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LHS News

A Newsletter for Members & Friends of the Lenexa Historical Society
March /April 2001
Volume 19, Number 2

The President's Corner....

Thanks to all of you who supported the annual LHS Soup Luncheon. It was another successful day; lots of money was raised and those attending had a chance to eat well and see old friends. Pat Lierly and Rita Debrabander did a wonderful job organizing the event, with able assistance from Mary Kay Smith and a host of other volunteers.

As you know, our LHS project for this year is the restoration of the Caboose at Sar-Ko-Par Trails Park. Board member Rick Hoffman is in charge of the project and will be looking for suggestions for ways to raise money for the project. If you have ideas, contact him.

Now that we are no longer responsible for running the Legler Barn Museum, LHS will have to focus on other historical projects in Lenexa. We will continue our "historic sites" designation program, as well as outreach to the schools. We will also continue to hold our annual Spinach Festival in September. However, I am seeking your input on new areas of historic interest in which LHS may wish to become involved.

I hope to see you at the general meeting!

Jim Spaith
LHS President

New Members

We extend a hearty welcome to our new members who have joined during the past several months:

Becca & Jim Coleman
Ann Foster, Diana Foster
Helen L. Gabberd
Wilbert & Judy Miller

Meet Johnna Lingle

Johnna Lingle is one of our newest Board Members. However, she is not new to serving the general public. Johnna has over 30 years of continuous public service. She has served as a Johnson County, Kansas, Commissioner, Mayor of the City of Lenexa, first Executive Director of the Lenexa Chamber of Commerce, City Clerk of Lenexa, owner of a private business of marketing & public relations, and co-owner of a custom cabinet business. The drive for restoration of the Legler Barn began while she was Mayor.

We welcome Johnna's thoughtful expertise!!

March General Meeting

Lenexa United Methodist Church
Program by Dr. Donald Inbody: "Bible in Pocket, Gun in Hand" (religion on the frontier)

7pm, Thursday, March 29, 2001

Refreshments after business meeting

Love & the Annual LHS Soup Luncheon

By Ernestine Johnson

Valentine's Day morning began bright and early at the Lenexa Community Center as members of the Lenexa Historical Society brought in everything from delicious cherry cheesecake and chocolate brownie pie for desserts, to warm, buttery cornbread and crackers to be eaten with ham and bean or hot steak soup at the annual hometown soup luncheon.

It was a busy day for all members of the organization who planned well, and then worked in some instances far into the night before, to finish the last pot of soup to take to the community center kitchen and be served to the eager 11am crowd. By 10:30 townspeople formed a line halfway across the community center. There was a warm, bustling feeling, as friends saw each other across the room and quickly exchanged hugs, pats on the back, or warm handshakes. No one wanted to eat in a hurry and leave in a rush. This was a day to catch up on what has happened in friend's lives since they met the last time.

As Lenexa has grown, and lives have become busier than ever, there are few occasions when neighbors have a chance to really "visit". The soup luncheon is one of these times, and many historical society members as well as other long-time residents show by their friendly faces that it is very important we do not lose this occasion for togetherness.

If you are one who missed this year's real "community" soup luncheon we hope you will put it on your calendar to come next year and see your neighbors. Or, even meet someone who will become a new friend, and a possible member of the Lenexa Historical Society.



Read this!!

By Jenn W. Hunter

The All-True Travels and Adventures of Liddie Newton By Jane Smiley, 1998

When I had mentioned to a friend of mine that I wanted to learn more about local history but couldn't be bothered reading a textbook, she recommended Jane Smiley's *The All-True Travels and Adventures of Liddie Newton*. Although the title may imply fact, it's actually historical fiction that reads like a diary. Writing in first person, the protagonist, Liddie, gives an account of her experience as she travels from Quincy, IL to Lawrence, K.T. (Kansas Territory) in the 1850's, a time when the Kansas-Missouri conflict was at it's peak.

Liddie herself is everything a proper woman in the 1850's should not be. She can't cook, bake or sew and would rather swim in the river and shoot a gun than clean the house or wash clothes. She also rides horses astride, can bait a hook and catch a fish, and carry on a lively debate. In other words, she's a tomboy, perfectly suited for the adventures that lie in the recently opened Kansas Territory. Liddie and her new husband, Thomas, a Yankee abolitionist, travel by steamboat and wagon, secretly transporting a box of Sharps rifles to his fellow abolitionists who are already in Lawrence. Liddie and Thomas join these Free-Staters unaware of the perils that await them. Their adventures truly begin once they arrive in the territory where border ruffians abound, who are "worse than animals, merciless fiends that have no thoughts in their heads except of the most brutal sort".

If you're interested in local history and want an exciting and well-researched novel to read, I highly suggest this book. Go on an adventure with Liddie as she witnesses the political and social upheaval of one of the most ferocious conflicts in Kansas history. Share the fear and courage of a young woman as she takes on the challenges of her time. Several copies of this book are available through the Johnson County Library.

Love Stories mini By Peggy Stanton

The winners of the "Be Mine: Valentine's Day Love Story" have been selected. Ann Childers of Lenexa submitted the most romantic Valentine's Day story. She told of how on Valentine's Day, 1944, in the midst of World War II, her young husband conspired with a buddy, whose mother was a florist, to deliver a beautiful purple orchid to his lonely wife in the states. Ann said she, "couldn't stop the tears...for his thoughtfulness and the love expressed...and for a buddy's mother who in those war years found an orchid for a lonely wife." For sharing her story, Ann will receive a \$25 gift certificate to Bo Lings Restaurant.

The second place prize, a floral bouquet, is awarded to Anne Hohman of Olathe. Her husband brought her four roses on Valentine's Day, 1994. "Only four?" Anne thought. Her husband's reply, "I bought one rose for each of the children we will have together." The Hohman's are now the parents of three children; "only one more rose to go."

Shelley Lapin of Overland Park receives a box of candy for sharing a poem her husband composed for her in 1990 while he was serving in the Persian Gulf, and a letter he wrote to their then unborn child. To his "Baby L" Mr. Lapin writes of Shelley, his wife and the yet-to-be-born baby's mother, "We both should thank God that we have her, shouldn't we?" He signed the letter, "I love you, Pappa."

The Legler Barn staff and volunteers thank all who were willing to share their beautiful and powerful stories of love. We wish the winners well as they enjoy their prizes.

Suzanne Steinle guessed closest to the correct number of candy hearts in the candy jar. She receives the jar filled with 445 candy hearts.

For attending the soup luncheon and visiting the exhibit, *Be Mine: Valentines and Their History*, Paul Pegram receives a potted plant. All prizes were awarded following the close of the exhibit on February 28, 2001.

Coal Mining in the Kansas City

Area, a temporary exhibit exploring the life of the Midwest coal miner, opens March 10, 2001. This exhibit is the result of research done by Don Rogers of Overland Park, Kansas. All the artifacts are his, also.

Mr. Rogers' father mined coal in a mine near the northwest Missouri town of Camden. Although his father quit mining when Mr. Rogers was a young boy, he has memories of eating the left-over pie his father would bring home with him from the mine.

Coal mines were located throughout northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas. At Lansing, Kansas, inmates worked a coal mine on the penitentiary grounds. Coal mines were located at Leavenworth in Kansas and at Lexington in Missouri. There was even a mine at Rosedale in Wyandotte County.

This exhibit will feature carbide lanterns and canary cages, lunch buckets and hard hats, and information on a coal mine, operated by a Mr. Gallagher, and located near 43rd and Indiana Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri.

Don't miss your opportunity to learn from this exciting exhibit that runs from March 10 through May 30.

Kansas Trivia Quiz by Walt McKenzie

1. What was the first state to prohibit ALL alcoholic beverages?
 - a. Missouri
 - b. Iowa
 - c. Kansas
 - d. Montana
2. All national basketball hoops (metal rims) are manufactured in what Kansas town?
 - a. Lenexa
 - b. Dorrance
 - c. Manhattan
 - d. Kansas City
3. Douglas County KS is named for:
 - a. Kirk Douglas
 - b. County Douglas, Ireland
 - c. Stephen A. Douglas
 - d. Douglas County, New York

(answers on last page)

For Big-Time Fun, Come to the Gandy Dancer's Ball

by Katie Evans

The Gandy Dancer's Ball will be Saturday, November 3 at the Holiday Inn—Lenexa. The evening will be filled with excitement, entertainment and fun! Not all decisions have been made about all the activities that will take place that evening. What is certain is that it will be a chance for all metro residents to dress in elegant evening clothes and have a good time while learning about Lenexa's history.

The black tie event will begin with dinner. The Ball committee has discussed having a menu that would simulate a typical meal served around the time of Lenexa's founding in 1869. Other ideas that have been discussed, but not decided upon, are: period dancing, historical characters giving a brief history of Lenexa, a short slide presentation of Lenexa history, and contemporary dancing.

The Gandy Dancer's Ball is the most ambitious fundraiser LHS has planned for a long time. If successful, it will eliminate the need for smaller fundraisers we usually have throughout the year, if that's our members' wish. Right now, the Ball committee consists of Jim Peterson, Doug Bartley, and Katie Evans, with lots of help from Carol Brown, Holiday Inn—Lenexa. She is the Director of Catering and Special Events. But, we need more ideas! We welcome your help. If you would like to be in on the ground-floor planning of this exciting special event, call Jim at 648-2043, Doug at 541-8267, or Katie at 268-4606.

The purpose of the Ball is two-fold: first, to bring attention to the mission of the Society and to show the public that LHS is a fun and interesting organization that they will want to join; second, to raise funds to be used in three ways:

- To underwrite the preservation of land and historic buildings in Lenexa
- To restore the Caboose
- To establish an interest-earning endowment from which the Society will operate

The Ball committee envisions the establishment of a one-million dollar endowment over the next ten years. A goal of raising \$100,000 at each Ball has been set. Part of the money will come from per-plate

donations, but the bulk must come from civic-minded local corporations that believe in the value of our mission.

It would be helpful if any LHS members that know corporate executives or have a contact within a company, could use that contact to elicit financial support for the Ball. To meet our goal, we will need the help of many LHS members as well as the community. If you can help, it would be appreciated.

MEMBERS PASSING

LHS member Mary Lois James died February 10 in her sleep at the age of 97. Dr. James had a distinguished career of teaching and family counseling at Russell, Ks, Akron, Oh and Caldwell, New Jersey. She moved to Lakeview Village in 1976 and was the first person elected to the Lakeview Village Volunteer Hall of Fame. Service to others was her lifelong goal.

Longtime LHS member Elza Sics died February 22 at the age of 67. She was born in Latvia and came to the United States in 1956. Three sons survive Elza, one of whom, Aivars Sics, lives in Overland Park. Elza loved flowers and gardening and enjoyed working in the LSH herb garden.

We in LHS extend our heartfelt sympathies to both the Sics family and the James family

Myths & Customs

by Sharon Hammontree

In America and also in England (UK) it is traditionally believed that a young girl is able to tell what sort of man she will marry by the first bird she sees on Valentines Day. Each bird has an association with a profession or type of character. But yellow birds in general are thought to be extremely lucky if seen in flight or perched nearby on this day. The following mystical birds are traditionally identified with St. Valentines Day.

Dove....a good man
 BlueBird....a happy man
 Robin....sailor, nautical
 Goldfinch....a rich man
 Blackbird....clergyman or priest-spiritual
 Sparrow....farmer, agricultural, of the country
 Crossbill....an argumentative man
 Woodpecker....no husband (!!)

Need to call an Officer/Board Member?

President

Jim Spaith.....631-2502

President Elect

Bob Lillie.....888-1476

Vice President

Mary Kay Smith.....888-0144

Secretary

Walt McKenzie.....888-0666

Treasurer

Norman Keech..... 648-0438

Board Member

Rick Hoffman.....894-0279

Board Member

Johnna Lingle.....268-8468

Answers! to Kansas Trivia

1. Kansas
2. Dorrance
3. Stephen A. Douglas

Correction: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Schweiger were incorrectly listed among our member's deaths in the last issue. It should have been Ralph and Elsie Schweiger.

Next **LHS News** deadline
will be 2pm on Saturday,
May 5th.

From Rita DeBrabander & Pat Lierly, Soup Luncheon Co-Chairs..... The LHS Soup Luncheon was again a success. The total profit was \$1911. Thanks to all LHS members and friends for the great support. The Soup makers, the bread and dessert makers did as outstanding job. The tables looked like we were having a party! We were, and the guests were great. It took many workers to make this a wonderful event. You are all appreciated! We also thank HyVee and Lipton Company for their donations, and the City for use of the Community Center.

LHS News is published by the Lenexa Historical Society.

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