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Annual
meeting is
Dec. 8

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Fall tours
and talks

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Celebrating a century



The baseball stadium grandstand saw its first game in June 1924.

Rossville plans preservation of 100-year-old grandstand

Before it even had a city government, Rossville had a baseball team.

Officially incorporated in 1871, this community on the western edge of Shawnee County is where wagon trains forded Cross Creek as they made their way west on the Oregon Trail.

A treaty in 1861 allotted lands occupied mostly by Potawatomi to white settlers; some tribal members moved to the reserve in Jackson County, while others settled in the new community.

They took care of the important

things first: They got a preacher, made a racetrack and formed a baseball club.

A baseball game preceded the Sunday worship service, and the horse races were held after.

Interest in baseball never waned. With a highly successful semi-pro team, the town decided it should have a worthy stadium with a real grandstand. In the spring of 1922, Rossville voters approved a bond issue for \$8,000 to build it.

Work began in the spring of 1923, with volunteers landscaping the grounds. Construction on

the grandstand and dugouts were completed the following year. It has seating for 500 fans with a table at the center for the statistician and press.

Local carpenters donated their services, and the work was supervised by two carpenters who were members of the city council.

On June 8, 1924, Rossville defeated Tecumseh in the first game played in the new stadium.

A century has passed, and Rossville's historic grandstand needs

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Calendar of events

P.O. Box 2201
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Cox Communications
Heritage
Education Center and
John & Mary Jane Ritchie
House
1116-1118 SE Madison Ave.
Topeka, KS 66607

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David Thompson

From April through November, SCHS has monthly tours of historic venues. From January through March, programs are presented on Sunday afternoons at the Cox Communications Heritage Education Center at 1118 SE Madison and via Zoom.

Attendees who are not members of SCHS are asked for a \$5 donation at each program.

Tours on the schedule:

■ Sunday, Oct. 20, 3 p.m. – Tour of the Carousel at Gage Park, led by Anne Stauffer.

■ Sunday, Nov. 10, 3 p.m. – Tour of the Woodward, 1272 SW Fillmore, and adjacent rowhouses.

Talks on the schedule:

■ Sunday, Feb. 2, 3 p.m. – Marshall Barber will talk about Topeka radio stations.

■ Sunday, Feb. 16, 3 p.m. – Bill Shaffer will talk about the history of Topeka movie theaters.

■ Sunday, March 2, 3 p.m. – Sonja Czarniecki will talk about Nick Chiles, publisher of the Plaindealer, the region’s largest Black newspaper in the early 20th century.

Stay tuned for the full January-March schedule of speakers.

Also this fall:

Ghost Stories

Tour Ward-Meade Park and Old Prairie Town by lantern light with guides from Shawnee County Parks + Rec and Ghost Tours of Kansas. Time: 7 to 10 p.m. Friday, Oct. 24. Cost: \$20. Preregistration is required at SNCO.gov.

Garfield Ghost Walk

Explore the lost history of Soldier Creek and North Topeka. Curtis Family, the North Topeka Tuberculosis Camp, floods, ghost stories and perhaps the most unexpected of all, a bear attack. Led by Shawnee County staff and Ghost Tours of Kansas. This is an outdoor program, so dress accordingly. Time: 6:30 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 26, from Garfield Community Center. Cost: \$15. For ages 13 and older. Preregistration is required at SNCO.gov.

Menninger 100th Anniversary Roundtable

Panel discussion with Dr. Walt Menninger, Dr. Roy Menninger, Dr. Jon Allen and others, Monday, Nov. 18, 6 to 9 p.m., Marvin Auditorium, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.



The city water works was the tour stop in June. The Forest Park retreat, the Topeka Performing Art Center and Grace Cathedral also were visited over the spring and summer.

Carlin to speak at SCHS Annual Meeting

Diana B. Carlin is the featured speaker at the 2024 Shawnee County Historical Society Annual Meeting on Sunday, Dec. 8.

and politics at the University of Kansas and is co-author of “Gender and the American Presidency: Nine Presidential Women and the Barriers They Faced,” and book chapters on Martha Washington, Lady Bird Johnson, Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama.



Diana Carlin

Carlin is professor emerita of communication at Saint Louis University and taught speechwriting at the University of Kansas and a course on presidential speechwriters for KU’s Osher Institute. She has also taught courses on women

The annual meeting also is a business meeting during which all members of SCHS are

entitled to vote on trustees and other business.

The meeting begins at noon Dec. 8 at the Topeka Country Club. Cost for lunch is \$40. Members may attend for the business meeting and program without purchasing lunch. Checks for lunch reservations may be sent to SCHS, P.O. Box 2201, Topeka, KS 66601.

Email shawneecountyhistory@gmail.com or call (785) 234-6097 for more information.



The original dugouts were indeed dug out, but they have since been replaced.



The full wooden structure can be seen from the back of the stadium.

Rossville stadium renovation plans

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repair. Mayor Jim Meyer said the first consideration was whether to preserve the wooden structure at all. It is the only all-wood grandstand remaining in the United States.

Mark Eberle, author of “Kansas Baseball, 1858-1941,” lists just nine baseball parks in Kansas that still have wood bleachers. All were built before World War II, and eight are still in active use.

Mayor Meyer says the community is fully behind restoration, so fund-raising has begun with a request for a grant from the Kansas Department of Wildlife &

Parks’ conservation fund. Once total costs are determined, a full fund-raising plan can be determined. It is hoped the project can be done all at once, rather than in stages, as that would be less expensive.

These days, the stadium is used by the Rossville High School baseball team.

But in the days before there was even radio to broadcast professional games, people across the nation came together regularly to cheer on the home team. Inter-city rivalries formed, and teams of professional players would drop in to challenge the locals. In 1925,

the Negro League’s Kansas City Monarchs had a barnstorming tour through northeast Kansas. Rossville made quite a respectable showing against the pros, losing just 4-1.

The stadium is on US-24 highway just east of Main Street (Carlson/Rossville Road).

Providing information for this story were Rossville Mayor Jim Meyer, librarian Christi McKenzie and stadium caretaker Alan Zlotnik. Mark Eberle’s history of the ball park can be found under “Historic Baseball Sites in Kansas” at www.fhsu.edu.