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Check out
this winter's
program
schedule.
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Fall
programs
were a big
draw.
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Resolve to enjoy history

The dawning of a new year often brings hope of a brighter future. And in Shawnee County, we've been resolving to put forth the effort since at least 1876.

That year had the earliest mention of New Year's resolutions in Topeka newspapers. The Daily Commonwealth offered a cautionary tale of the fellow who resolved to stop chewing tobacco. He flung his box out the door, then tried everything from cloves to gum to replace the habit. On the fourth day he was on his knees in the yard, searching for the box of tobacco.

That was a common theme 100 years ago – quitting smoking. But no one was expected to see that particular resolution through.

A.A. Rowley a Topeka poet, offered this advice in the Topeka Mail in 1894 for those who would resolve:

Resolve to be satisfied during the year;

Resolve to quit kicking; resolve not to sneer;



OVERWHELEMED

In this cartoon from the Jan. 10, 1910, Topeka State Journal, Dorothy asks her friend: "So you are not going to make any New Year's resolutions?" To which May replies: "No. I fully meant to make a few. But when I announced my intention the members of my family had so many suggestions to offer that I grew discouraged."

Resolve that you'll look on the bright side of life;

Resolve not to mourn if you don't win the strife.

Rowley concluded his list: *Resolve to be honest; resolve to be true,*

But not to quit smoking –

you won't if you do.

Advice from the Kansas State Democrat in 1913 might sound today: The newspaper urged readers to resolve to shop local merchants.

"If you have been sending

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From the President's desk

Bob Keeshan

Resolve not to miss these great programs

A bad pun answers the question, "What is a New Year's resolution?"

"Something that goes in one year and out the other."

Notwithstanding this I have made two New Year's resolutions. The first resolution is the proverbial lose 20 pounds (which I annually fail). The second resolution is to work with our wonderful Shawnee County Historical Society board to have a wonderful year of programs and events.

We are off to a great start and have the following events already scheduled with program chair Christine Steinkuehler:

Jan. 14 – Jeff Carson will lead a tour of the **Jayhawk Theater**, which last year received a \$5 million grant from the state to restore the original 1926 interior. Work is slated to begin soon, so it will be several months before the theater will be open again.

This will be the only winter program not at the Cox Center, 1118 SE Madison. All programs begin at 3 p.m.

Jan. 21 – Sara Neiswanger has written a children's book that covers the many highlights of the life and career of **Cyrus Kurtz Holliday**, who was the first chairman of the Topeka Town Association and went on to be involved in everything from the Santa Fe Railway to the construction of the Statehouse.

Jan. 28 – **Steamboats** didn't have a long history on the Kansas River, but it was certainly interesting. Ken Gott will talk about the boats that carried goods and passengers on the Kaw.

Feb. 4 – Doneta Colbach will tell us about the media company **Newtek**, which created cutting edge technology for mixing video for online use in 2005 and is still going strong.

Feb. 18 – Chris Ridley, Washburn Rural teacher, has written a book about WRHS football coach Ron Bowen and the seasons Bowen led the team. Chris will talk about Bowen and other **WRHS sports lore**.

Feb. 25 – Pete Stauffer is a grandson of Oscar Stauffer, who founded a **media empire** that included The Topeka Capital-Journal, broadcast properties including WIBW, and Capper Publications.

March 10 – Long before there were Unified School Districts, Shawnee County communities and parents made sure their children received an education. Robert Chitwood will talk about **schools in Shawnee County**.

March 17 – Last year's **Show and Tell** brought some amazing finds to the Cox Center, from artifacts to detailed histories. Bring your photographs and memorabilia – and your stories – to share.

The Shawnee County Historical Society is always looking for interesting programs and presenters.

Let us know what subjects you would like to hear about, historic authors you would like to see and programs you would like to present. Do you have homes or areas you would like to see on our annual historic homes tour?

The SCHS also honors each year the individuals and groups in Shawnee County that have contributed significantly to preserving our history. Let us know who you think is deserving of a historic preservation award.

You can send an email with your ideas and other comments to shawneecountyhistory@gmail.com.

Resolutions have a long history

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your money to mail order houses and receiving sham bargains it is time to wake up," the newspaper said. Buying local not only meant you could see the goods first hand, you would be saved the annoyance of complaining via letter, the Democrat noted.

"...Every dollar spent at home means better property values, better local government, better schools for your children and an air of real home town friendliness."

Listen closely

Newspapers a century and more ago were full of dispatches from other publications – local news often didn't appear until the third or fourth page. The Topeka Daily Press had a lively article on the topic of resolutions, the "Special New York Letter," in its edition of Jan. 6, 1894. It noted: "I have been told that if you listen attentively at night you can hear a strange rustling noise which is made by the new leaves that were turned over on New Year's being turned back again."

It has been 24 years since Y2K, when the calendar turning over from years starting with 19- had everyone worried the world would come to a halt as computers tried to deal with "2000." The new millennium was celebrated Dec. 31, 1999, by most people. But purists waited until the last day of 2000 to welcome in the new

century, maintaining that the first year must be 1, not zero.

When does it turn?

At the turn of the last century, there was little debate in Topeka as to when it actually began: Jan. 1, 1901.

Gov. W.E. Stanley, though, pronounced the new century's beginning as Jan. 1, 1900.

"Let us hope that the dawn of the new century will be bright with the hues of promise; that its sun will rise in an unclouded sky, and that some of its earliest and brightest beams will fall on Kansas," Stanley wrote in his New Year's message, published in the Topeka Daily Capital.

On Dec. 31, 1999, a gala was held at the Statehouse to welcome the new millennium.

A Twentieth Century Inaugural Fete at the city auditorium was held Dec. 31, 1900. Maj. Tom Anderson was tapped to play Father Time and carry out the old year. It was his job to ring 12 times at midnight the old fire bell.

The evening opened with entertainment, followed by a ball. Guests could watch from the balcony for 25 cents or have full floor admission for \$1. Attendees' names were to be recorded for posterity, with the list put in the care of the Kansas State Historical Society.

Attendance was much lower than expected, but all the names were recorded. The newspaper even described

some of the ladies' gowns.

A century ago

As they welcomed 1924, the American Building & Loan Association in Topeka wished everyone a prosperous new year. The advertisement in the Kansas State New defined their blessing:

"That means we wish you a happy new year, for to be happy, one needs to be prosperous."

The Nebraska Farm Journal, published by Capper's in Topeka, provided a sentiment good for any year. Contributing editor John Logan said: "I hope the new year will treat us, one and all, a little more kindly than we deserve."

The Security Benefit Association had a monthly publication that went to 250,000 subscribers in 1924. The message from editor Harvey F. Songer urged everyone to look forward:

"Turn over to a new page. We're through with 1923. Whether it shows a record of triumphant achievement or the blots and blurs of failure, the account is closed. Only from the lessons the year has taught can it be of service to us now.

"The new year, with the wondrous possibilities of its 366 golden days, lies before us. What will its record be? We can make of it what we will. Let us step across its threshold with high ideals and with a determined purpose to make it the best year of our lives..."

Fall programs prove popular

Fall programs included a tour of Historic Topeka Cemetery in September, the Historic Homes Tour in October, and a visit to the Museum of the Kansas National Guard in November.

More than 50 people toured Topeka Cemetery, led by cemetery Superintendent Lisa Sandmeyer and Andrea Etzel with the Friends of Historic Topeka Cemetery.

Five mid-century homes were open in October for the SCHS's annual fund-raiser, the Historic Homes Tour. After touring homes, ticket holders were invited to the Sunflower Foundation to tour the renovations there and hear a presentation from Ann Vigola Anderson, who writes "Posts of a Mid Century Kid."

Tour-goers in November learned more about the Mu-



Visitors gather on Mausoleum Row to begin a tour of Topeka Cemetery.

seum of the Kansas National Guard, which tells the story of the 160-year history of citizen soldiers in Kansas and their role in the nation's military conflicts.

The annual meeting was Dec. 3 at the Topeka Country Club

and featured Dale Dennis, a 53-year veteran of the state Department of Education. He talked about the status of education in Kansas from the standpoint of state funding.

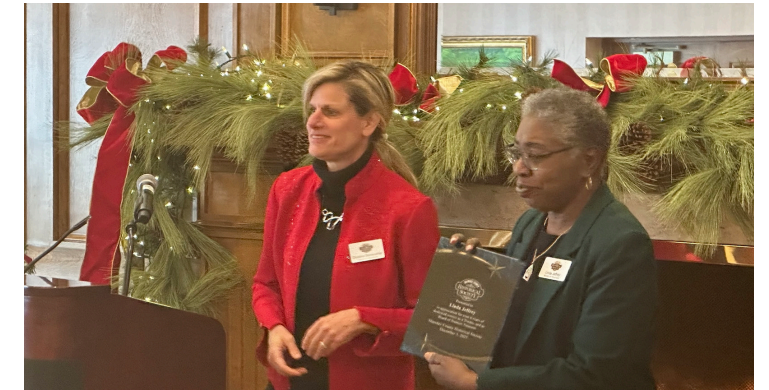
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Left: Docents help with interpretation at one of the stops on the Historic Homes Tour in October. Above: Ann Anderson presents her stories of what it was like to grow up in the 1950s and '60s in Topeka at a reception following the homes tour.



Left: Tour-goers learn about the history of the Kansas National Guard during November's tour.



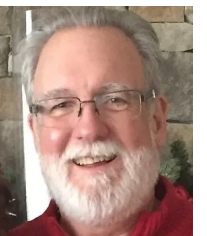
Above: Board president Christine Steinkuehler thanks Linda Jeffrey for her years of service to the board as treasurer. Linda completed her term on the board in December.



Left: Dale Dennis presents a view of education in Kansas as interpreted by how the Legislature funds it at the 2023 annual meeting.

New members

The annual meeting also is where new members are accepted. In 2024, Kem Sloop and Terry Beck are joining the board of trustees.



Kem Sloop

Calendar

If your site has programming about Shawnee County history, SCHS will include it in the website calendar of events and the newsletter.

shawneecountyhistory@gmail.com

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The Shawnee County Parks & Recreation is sponsoring these events in January and February:
The Poor Asylum, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 10, Shawnee North Community Center, 300 NE 43rd St. Learn the history of the Shawnee County Poor Farm. This presentation explores the park's history, beginning with its roots in the Civil War until its doors closed in 1942. \$5 per person

Over the Hill, 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 13, Shawnee North Community Center, 300 NE 43rd St. Delve into the remnants of the Shawnee County Poor Farm, including the original building, barns and even the former cemetery. Please dress for weather. There will be stairs. \$3 per person

Healing Topeka: Historic Hospitals, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7, Hillcrest Community Center, 1800 SE 21st St. Join us as we journey through time, uncovering the evolution of Topeka's hospitals and why the Capital City was once called "the psychiatric capital of the world." Discussion includes the Menninger legacy, Topeka State Insane Asylum, Security Benefit Hospital, and the Hillcrest Sanatorium. \$5 per person