

# Historical Highlights



## President's Message

It was a great day, in spite of the inclement weather, this July 3rd as we gathered at the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center to dedicate the newly constructed "Freedom's Pathway Flame Monument". This impressive marker now stands as a strong reminder of the commitment your society has to fulfill its mission by instilling an understanding of the important role Shawnee Countians have played in the "rebirth of freedom", a central theme of American history. Boston may have its "Freedom Walk", but we have our "Freedom's Pathway" that was just as critical to our nation's development. The path that runs between the restored John and Mary Ritchie Historic House, the Statehouse and the Brown v. Board National Historic Site showcases the successive "rebirths of American freedom" played out here from the 1850s through the 1950s that will no doubt continue into our future. Our dedication ceremony was enhanced by the presence and comments from many of our pathway partners that included: Sherda Williams, Superintendent of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic



SCHA President, Dave Heinemann

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### Special points of interest

- Upcoming Events are listed on page 6.
- Renew your 2016 membership today!

## President's Message Continued

Site; Mary Madden, Director of Museum and Education Programs, Kansas State Historical Society; and, Jim Ogle, Executive Director of the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. Mayor Larry Wolgast praised the activities of SCHS and our partners and reviewed the main street revival taking place that complements our work. Mayor Wolgast and our community leaders should be commended for their dedication, vision and ongoing hard work that is truly turning our downtown community, that encompasses our Freedom's Pathway, into an historic and thriving place everyone will want to visit and perhaps even live. Many statues have already been erected to honor historic local figures, such as Cyrus Holliday, Arthur Capper, Harry Colmery, and Charles Curtis, with more to come. Many of the planned pocket parks have been completed. The good news is that the list of enhancements continues to grow and add to the splendidly refurbished state capitol building and other historic structures that have been preserved like the Dillon House.

The new "Freedom's Pathway Flame Monument" would have not been possible without the work of many people. The leadership of Bill Wagnon, chair of our Landmark Preservation Committee, was instrumental, with the help of his committee members in the completion of this project. A special thanks goes to those individuals named later in this newsletter who donated the funds for the monument. Please take the time to view the monument when you are in the vicinity.

A special note of appreciation must be expressed to Glenn and Claire Swogger who, through their Redbud Foundation, recently awarded the SCHS a grant of \$30,000 to be used over two years for a part-time grant writer to help place your society on a stronger financial footing as we work to meet our growing program needs. You will hear more about this later as we proceed to implement this grant.

Again this year, a big "Thank You" must be extended to the Topeka Santa Fe Band for providing an outstanding performance of their

march music at our 4th Annual Ice Cream Social that was held on August 14th. The band, which has had a presence in our community since 1924, also led us in the singing of "Happy Birthday" to one of our honored guests, former Mayor Charles Wright. Earlier this year, during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the June 8, 1966 tornado, Mayor Wright's leadership during that tragic event was highlighted by Bill Kurtis and others at the Twist of Fate event held at Washburn University. Mayor Wright celebrated his 97th birthday this August 17th.

Finally, as I close, I must take the time to extend my thanks to John Pinegar for being my fact checker. Some of us, other than politicians, can use one too. You may recall that in my last message I recounted how when I began my service in the Kansas legislature in 1969 I became curious about why a huge white cross that was behind my apartment near Burnett's Mound came to be placed there. I found an inscription on the marker stating that it was given as a memorial for those who lost their lives in the tornado of June 8, 1966 and that it was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Dana L. Hummer in memory of their daughter Nancy. I mistakenly thought that Nancy had been one of the tornado victims. The truth is that Nancy, a student at Washburn University, tragically died of an illness on August 12th of that same year. Chief Hummer and his wife Louise were able to memorialize their loss and our communities' loss with this cross marker that was later moved to the Topeka Cemetery where it shares space with a fountain and

## Get Published

Besides becoming a member, there are many other ways you can help your Shawnee County Historical Society. Have an idea for our publication? Want to have your own research showcased? You can send in historical research that you have done yourself to be published in our quarterly newsletter. Another way you can help is by sending in questions you would like researched for the next quarterly newsletter or suggestions for topics.

You can contact the editors of the Shawnee County Historical Society at: [shawneecountyhistory@gmail.com](mailto:shawneecountyhistory@gmail.com) attention: Historical Highlights



Topeka Santa Fe Big Band



4th Annual Ice Cream Social

Garden Chapel that were also built in honor of their daughter Nancy. It was entirely fitting that the Topeka Public Schools Foundation recently bestowed their Patron Award to Louise Hummer in recognition of the Hummers' continued generosity in helping to create the sports park endowment fund that helped to make the Hummer Sports Park possible for the benefit of today's and future generations.

## Summer Camp for Kids 2016

Shawnee County Historical Society has had another successful summer of heritage education for 3rd through 6th grade youngsters.

This year's history camp was sponsored by the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area as a way to emphasize the different ethnic groups in Kansas and specifically Shawnee County. The campers learned many of stories from different ethnic groups that immigrated to Shawnee County's in

the early settlement period of Kansas and their contribution to the shaping of our frontier state.

The History Camp for Kids, program titled, "Ethnic Communities of Shawnee County, A Melting Pot of History, Culture, and Traditions", partnered with the YWCA, Boy's and Girl's Club of Topeka, and Central Park Community Center to bring youngsters that were enrolled in each site's

### Recognition of Support

The SCHS would like to recognize Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area for helping to make the 2016 Summer Camp a great success. Their generous grant contribution ensured high quality programming for our campers.



summer camp program to the Historic Ritchie House once a week to learn more about the rich history of Shawnee County. This year's theme, proved to be of real interest to the campers. Lessons focused on early settler's immigration routes to Shawnee County, family stories of occupations, traditions, setbacks and triumphs. Campers learned of each group's contribution to communities by studying primary sources of the time. Campers experienced some historical objects as well as traditional foods from each of the ethnic groups. Presenters for this year's history camp were:

**Daria Hart and husband John Hart** –Daria, having recently immigrated from Russia gave a lesson on the history of Ellis Island. She also recounted her homeland and some traditions of Russia. Daria also explained the current process of becoming a citizen in America and made

comparisons to immigrants in the past. John joined her in a simulated experience of being a new arrival on Ellis Island. Both answered many questions and ended the lesson with a traditional type of Russian pancake which the campers enjoyed very much.

**Eileen Davis** - Having studied her family's German heritage for years, Eileen came with stories, maps, primary sources, photographs, and her German traditions. The campers learned traditional German dances accompanied by John Reb, who played his family dulcimer musical instrument, made by his grandfather. Eileen also came to share traditional bierocks with each of the campers. This new food to many campers was an instant hit!

**Sherrita Camp and sister, LaDawndra Robbs** came to share their family stories of the

## Upcoming Events:

Dec.4, 2016 Annual Meeting 2p.m.  
Cox Education Center

### YOU MAY BE MISSING OUT

... on some news and upcoming events if we don't have your email address! Since last fall, we've had an email newsletter going out once or twice a month highlighting news items and events that fall in between the print Historical Highlights issue times. We have events scheduled for each month of this year, with more to come, and they're listed in our SCHS News to Use email newsletter as they come up. To be on the list, send your email address to us at [schsupdate@gmail.com](mailto:schsupdate@gmail.com) Please identify yourself in the body of the message with your name and address. Your email address stays with us. It is used for our SCHS communications only. If you're not sure that we have a current email address for you, send it anyway and we'll check and update if necessary.

Exoduster Movement, African American immigrants coming from the South after the Civil War. Both presenters, dressed in historical attire, told of grandmothers from both sides of their family who were part of the Exoduster immigration into Kansas. Their research into their genealogy was an ongoing project for thirty years. The campers were given dried gourds which they cleaned then used as musical instruments to accompany traditional African American songs. Both sisters then told the Underground Railroad story inside the Historic Ritchie House and ended with an interactive lesson on family genealogy and the importance of learning family history. With the help of the presenters, each camper began filling out the first page of their very own family tree.

**StacieTorrez** - Stacie gave a lesson on her family's Hispanic heritage in the Topeka area and told of her family's immigration in the early 1920s. With pictures of her family as they worked for the Santa Fe Shops from their early immigration days, Stacie described her early photographs and stories of the Oakland area and of neighborhood traditions. Topeka's Hispanic "Fiesta", Topeka's annual July celebration, proved to be a favorite of the campers as many of them were familiar with the festivities. Spanish rice was served to the campers as an example of traditional food. Stacie taught basic steps to traditional dancing and the campers were able to

join in to the upbeat rhythm of Hispanic music.

**Melinda Abitz** –Even though Melinda is not of Swedish heritage, she graciously stepped in as a presenter for the lesson on Swedish immigration to Shawnee County and Topeka. The campers learned of the rich Swedish heritage of Topeka by learning of the churches and occupations that emerged from this ethnic group. Learning a few Swedish words that explained the homesickness of those early settlers, it provided an opportunity to understand why many traditions and cultural experiences still exist in Shawnee County and other communities in Kansas. Campers learned that keeping traditions alive helped the new settlers maintain their memories of their homeland and its culture. Swedish Butter Cookies fulfilled the need to satisfy a camper’s sweet tooth and after learning a few traditional Swedish dance steps, the campers (and neighbors) enjoyed a rousing Swedish dance in the front yard of the Cox Center!

### **“Rediscovering Freedom’s Pathway”**

As staff and volunteers plan for an exciting new year of school field trip experiences for area students, we would like to recognize the institutions, foundations, and individual donations from Historic Ritchie House tours that helped to sponsor our heritage programs for the 2015-2016 school year. Those sponsors were The Topeka Public Schools Foundation, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Topeka Gives, and Westar Energy Foundation. The 2016 summer heritage history camp program was sponsored by Freedom’s Frontier National Heritage Area.

We strive to support Kansas school teachers and students in helping to meet curriculum requirements for the Kansas Standards for History by providing innovative methods of experiential presentation. We offer teaching through reenactments, hands-on learning

with historical objects, and active discussions that engage young people in understanding the role of locals in America's enduring struggle over freedom. We hope to reach another level of understanding outside the traditional classroom by learning with historical places, our Historic Ritchie House.

## Dedication of the Freedom's Pathway Flame Monument at the Historic Ritchie

The flame monument dedication occurred on July 3 at the Historic John and Mary Ritchie site. Speakers at the ceremony were Bill Wagnon, Sherda Williams (Brown v Board NHS), Mary Madden (Kansas State Historic Society), Jim Ogle (Freedom's Frontier NHA) and Larry Wolgast (Topeka Mayor). Donors who underwrote the monument were:

Bill and Joan Wagnon  
 Ralph Skoog  
 City of Topeka  
 Dave Ritchie  
 Robert J. Dole  
 Dick & Dorothy Hang-

er  
 Jim & Kathy Maag  
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 Marie Gaither  
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 Dale Anderson







## Donating with Dillion's

Remember to sign up for Dillion's Community Rewards Program. It does not cost you anything. All you have to do is sign up through your membership account online and select the Community menu and click on Dillion's Community Rewards. Next, simply click enroll and search for SCHS by using our identification number 33429. By simply swiping your membership card each time you shop, Dillion's will make a charitable contribution to the organization your designate. It is free, easy and benefits organizations like the SCHS.

## Membership News

The June 12 issue of Historic Highlights inadvertently left out the list of Renovator and Sustainer members for the current year since the earlier newsletter. Those were:

### **Renovator:**

Nancy Kassebaum  
Baker  
Civil War roundtable  
Dorothy & Dick Hanger  
Margie Hogue  
Martin Jones  
Jim Maag  
Joe and Beth Pennington

Ted and Anne Heim  
Linda Jeffrey  
Jennifer Sourk  
Barbara Stewart  
Holly Zane

### **Patron:**

Carolyn Huebner  
Lona Morse  
Eva and Ramon Powers

### **Sustainer:**

Dave Ritchie  
Jill Wolters

### **Renovator:**

John & Carol  
Christensen  
Jill Wolters

Individuals who have renewed or donated since June 1 are:

### **Regular:**

Melvin Bruntzel  
Jean and Celia Daniels  
Kurt Daniels  
Rick Friedstrom  
Leon Graves

### **Sustainer:**

Nancy Kassebaum  
Baker  
John Gilbert, MD  
David Heinemann  
Jeanne Mithen  
Joan and Bill Wagnon

## Treasurer's Update

Members participating in Dillon's community program generated a quarterly donation of \$81.21.

Individual to SCHS donations to Topeka Gives resulted in a total donation of \$2,170.99.

The Redbud Foundation, an agency of Glenn and Claire Swogger of Topeka, has awarded the Society a grant of \$30,000, in two installments of \$15,000 per year, to contract with a part-time grant writer and development advisor. The goal of the grant is to place the Society's funding on a more sustainable basis. The Heritage Education Program of the Society has outgrown its current single part-time staff for curriculum development and school tour productions. Additional staff will be necessary to meet growing demand. The Trustees will undertake a search for a person to carry out the purpose of the grant forthwith.

The Westar Foundation contributed \$2,000 to the Heritage Education Program.

## Building and Maintenance Update

Heavy rains locally in late April resulted in the collapse of one of the walls making up the basement handicap exit of the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center. Lynn Hultquist of Hulquist Landscaping rebuilt the wall. In addition Lynn offered to help us by trimming our trees around the Ritchie House. See the Before and After Pictures on the next page.

## Before and After Pictures



## Kansas Dialogue Tour

On Saturday, August 13, the Society in partnership with the Brown v Board NHS and the Free State Capitol, staged another production of “Forging Freedom’s Pathway”, a living history tour. Some 80 persons participating in the annual Kansas Dialogue experienced episodes from Topeka’s history that shaped the successive “rebirth of freedom” in America. Dialoguers heard Col. Edwin V. Sumner, USA, and Jim Lane debate the right of the Free State Legislature to meet in Constitution Hall on July 4, 1856. At the Historic John and Mary Ritchie House, they heard the couple explain why they came to the Kansas Territory in the early spring of 1855 and operate a station on the Underground Railroad later in that decade. At the Brown v Board NHS, they met Chester Woodward, Topeka School Board member in the 1930s, who explained the “separate but equal” practices in Topeka and Julia Roundtree, an African American Topeka teacher in the early 1950s, who expressed her reservations about desegregation and how it caused her to lose her teaching position. Together these episodes paint a graphic picture of the enduring struggle for freedom which plays out locally. Buses and drivers for the tour were contributed by Brewster Place, Aldersgate Village, McCrite Plaza, and USD 501.



Col. Sumner played by Johnathan Hart prepares to disperse the Free-State Legislature

## THE KANSA INDIANS: CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

By Mallory Lutz

As for many Native American tribes, the Kansa Indians experienced a whirlwind of change following the arrival of Europeans in Kansas in the early 1500s. That change only rapidly increased in the following centuries as American settlers from the East made their way across the plains and new technology forever changed transportation and the American landscape. Changes in technology had drastically different effects in the life of Native Americans than compared to white Americans. With the influx of new peoples, the economic traditions, mainly the fur trade, of the Kansa Indians was disrupted. Both Europeans and peoples from the East Coast brought new diseases to the plains that significantly altered the population of Native American tribes, including the Kansa Indians. Outside interests, including traders, the railroad, and the U.S. Government, were ultimately too powerful for the Kansa Indians, and the native peoples were forced to leave the land and traditions they loved.

While the Kansa, a group descended from Siouan peoples, had existed since prehistoric times, Europeans first made reference to the Kansa in the early and mid-1600s. Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate referred to the Kansa on a 1601 exploration to find gold in the Quivira region of Kansas. In 1673 the French also made note of the Kansa tribes. It is thought that in the late 1600s the Kansa migrated from an area east of the

Mississippi River to the area of what is present-day Kansas. While it is not exactly known why the Kansa migrated, some historians believe the group moved to follow buffalo herds or avoid tribal warfare (12).

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For centuries until government intervention and the power of various interest groups, the Kansa enjoyed a unique way of life and like many Native American tribes, treasured a distinct tribal culture. The buffalo hunts were one of the many important traditions in Kansa culture that were unfortunately disrupted by the interests of white traders and settlers (27). The Kansa diet consisted of various vegetables they harvested and meat from hunting excursions. Throughout the 1800s the government tried to get the Kansa to change their ways, both in hunting and farming. The U.S. Government desired that the Kansa become more sedentary and practice new farming techniques (38). Prior to the Kansa being forced to assimilate to white

culture, traditions, and fashion, the Kansa Indians dressed in combinations of animal skins, such as bison and deer hides. Many Indians wore tattoos, and warriors were usually bedecked in beads or animal claws (28). Family was key to the Kansa way of life. Although their society was patriarchal, women were respected and played important roles in family life, gathering food, and preserving tribal traditions. While polygamy was allowed, women were treated with respect and exercised control within their families (32). As the U.S. Government encroached on and violated the Kansa way of life, Kansa family dynamics changed. As missionaries became more prevalent among tribes, children were educated by white teachers and experienced more time away from their

families. Before the Kansa were repeatedly forced to migrate, their homes typically consisted of a “pole frame” covered with branches or skins; however, when they were forced to move across the plains to differing landscapes, they resorted to sod dwellings (36). These changes, whether in diet, tribal relations, or construction of homes began to take their toll on the Kansa Indians.

The Kansa were successful hunters and fur traders. With the influx of Europeans, traders, land speculators and squatters, and settlers, the Kansa economy became volatile. Throughout the 1700s and 1800s the Kansa were torn between the competing interests of either the French, British, Spanish, or Canadians. Multiple countries wanted a monopoly on the Kansa fur trade, which only led to the exploitation of the Kansa and led to the demise of their economy. In the 1720s the Kansa were caught in the middle of Spanish and French colonial interests (56). While the European powers attempted to exploit the Indians, the Kansa became confused and fearful for the economic way of life they were familiar with; in response, the Kansa killed twenty-five Spanish men in 1720 (57). Amid struggles with various interest groups, the Kansa enjoyed prosperous trade with the French during the middle decades of the 1700s. Yet by the 1760s European trade with the Kansa had a precarious status. This was due in part to the French and Indian War which lasted from 1754 to 1763. Many tribes across the U.S. were displaced and encountered hostilities with other tribes. Fighting increased between the Kansa and Pawnees and



only worsened in the years to come (71). By the early 1800s the Kansa found themselves in skirmish after skirmish with the Pawnees and other surrounding tribes. In 1812 the Kansa lost 30 warriors in a war with the Pawnee, which significantly decreased the tribe's strength (93). Shortly after that incident the Kansa found themselves engulfed in what became known as the Kansa-Otoe War, which lasted from 1813 to 1816 (94). Tribal warfare only made the Kansa's problems of starvation, factionalism, and declining economy worse.

While the Kansa struggled to protect their economic interests and preserve their way of life, other factors besides Europeans threatened their very existence. Throughout the 1700s and 1800s smallpox repeatedly decimated the Kansa tribes. Some epidemics were worse than others. In the early 1830s over three hundred Kansa died from smallpox. While some Kansa were vaccinated against the disease in the late 1830s, smallpox struck again in the 1850s, killing hundreds more (42). The forced migration and pressure to adopt new farming techniques from the U.S. Government increased the Kansas' susceptibility to smallpox and other diseases such as cholera.

In the midst of economic changes, disease, and warfare, Christian missionaries introduced themselves to the Kansa Indians. In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries both Catholic and Methodist missionaries attempted, though mostly unsuccessfully, to convert the Kansa Indians. While both religious groups did not make much headway in terms of altering the Kansa's theology, the Methodists established schools for Kansa children in the 1830s (125). In an attempt to assimilate the Indians, the Methodists taught students to read and write and educated them in white culture. Methodist missionaries had a profound impact on the everyday life of the Kansa Indians. Missionaries introduced the English language to the Kansa, and "Kansa men were no longer opposed to working with the women;

they were interested in horticulture and stock raising and...abandoned their wigwams of earth and began to erect dwellings of logs" (131). Missionaries changed the everyday cultural aspects of Kansa life during the 1800s.



**KANSAS VILLAGE.**

Engraved from a view in De Smet's Sketches.

Engraving of a Kaw village, 1840s, by Pierre-Jean De Smet showing earth lodges and other traditional house forms

The early 1820s were pivotal for the Kansa Indians. The newly opened Santa Fe Trail posed the question of what to do with the Kansa Indians. "The commercial value of the Santa Fe Trail had by now increased substantially, and there lurked the danger that the Kansas might obstruct this vital traffic" (109). The U.S. Government forced the Indians to move out of Missouri and not "obstruct" the Santa Fe Trail. Furthermore, the "Kansas were to abandon hunting, trapping, and intertribal warfare in favor of the aspirations and mundane tasks of white frontier farmers" (112). The U.S. Government asked the Kansa

to give up their way of life—everything they had ever known and all of their tribal traditions.

The treaties in the 1820s were only the beginning of a half-century of more broken promises, disease, forced migration, and factionalism. In 1846 the Kansa were forced to move to the Upper Neosho Valley (24). Disputes between tribes resulted in uprooted Kansa settlements and starvation. As

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*“Congress authorized the executive branch to enter into treaties that would result in the removal of all Indians from Kansas”*

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ment. Their situation became even more dire when on March 3, 1863, “Congress authorized the executive branch to enter into treaties that would result in the removal of all Indians from Kansas” (191). The days of living in the territory they had long known were numbered.

The situation became even more complicated with the arrival of the Union Pacific Railroad in Kansas. As the interests of the railroad further pushed the Kansa off of their land, they again became involved in tribal battles. The power of the railroads was too much for the tribe, and the Kansa were forced to leave their land and migrate to Indian Territory in 1873, forever leaving behind the territory they had known and loved.

From the time the Kansa migrated to present-day Kansas in the late 1600s, all they experienced was change. With these changes, whether it was the influx of Europeans or various migrations, came challenges. The Kansa were constantly barraged with hardships that included smallpox, tribal attacks, exploitation by Europeans, white settlers trekking westward, and the U.S. Government’s endless number of broken promises. After numerous forced migrations and attacks on their cultural traditions, from their tribal dress to the buffalo hunts, the Kansa were defeated. The power of the U.S. Government and the railroad fever that swept across the nation ul-

timately ended the Kansa way of life. Like numerous other Native American tribes, the Kansa were forced to give up everything they knew and move to Indian Territory, leaving behind a land and life they had known for hundreds of years.

### Bibliography

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SCHS Memberships make great gifts for friends or family!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership is from January-December, annually

MEMBERSHIP FORM (Please print)

Yes! I wish to join the Society that preserves the past and celebrates our heritage.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Check type of membership: \_\_\_\_\_ Regular (\$35.00) \_\_\_\_\_ Patron (\$50.00) \_\_\_\_\_ Renovator (\$100.00) \_\_\_\_\_ Heritage Education Sustainer (\$150.00 +)

GIFT MEMBERSHIP (Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ Gift Membership for someone I know who will benefit from membership.

(Photocopy this form for more than one. Use rates listed above.)

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Landmark Preservation Committee  Education/Communications

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## Get Involved

The SCHS would like to thank all of our volunteers and staff that help us maintain our commitment and involvement in Shawnee County and other local communities. We could not make this happen without you!

There are many ways in which you can help the Shawnee County Historical Society preserve the past for the future. Become a member! Volunteer some time! Or make a donation. Also remember the SCHS in your estate planning.

Membership in SCHS is from January 1 through December 31 each year. There are three levels of support. The Society greatly appreciates and benefits from the highest level of membership in which you are able to participate. You will receive:

- Quarterly Newsletter
- Discounts at events
- Exclusive Members-Only Section on our website
- Online Archives
- The Shawnee County Historical Society News
- Invitation to the Annual Meeting on or near December 5, the anniversary of Topeka's founding
- Pre-announcements of Society activities and special events

Membership revenues also support other local endeavors including our Educational Program and History Day at Washburn University.

In addition, your Society works closely with the Kansas State Historical Society and is dedicated to a preservation focus, meant to preserve and celebrate the tangible aspects of our heritage. Together we can preserve Shawnee County History for future generations to enjoy.

We also work collaboratively with the National Park Service to provide learning opportunities for students and adults. The SCHS has partnerships with the National Association for State and Local Histories to preserve Shawnee County History.