

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS



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FEBRUARY 2007

- Year In Review -

"Shawnee Shindig"

On October 23, 2005, the SCHS presented the "Shawnee Shindig". This event was a fundraiser for the Society and was at the Florentine Room of the Jayhawk Tower, 700 Jackson, Topeka, Ks. Participants were encouraged to come in historic costume. Besides refreshments, the program included the following:

Vocalist **Mark Camacho**,
accompanied by **Nancy Goodall** on piano

Commemoration of the "150th Anniversary of the Convening of the Constitutional Convention for the Free State Constitution" at Constitution Hall - Topeka
delivered by **Ramon Powers**

An Impression of Fry Giles by Re-enactor **Allen Jones** - "Anniversary of the Election Relocating the County Seat from Tecumseh to Topeka"

Historical Musical Presentation by the **Blue Potatoes** from Washburn University

Prizes for best costumes were donated by Hillmer's Leather and Gifts

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - DECEMBER 2005

BY DOUG JONES

It's been a busy year for the Shawnee County historical Society. There was the Foundation Day event in January at Washburn University, the Historic Preservation Awards Ceremony in May at the Sixth Street ballroom (Odd Fellows Hall), The Shawnee Shindig on October 23 to honor the 150th anniversary of the Convening of the Constitutional Convention for the Creation of the Free State Constitution at Constitutional Hall, Topeka, and to honor the Anniversary of the election to move the county seat from Tecumseh to Topeka (special thanks to Betty Paxson and Betty Bomar for all these events). The Society also participated in the Awards Ceremony for the winners of the Kansas History Day competition. During the annual Trustee retreat in February and subsequent Executive Committee meetings, a Five Year Plan was developed for the Society. This will be reevaluated each year at the annual trustee retreat. The Society's website has been considerably expanded and updated (special thanks to Carol Yoho and David Pownell). Check it out - www.shawneecountyhistory.org. Soon to be distributed will be a map of Shawnee County and Topeka during the Territorial Period with points of interest marked and described (special thanks to Doug Wallace and his collaborators). Our new publication, "Historic Shawnee County" by Spencer Duncan is available as a limited edition. It is very nicely done. Get your copy while they last, folks. It would make a great gift. The Society has been working throughout the year with the Friends of the Free State Constitution to endorse and support their efforts to save Constitution Hall - Topeka at 427 - 429 Kansas Avenue. Sometime in 2006, there will be an event to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Disbursement of the Free State Legislature by Federal troops. The Society is actively participating with the 29 other counties in Kansas that are involved in the effort called Freedom's Frontier, a national heritage area around the theme of Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom. A bill

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to designate this area as a National Heritage Area has passed one house of the Congress in Washington and is expected to be presented to the other house in 2006. The Society has "Brought back" to our newsletter and our website the "Endangered Structures of Shawnee County", an effort originated by Historic Topeka prior to the merger of our two groups. Also, there is a recently-formed Ad Hoc Committee that will be investigating the possibility of getting the county government to pass a mill levy for historic preservation. This has already been done in numerous other Kansas counties, and this could have a far-reaching effect on preservation efforts in the future. I could go on and on, but I'll stop for now. I want to thank everyone for their efforts in this past year, and I want to encourage others to get involved. There is plenty of work to be done. I apologize if I have left out some of this year's activities. I want to give a huge "thank you" to all of you that I have not mentioned by name in the above report who have stepped up to the plate with your time and energy this year. I really appreciate your help. Let's do even more in 06. **Doug Jones**

SCHS Annual Meeting - 2005

The SCHS Annual Meeting for 2005 was held Sunday, December 4, 2005 at the Central Congregational Church at 1248 SW Buchanan. The theme of the meeting was "Secrets of the Underground Railroad". The program consisted of the following:

- * Shiloh Baptist Singers - Dickie Bennett, Herbert Barber, Bob Hollie, Don Oden, Thomas Nickerson, with Tony Arrington, pianist
- * Bill Wagnon (substituting for Allen Jones who was ill) reading memoirs from Pastor Lewis Bodwell's involvement in the Underground Railroad.
- * Heritage Roundtable Panel - Underground Railroad
 - * Moderator - James Hill - Midwest Coordinator of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom-National Park Service, Omaha, Ne.
 - * Judy Sweets - Underground Railroad Assn. Douglas County
 - * Dennis White - Underground Railroad Assn. Jackson County
 - * Michael Stubbs - Underground Railroad Assn. Wabaunsee County
 - * Carol Cook - Riley, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee Counties, Alma teacher

2006 SCAS Trustees

Jack Alexander - term ending 12/06	Walt Hillmer - term ending 12/08
Jack Wiseman - term ending 12/07	Rowena Horr - term ending 12/06
Annie Spiess - term ending 12/08	Frances Hollie - term ending 12/06
Betty Bomar - term ending 12/07	Dennis Vasquez - term ending 12/08
Doug Jones - term ending 12/08	Bill Wagnon - term ending 12/07
Matt Tomlinson - term ending 12/07	Dorothy Hill - term ending 12/06
Bryce Benedict - term ending 12/08	Betty Paxson - term ending 12/07
Marcia Saville - term ending 12/06	

2006 SCAS Officers

President - Doug Jones
 Vice President - Anne Spiess
 Treasurer - Matt Tomlinson
 Secretary - Betty Bomar

On April 1, 2006, The SCHS called a press conference and held an event at the Ritchie House, 1116 SE Madison. The purpose of this event was to honor Rev. Richard Taylor, Frank Rice, and Gene Schroer.

In the early 90's, the Ritchie House had been approved for demolition. Rev. Taylor got involved to try to save the property, and persuaded Mr. Rice and Mr. Schroer to donate the Ritchie property to the Shawnee County Historical Society for restoration. These efforts continue to this day. It was a pleasant spring day, with a great turnout for the event.

A plaque describing the events that "saved" the Ritchie house was unveiled, and Rev. Taylor, Frank Rice, and Gene Schroer were honored for their commitment to saving this property and the story behind this property for all to enjoy.

Historic Preservation Awards

On Tuesday, May 9, 2006, the Shawnee County Historical Society hosted its annual "Historic Preservation Awards" during National Preservation Week. The event was held at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library. The program included presentations about the State Capitol Building by Greg Allen, Barry Greis, and Vance Kelley. Greg spoke about the Free State Constitution-"In the Beginning". Barry's talk was about the 1866 Capitol Building-"Foundations in Stone", and Vance's presentation was about the renovations currently taking place at the "People's Building". A good crowd was on hand, and all three presentations were excellent. This year's Historic Preservation Awards were given to the following recipients:

Don and Nova Cottrell for the Curtis House, 1101 SW Topeka Blvd.

Marshalls Band - Todd Manning and Rick Baker for CD compilation of historic music

David Leamon, Anderson and Edith Chandler, and Sherwood Smith for the Chandler Library Pavillion

Kansas Auto Dealers Association for restoration of 731 Kansas Avenue

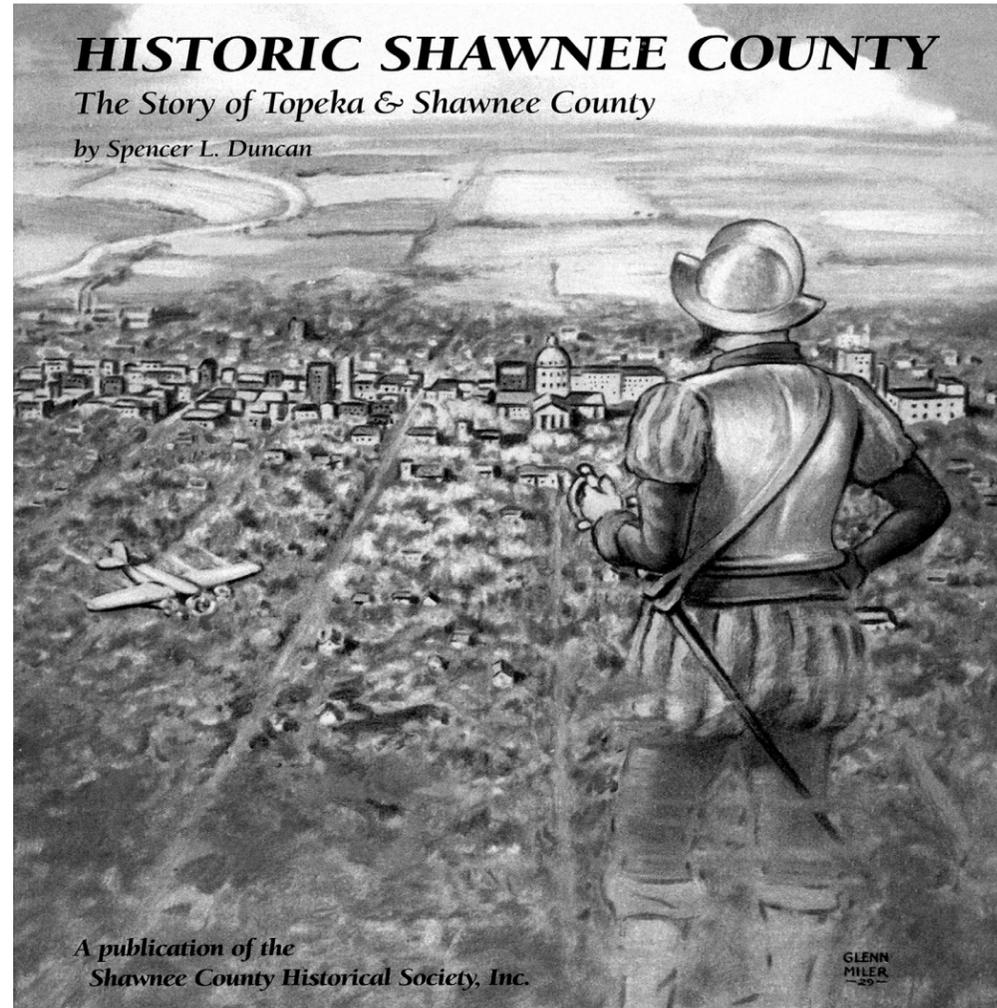
The Pioneer Group (accepted by Rick Kready) for restoration of Curtis Junior High School

Rev. Richard Taylor - Lifetime Preservation Award for his involvement in many historic projects

Hillmer's Leather and Gifts provided gifts for the presenters.

The SCHS wants to compliment the Friends of the Free State Constitution for their event commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Dispersion of the Topeka Legislature. This event was held on Monday, July 3, 2006 at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library. Special remarks were made by Judge Terry Bullock. This event was also to dedicate the Constitution Hall Mural at 427-429 Kansas Avenue. Volunteers from Washburn University and Topeka's art community were led by local artist, Cally Krallman. This mural depicts the Dispersion of the Free State Legislator and other period history.

Limited Edition - Get One while they last



**PRESIDENT'S REPORT- 2006
BY DOUG JONES**

I have very much enjoyed my tenure as the President of the Shawnee County Historical Society and look forward to continuing my involvement with the Society. We have been very active over the past few years, but I want to admit one failure. I have not done my job in getting out the Newsletter on a regular basis. I want to apologize for that. Other than that, I feel that our Society has gained momentum and has gotten involved in many good projects, as evidenced by the items in this newsletter. I want to discuss one other very exciting project that we have been involved in. I have been attending monthly meetings for the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area for about two years. The bill has just passed both houses of Congress and has been signed by the President designating 29 counties of Kansas and 12 counties of Missouri as a National Heritage Area, based on the theme of the Enduring Struggle for Freedom. This is a **BIG DEAL**, for Kansas and Missouri. Heritage Tourism has become a tool of economic development for many communities. I am also involved in a subcommittee that is designing "theme tours" for bus tours, but also for family tours to the many sites relevant to Freedom's Frontier. We are on the verge of the sesquicentennial for the Civil War, and many travelers will be traversing our area in search of history and our stories. Also, coming soon will be our 2006 bulletin, "Constitution Hall - Where Statehood Began". On December 3, 2006, the Society held its annual meeting at the Historic Curtis House. Many thanks to our generous hosts, Don and Nova Cottrell, who have done a wonderful job of restoring and caring for the Curtis House. Also, thanks to Betty Paxson for additional refreshments. Nova gave a presentation on the life of Charles Curtis and on the restoration that she and Don have done to the home. If you have not been there lately, you should go see it at 1101 SW Topeka Blvd. It is one of Topeka's treasures. As a last comment, I would encourage all of you to get involved. It doesn't have to take a ton of time - we will take whatever time you have to give. Volunteer for one of the committees, volunteer for any organization in Shawnee County that needs your help to promote interest in history, and give some of your time to help make our county a better place to live. OK, I'll quit now. Thanks for being a member of the Shawnee County Historical Society.

Historic Shawnee County - The Story of Topeka and Shawnee County

by Spencer L. Duncan

\$39.95 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

To order, mail this form to:
Shawnee County Historical Society
PO Box 2201
Topeka, KS 66601-2201

Hurry & order now to get yours before they run out!
Makes a nice gift for the history buff

2007 Officers

**President - Anne Spiess • Vice President - Betty Paxson • Secretary Betty Bomar
Treasurer - Matt Tomlinson**

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

**Doug Jones
Editor**

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