Museum Construction Resumes

Work is scheduled to resume on the Paul and Ann Milburn Center for the Pottawatomie County Historical Society in early June. John Patterson, Architect for the facility, completed the detailed drawings for the building in early May. The City of Shawnee issued a building permit on May 18. The steel for the roof and exterior walls has been fabricated so that the building will quickly be visible to the general public. We anxiously wait to see the results. Garner Construction Company is managing the construction of the new facility.

Bring Your Family, Friends, and Visitors to Museum This Summer

There is much to be seen and enjoyed at the museum in the former Santa Fe Depot this summer. The Lady’s Waiting Room on the south side of the museum continues to feature a replica of downtown Shawnee during 1941-42. Models of most of the significant buildings are located along Main and other streets. The three train stations are represented with impressive models prepared by Dawson Engle and Kenneth Epley. Model trains triggered by motion sensors begin to travel around the tracks when visitors walk around the display.

The main room has many displays including “Buddy”, the Alaskan brown bear whose hair has turned light tan over the years. The antique player piano donated by Mrs. and Mrs. James Harrod features many piano rolls that museum staff will be glad to play for your enjoyment.

The Baggage Room has themed displays plus an ongoing slide show of historical photographs. The Express room on the north side of the building features additional train exhibits with an opportunity for young people to handle the controls. Another train exhibit will be installed this summer. A pony pulling a fire wagon can be a bouncy ride for young folks when someone puts a dime in the coin slot.

Members of the Wunagisa Chapter of the DAR worked this spring to refresh the furnishings in the Beard Cabin located north of the museum. On request, tours of the cabin may be arranged.

The museum is open on Tuesday through Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM.
Shawnee and Pottawatomie County continue to Enjoy the Benefits of the 1930s Federal Programs

You may have noticed that the stamp on the envelope is a WPA poster replica produced by the Post Office to commemorate that Federal program that built so many facilities in the county. Following is a summary of many projects that the city and county received:

To construct a new courthouse, the county issued $175,000 in Federal Bonds and received a $50,000 federal grant. The facility was dedicated July 3, 1935.

A new program, Civil Works Administration (CWA), provided grants totaling $181,740 in 1933-34 used in Shawnee for sanitary sewers, storm sewers, streets, parks, the cemetery wall and other smaller projects.

A 1936 Shawnee city manager report showed that the Public Works Administration provided a grant of $210,000 and the city issued bonds of $555,000 to construct the dam on Deer Creek to create Shawnee Lake #1 and piping from the lake to the filtration plant. In addition, a PWA grant of $61,363 plus $75,000 in city bonds funded the City Auditorium on the north end of Bell Street in downtown.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) replaced the CWA. Shawnee received funds that were used to provide additional storm sewers, pave streets, construct a sewing room (later used as Teen Town in Rotary Park), construct the swimming pool in Woodland Park, build tennis courts throughout the city, construct the high school football stadium and improve the water filtration plant.

Jefferson Elementary School, which was destroyed by a tornado in 1924, received an addition to its replacement building. The building plaque indicates “First Federal Public Works Project in Oklahoma.” See photo below:

1934 Addition to Jefferson School

Other towns and schools in the county received grants including the Tecumseh High School Gymnasium, Tecumseh water plant, Tribbey School Home Economics Building, Earlsboro High School Shop Building, McLoud High School Home Economics Building, Wanette School Gymnasium and additions to eight other county schools. It is estimated that in 2017 dollars, nearly $30,000,000 in grants benefited the county. A significant number of the projects are enjoyed by Pottawatomie County citizens today.
Museum Attendance May 2016 through April 2017

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In addition to visitors to the museum, the Facebook membership has grown to almost 4,700 members with more added each day. Thanks to Ken Landry for regular posts of historical photographs and items of interest about Pottawatomie County History.

Three Members Added to Board of Directors

Three members have been added to the Board of Directors of the Pottawatomie County Historical Society:

Gary Akin, President, Brooks Construction Company, Shawnee
Lynn Allredge, retired Certified Public Accountant
Melissa Dennis, Pottawatomie County Commissioner, District 1

In addition to the above directors, the board consists of Tom Terry, President; Mark Schneiter, 1st Vice President; Teresa Burnett, 2nd Vice President; Dr. Tom Henry, Treasurer; Bobbie Donat, Secretary; Robert Currie, Corresponding Secretary; and Lisa Hefner, Ann McDonald, Joi Grissom, Sara Epley, Bob Perry, Jim Lynn, Judith Michener, Sam Vasquez, Dorothy Cooks, Dr. Clay McLaughlin, Dawson Engle, and Kelli Mosteller. Ken Landry is Museum Director. The Historical Society Bylaws provide for a maximum membership of twenty-one, the current size of the board.

Museum Wish List

HP 24” Printer to be used for museum signs $1,000
Printing supplies, i.e. paper & cartridges 200
General Office Supplies 200

*Special thanks to Ms. Ruth Horn and to Finley & Cook for past donations for the Wish List items.*
Volunteer Spotlight: Ms. Sheila Riffle

Sheila has been a blessing to the Pottawatomie County Historical Society and Museum. With her assistance and dedication, we are one step closer in getting all the old Deed of Gifts and records entered into the software database.

Sheila was raised in Shawnee. She attended Irving Elementary and went on to graduate from Shawnee High School in 1970. Sheila got married after high school and had 3 kids; 1 girl and 2 boys. She was a stay at home mom until she decided to go to college. She graduated from OBU in 1996 and got a job in Texas as a 1st grade teacher, where she taught for 16 years, retiring in 2012. She and her family moved back to Shawnee about a year and half ago. Sheila loves Shawnee and wanted to be a part of keeping Pottawatomie county history alive so she started volunteering at the museum in April 2016.

If you would be interested in volunteering at the current museum or the new Paul and Ann Milburn Center, please contact us at 275-8412 during museum hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm.