Topeka’s Constitution Hall, 1855

first social, a picnic barbecue: “In good time the fair sex, of whom there were a good number began to assemble, accompanied by those made of courser material, the table (50 ft. Long) was soon spread with rich viands [food, victuals], which creaked & groaned beneath its load of dainty food, there was the mammoth fish, who but the night previous reveled & gamboled [frolicked] in freedom midst the murky waters...now stretched at length on huge platter prepared to grace the festive board. A barbecue & other like substantial food came in for their fare share of attention. A large pyramid cake graced the center of the table surrounded by

other minor cakes, from the apex of which as if a natural production a rich profusion of prairie flowers shot forth their smiling petals....”

Miller gave one of many toasts that day celebrating the occasion: “*Our Territory*—May she soon become united as a free State, among the bright constellations that form the stars and stripes of our glorious Republic.”⁴

During 1855, the tinsmith and his family lived on the first floor of the Farnsworth brothers’ Constitution Hall, Topeka’s first permanent, stone structure.⁵ He probably conducted some business there including tin work in the basement. At the same time Miller commenced construction of his own dwelling and store, a brick structure on 6th St., close to Kansas Ave. (the site is believed to be where the old National Bank of Topeka Bldg. stood, and prior to that the Mulvane Bldg.).

Throughout this turbulent period of Bleeding Kansas and then the Civil War, Joseph Miller participated in local affairs and the military. When the so-called “Wakarusa War” broke out in November, 1855, Topekans rushed out forming a guard unit to protect Lawrence; Miller was a private. At the time of the Battle of the Blue in October, 1864, when a Confederate army threatened the border, he served again as a private in Co. E of the 2nd Kansas Militia. While other Topekans fought in the battle, his unit guarded the roads from Missouri.

Possibly his greatest contribution came as Justice of the Peace, at the time of Topeka’s first “crime of the century”: John Ritchie’s killing of U.S. Deputy Marshal Leonard Arms.

During the “summer of troubles” on the Kansas frontier in September, 1856, Ritchie joined in several raids on Proslavery towns (like Tecumseh) and the skirmish at Hickory Point in Jefferson County. Pursuant to these activities, territorial officials arrested Ritchie and others for robbery and murder. Ultimately, as ten-

sions eased, he and fellow Free Staters saw the indictments dropped or were pardoned. Out of “annoyance or revenge” thought Fry Giles, Deputy Marshal Arms arrived in Topeka on April 20, 1860, to re-arrest Ritchie on the old charges. At the latter’s home, the confrontation escalated, leading to the shooting and killing of Arms.⁶

Ritchie immediately surrendered to Justice Miller, who scheduled the trial for the next evening. Three attorneys stood for the prosecution and three for the defense, among the latter Topeka’s second mayor Lorenzo Dow and future United States Senator James Lane. A special edition of the *Kansas State Record* dated April 23, 1860 carried the trial’s transcript. The verdict was reached about midnight that same evening, and Giles recorded Joseph Miller’s judgment in full in his Topeka history⁷:

I have had the matter under consideration since the commencement of the trial, and believe that I realize the importance of the position that I occupy, and that I have endeavored carefully to scrutinize the evidence with that candor and impartiality which the subject under consideration so justly demands, and after fully weighing the evidence with all the ability which my poor, feeble nature possesses, have come to the honest conclusion, in view of my responsibility to my God, my country, and myself, that John Ritchie has committed homicide, but one justifiable in the sight of God and man. This being my honest conviction, the court deems it to be its duty to acquit the prisoner at the bar, charged with the murder of Leonard Arms, and discharge him from the custody of the law.

The *Kansas State Record* simply noted: “The decision of the Court was given about mid night, in Mr. Miller’s firm, calm, clear and distinct manner, and was received by the crowded audience with great demonstrations of joy and universal satisfaction.”⁸

Important as his role in Topeka’s civic life was, Joseph Miller also became deeply involved in its religious

Kansas State Record
Feb. 11, 1860

Joseph C. Miller, cont.

and cultural affairs. On March 1, 1857, four interested settlers and two missionaries met with Sarah and Joseph Miller in the basement of their home on 6th St. to organize the community's first Baptist church. Quite likely they held services there from time to time until 1862 when the Baptists occupied a hall above Miller's new brick store at 191 Kansas Ave. Local Baptists met there until completion of their first permanent home at 9th and Jackson.

Little more than a year after the town's founding, a small band of Topeka residents organized a literary or cultural society called the Kansas Philomathic Institute (aka, the Philomathic Literary Society). They published regularly in 1856 a paper or "magazine" entitled *The Communicator*. Presumably handwritten, Joseph Miller was its editor. The following year Maria Merrell Martin, wife of Dr. Samuel Martin, edited the journal, renamed *The Prairie Star*, which consisted of poetry and prose including essays and a brief Topeka history.⁹ Unfortunately, copies of Miller's publication were lost, along with the Society's library, in the Ritchie Block fire of November 28, 1869.

About his friend and fellow Free Stater, Topeka historian Fry Giles recalled¹⁰:

Mr. Miller came to Topeka from Connecticut [sic] early in the spring of 1855, and established himself in the tin and hardware business. He gained the respect of the few people then in Topeka, and as his character in subsequent years became fully known, the town bore to him the kindest sentiments of regard. A quiet, unobtrusive man, his heart was always right and his hand was always ready. He occupied positions of trust from time to time, and then the people never feared for results. He was fearless and outspoken in denunciation of all wrong; an abolitionist, of course, never seeking disputations, and never shirking responsibility.

He was, under God, the power that founded the Baptist church in Topeka, and for many years its greatest support. We are unable to call to mind any family among the early settlers of Topeka who did more to correctly mold the moral sentiment than did Joseph C. Miller, Esq., and his wife Sarah.

**Current western facade,
Constitution Hall**



¹ Some sources give the date as December 28, 1821.

⁸ For a brief account of that party, see Louise Barry, "The New England Emigrant Aid Company Parties of 1855," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. XII, no. 3, August, 1943, pp. 227-236. Several members settled in or near Topeka including Loring Farnsworth who would become Topeka's first mayor and builder of Constitution Hall.

³ The Joseph C. Miller diary is found in the Ms. Division of the Kansas State Historical Society library.

⁴ For the full account of the party, originally published in the *Lawrence Herald of Freedom*, May 26, 1855, see *History of the State of Kansas*, vol. I, A.T. Andreas, 1883, pp. 539-540 (1976 Atchison County Historical Society reproduction).

⁵ Loring Farnsworth recalled in a manuscript dated December 4, 1880, at the KSHS about his building of Constitution Hall: "Somebody moved into the basement, and had a meat shop, Joseph Miller and his family moved into the first story, I should think. Watters, a kind of geologist boarded with Miller." His reminiscence is found in *The Capital's Storied Capitols*, SCHS Bulletin No. 85, 2011, pp. 31-37. The Miller family could have resided in Constitution Hall as late as the winter, early spring of 1857; George A. Root, "Chronology of Shawnee County," SCHS Bulletin No. 11, June, 1950, pp. 30-31.

⁶ See Mary Ritchie Jarboe, "John Ritchie..." *John Ritchie: Portrait of An Uncommon Man*, SCHS Bulletin No. 68, 1991, pp. 35-38; also F.W. Giles, *Thirty Years in Topeka, A Historical Sketch*, Geo. W. Crane & Co., Publishers, 1886, pp. 138-143 (chapter titled "The Homicide of Arms").

⁷ Giles, p. 142.

⁸ On an earlier occasion, Miller presided over the case of a Jefferson Co. man charged with perjury and then assault on the deputy who had served that person with a warrant. For that story, see "Arrest and Stabbing," *Topeka Tribune*, March 31, 1859, p. 3.

⁹ For a discussion on the Institute and excerpts from *The Prairie Star*, see John W. Ripley, ed., *The Prairie Star, A Journal of the Kansas Philomathic Institute For 1857*, SCHS Bulletin No. 62, 1985, 138 pp.

¹⁰ Giles, pp. 354-355.

For more information about Constitution Hall, visit. <http://www.constitutionhalltopeka.com/>

Ramblings & Tidbits

by **Jeanne Mithen**, SCHS Trustee and Reference Librarian, Topeka Room, Topeka & Shawnee Co. Public Library

► **“Who were they? Incidents from the old days,”** by Edna Becker. SCHS Bulletin 34 (July 1960), p.34:

Fourth of July was always a festive occasion. There was a picnic with ice cream, lemonade, patriotic speeches and a band. Usually there were all kinds of contests and races such as the sack race, three legged races, nail driving contests, for old and young alike, and somebody always caught the greased pig. Everyone went and had a wonderful time.

Most of the girls had new dresses or at least new hair ribbons. This incident concerns a girl’s brand new dress. She had spent a great deal of time making it and it was pretty—all ruffles and flounces. She starched it carefully, but it didn’t stick out enough to suit her. Then somebody told her to try sugar water, for it made fabric very stiff. She did and the effect was ravishing. Never did a dress stick out like this one did.

She went to the picnic proudly, but, alas, the day was hot and she perspired quite a bit. As usual there were many flies around. They loved her sugar-water dress and swarmed around her until finally she became so embarrassed that she had to go home—a sadder and a wiser girl.

► **“First Passenger Train to Reach Topeka,”** by Nancy Veale Galloway. SCHS Bulletin 34 (July 1960), p. 32:

The first regular passenger train to reach Topeka arrived on January 1, 1866. It was met by a band and a crowd of 600 Topeka citizens. A cannon fired the welcoming shots. Senator James H. Lane, who was with the superintendent of the road, and a party of newspaper men on the train, made a speech. Following the speech, toasts to the occasion were drunk in champagne.

By mid-March, 1866, the track for this road had been extended to Silver Lake, ten miles west of Topeka.

On May 31, 1868, this road became known as the Kansas Pacific Railway, and later, on January 24, 1880, it was consolidated with the Union Pacific Railroad Company.

► For a little more than a year, from September 1887 to the fall of 1888, Topeka had a street

transportation system that used steam engines. The news was received with dismay. People said horses would be frightened, children killed and adults maimed for life by the puffing monsters.

Two weeks after the opening the company couldn’t handle all its business. The first electric railway car was April 15, 1889. In the year between the two systems, horse-drawn cars were used. People who had urged horses instead of steam decided that horses were not so good, after all.

► from an essay by Zula Bennington Greene, in SCHS Bulletin No. 40 (Dec. 1963):

Around the early years of the century [1900] New Year’s receptions were the social events of the year. Gentlemen got into dress suits, silk hats, gray gloves and escorted their equally resplendent wives in carriages on a round of calls.

Refreshments were served by pretty girls. One hostess said she usually served wild turkey or prairie chicken, coffee, rolls, cake and frozen custard. Ice cream was not easily obtainable. Lists of hostesses were printed in the paper and friends were asked to call. No mud was too deep, no blizzard too blowy, to keep the callers at home.

► In 1886 the assessor found 648 “pleasure carriages” in Topeka, which then had a population of 25,005. Strangely, there was exactly the same number of gold watches—no doubt many were modest about admitting the possession of a gold watch. But there were 790 pianos. A piano can’t be slipped into a pocket.

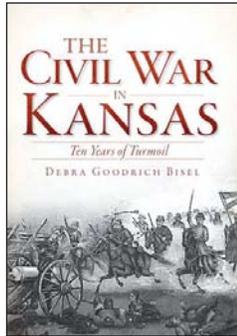
► The home at 935 SW Western was built circa 1888 for John E. Frost, land agent for the ATSF, and designed by Seymour Davis, Kansas State Architect. It was added to the Kansas Register of Historic Places in 1986. From about 1933-1942, it was home of Clark’s Secretarial School. The Pomeroy family bought the home in 1946. Charles K. Pomeroy has owned it since the 1980s, and done much of the restoration work. He has used it as his residence, law office and tax preparation office, although there is no current listing for it in the Polk City Directory as a business or home.



You Need to Know...

- ▶ **The Civil War Roundtable of Eastern Kansas** will be meeting at the Hale Ritchie House on **May 31 at 6:30 p.m.** Deb Bisel will be speaking on her book, *The Civil War in Kansas: Ten Years of Turmoil*. She will have copies of her book for sale. (The total is \$19.60 including tax.)

This is free and open to the public. The CWRT of Eastern Kansas is a group of individuals who enjoy studying the Civil War and is a varied lot with varied levels of expertise. Some are historians; some are history buffs. The dues are \$15 per year and help support expenses for speakers. Meetings are held September through May, usually at the Kansas State Historical Society.



- ▶ **SCHS was pleased** to receive this **antique spring wagon** from the estate of the **Reverend Richard Taylor**. Rev. Taylor, who died at the age of 87 on Friday, Feb. 10, 2012, was instrumental in binding the Historical Society with the Ritchie properties, 1116 and 1118 SE Madison St., Topeka. This carriage will be an attraction to visitors at our Ritchie sites, and may make appearances elsewhere throughout Shawnee County in days, weeks and years to come. Learn more about Rev. Taylor and his local history interests at <http://cjonline.com/news/state/2012-02-18/appreciation-life-rev-richard-taylor>
- ▶ **Robin Shrimplin**, SCHS Education Consultant, gave tours of Ritchie properties in April to the sixth-graders from Cair Paravel and also to all third-graders from Wanamaker Elementary.
- ▶ **Melinda Abitz**, Educational Program Developer, has been busy promoting the History Camp “Super

Saturdays” program for the months of June and July and is working on lesson plans for the Camp and lining up volunteers and guest speakers. Melinda is creating a script for future docents, who will start tours in June, and is continuing to learn about the capabilities of the Learning Center’s electronic Smart-board. She is often on-site at the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center at the Hale Ritchie House, answering the telephone (785-234-6097) and scheduling any public meetings.

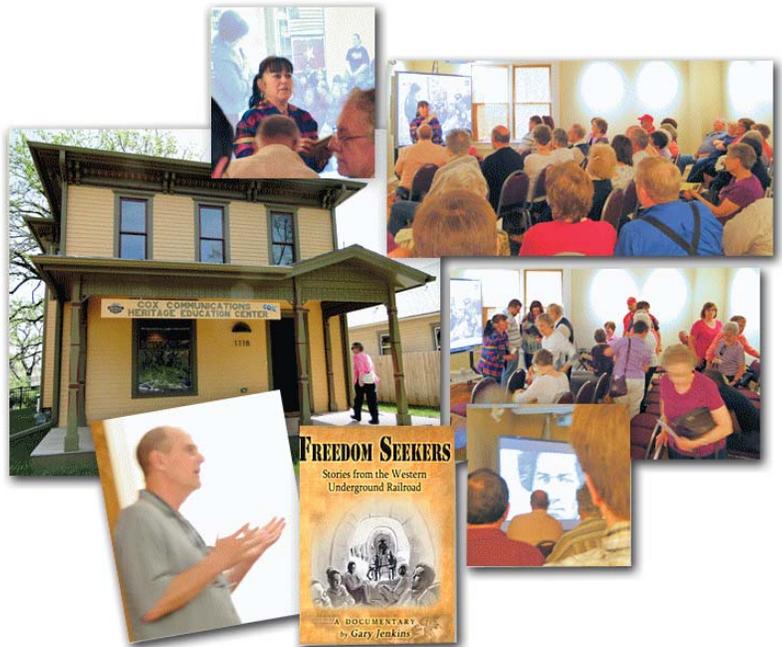
- ▶ **SCHS plans to market certain items** donated toward fundraising this summer with an on-line auction service. We’d again like to thank our generous donors for items sold in our recent sale.



- ▶ **Member Doug Mauck** is researching his theory that tracks of the **Oregon Trail** are visible in the fields and undergrowth of MacLennan Park, south and west of Cedar Crest near I-70 at Fairlawn Rd. “I’ve been taking groups on walking tours of the trail at MacLennan Park. I’m making believers! Ward-Meade Farm was established in 1854 ‘on the Oregon Trail.’ The Ward Meade farm is almost a mile west of Papin’s Ferry, so the Union Ferry Branch of the Oregon Trail ran down 1st Street past the Ward-Meade farm. The place where the trail enters MacLennan Park is approximately where 1st Street would be if it extended to Fairlawn. “I’ve been finding more artifacts on the trail traces: a hand brake assembly from an old horse drawn wagon. I also recently found the hook from harness traces. Travel on the Oregon Trail must have been one big long maintenance problem!”

Freedom Seekers—area premiere

Freedom Seekers: Stories from the Underground Railroad was shown on Sunday, April 1, 2012. This was the area premiere of **Gary Jenkins**'s 75-minute documentary telling stories of the dangerous escapes by Missouri slaves held in bondage and thrilling adventures of Kansas Conductors and Stationmasters. Undercover activities of William Quantrill, the gun fight at the Wakarusa Valley cabin of Joseph Gardner, The Immortal 10, forged slave passes and many more previously untold stories of the Underground Railroad were included, as was footage of abandoned Quindaro, Kansas, ruins where many Freedom Seekers hid in cellars, wells and hidden rooms. For more information on Jenkins and his films, visit <http://lifedocumentaries.com/>



Area Baseball History

You are invited to visit a new web site, “The Kansas Baseball History Project,” at www.kbh-project.com/

The site has ties to local history through searches of the city of Topeka and of Shawnee County. For example, there are reports about major league players with local ties, including short notes about their ties to specific communities, and gravesite data to show where players are buried in this area. Reports on history of minor league teams are also included. Site manager **Jan Johnson**, of Topeka, welcomes news from knowledgeable sources to help grow this site.



New Signage

The Cox Communications Heritage Education Center at the Hale Ritchie House, 1118 S.E. Madison, Topeka, is sporting a new identification sign, with the construction help of **Daryl Nickel**. Daryl was in charge of renovation construction at Hale Ritchie, finishing his work last year. The new sign made its debut at the April showing of Freedom Seekers [see photo collage to see our sign hanging in place].

History After School

@ **Stout Elementary School**, led by **Robin Shrimplin**

The Society is proud of its educational programming, ongoing projects spanning recent years. Robin Shrimplin was back at Stout Elementary this spring with “History After School.” Curriculum included:

- ▶ April 2-6 “**Native Americans**”
- ▶ April 9-13 “**Native Americans**” *cont.*
- ▶ April 16-20 “**Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery**”
- ▶ April 23-27 “**Lewis & Clark and the Corps of Discovery**” *cont.*
- ▶ April 30-May 4 “**Pioneers and Kansas Trails**”
- ▶ May 7-11 “**Entertainment in Pioneer Days**”

Mark Your Calendar! For more information read "Member Doug Mauck..." p.9

Oregon Trail Heritage

Thurs., June 14, 2012 / Meet @ 5:30 PM
Cedar Crest Parking Lot, One Cedar Crest Rd.

Member **Doug Mauck** will host a walking tour of what, through research, he believes to be one leg of the Oregon Trail, on public park land @ Cedar Crest Park.

Come stand in trail ruts!

Historical Highlights

June 2012

William Weymouth was architect for **Free State Constitution Hall**, 427-429 SW Kansas Av., Topeka.

Claricia Mize is his great, great, great, granddaughter, by wife Sara. Claricia is often a welcome guest at historical recognitions in the Topeka area, including the Society's recent 2012 Preservations Awards event.

When William died, fairly young, Sara, much younger than he, remarried to John Ritchie's close friend Harvey Rice. When Harvey died, she married into the family of Parker's Opera House. She kept the original cabin on her town property just behind the site that is now Downtown YMCA, in back of her newer house made of stone. Her will specified that the cabin should be removed to her farm, in care of her farm renter. It's not yet clear as to the exact location of her farm, or where remnants of the cabin might be found.

from Chris Meinhardt, promoting conservation of Constitution Hall



→
Tidbit



P.O. Box 2201, TOPEKA KS 66601-2201

*Lighting Freedom's Pathway;
Building Heritage Culture*