

MUSEUM MUSINGS

WESTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

P.O. BOX 266 ~ 601 MAIN STREET ~ WESTON, MISSOURI 64098 ~ 816-386-2977

APRIL ~ MAY ~ JUNE 2011

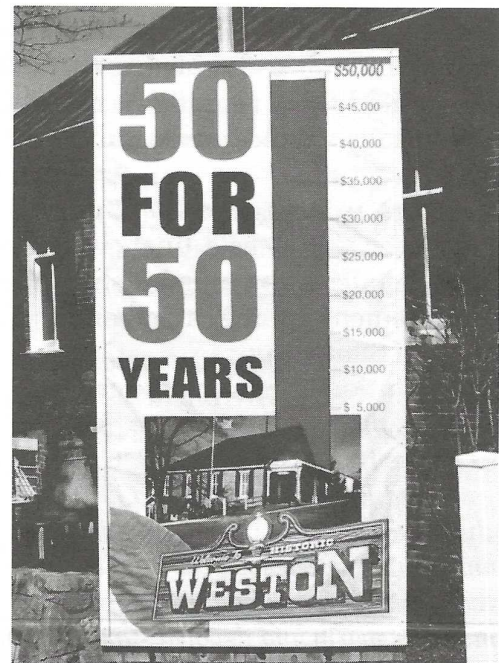
Museum Updates It's Computer Technology

In recent weeks the Weston Historical Museum has moved to update and replace some of its technology. With the purchase of a new computer and PastPerfect, a user-friendly museum data program, we have moved into the 21st century. The computer will have touch screen capability and will be useful to our staff and many visitors doing research.

Due to poor health, Mrs. Sandy Miller, has been unable to continue her work as the data input person. Faced with a substantial amount of work needing to be done, the 10+ year-old computer that has become something of a dinosaur, and a difficult software program, the Board felt it was time for newer technology.

The museum will soon be on the internet and there is a plan to also have wi-fi service within the museum before the end of the year.

Another purchase is a broad-base scanner which will allow us to scan larger documents, such as certificates, and save them onto discs or memory sticks for better storage and use. At this time, we do have a website, but more updating on it is also planned.



Our "50 for 50 Years" fund raising campaign has met with resounding success. At the Trivia Night event, President Carl Felling announced our goal had been achieved, and that the Executive Board had decided to reach for \$60,000. Money and pledges gathered will help with capital improvements needed.

Already completed are the new roof, additional shelving and case repairs. A new computer system will also be paid for by the funds.

I.O.O.F. Records Found, Given to Museum

Recently while sorting through some of his belongings, Mr. Paul Toy, a Museum member, discovered papers he had in his possession for over forty years; but ones about which he had totally forgotten.

The papers were records of transactions of the Phoenix Lodge, No. 30, I.O.O.F. or Odd Fellows of Weston in the 1860's. Paul had come by these when he worked for Rumpel Hardware in the 1960's. Rumpel purchased the building

on the southeast corner of Main and Thomas Streets and was cleaning it out with Paul's help. In the rubble of a deteriorating wall he found these papers, which Rumpel had no interest in keeping.

The building itself had once been a three-story edifice and for many years the Odd Fellows held their Lodge meetings on the top floor. When a severe windstorm hit, it damaged

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I.O.O.F. (continued from Page 1)

the third floor so badly it had to be removed. From then on it has remained as a two-story building. However, the Odd Fellows continued to meet on the second floor while businesses moved in and out of the main floor.

Mr. Toy took the papers home with him and eventually forgot all about having them. When he re-discovered them recently he decided that where they really should be was in the Weston Historical Museum.

The papers, in very good shape despite their age, show such things as a financial report for the Lodge, requests for membership, requests for re-instatement to the membership and a Resolution of Sympathy.

The Resolution of Sympathy reads:

"Whereas the sad intelligence has just been recorded by the Lodge that Cyrus P. Gilbert, the son of our esteemed Brother Samuel A. Gilbert, has been suddenly snatched away by the rude hand of death, like a bud with its sweetest leaves unfolded, Therefore be it Recorded That we extend to our stricken Brother and family our warm and devoted sympathy in their melancholy (unreadable). So inscrutable to mortal vision yet so wise and just to the Great Ruler "who

tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" and whose providence permits the beautiful image of their bright boy to remain undefiled in their hearts until Hope and Faith are consummated by their reunion in the Eternal Lodge above."

In checking burial records, we find that Cyrus Gilbert was only two years old at his early death on November 5, 1869. The toddler was buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery.

One who petitioned for admittance in the Lodge was Mr. J.W. Douglas, who at the time of his petition had lived in Weston for a little over six months. The date of the petition was May 7, 1869.

According to his written petition, in lovely Spenserian script, L. Wagner, John Maitland and Charles Kay recommended him to the Lodge. Following investigation of his credentials by T. Grasmuck and L. Metzger, Douglas was admitted into the folds of the Lodge. Another gentleman's name appeared on the 'document' and we believe he was possibly the clerk at the time, John U. Dale.

The museum sincerely thanks Mr. Toy for this donation of documents that give us a glimpse into the Odd Fellows Lodge and into life as it was in the 1860's

Trivia Night Proves To Be Enjoyable Success

Attempted bribery, heckling of fellow contestants and the emcee and hooting at the judges were all done in fun at the Museum's Trivia Night March 19, 2011. The event was held in the American Legion Hall and netted the Museum's 50/50 Fundraiser a total of \$1015.

Approximately 75 people took part in the game of questions and answers about tidbits of information in ten categories with ten questions each. The emcee for the evening of fun and games was Glenn Benner

To make the evening more festive, long banners with various decorations hung at each of the windows. Shorter sound baffles, also decorated, hung from the ceiling and tables were variously decorated. The 'artists' for the evening were Ruth Mary Clemens, Jessica Larsen and Barbara Bless.

Contestants brought their own snacks to nibble on during the game, while the museum provided liquid refreshments. Bartenders for the evening were David Knox and Tommy Grame.

Welcoming remarks were given by Museum President Carl Felling, who along with Chris West, served as scorekeepers. Judges for the event were Jean Hartley, Ruth Marr and Marsha West.

The winning team was made up of Library personnel and friends, which included Stephen Chalmers, Sally Collier, Brandi Blankenship, Lynn Collison, Jesse West, Nancy Owens and daughter, Bronwin.

We want to thank each and every one of our great contestants for their participation and contributions. Another Trivia Night is being planned for later this year. We hope everyone who attended this time can join us again and spread the word to come share the fun.



One of the new displays for this year is entitled "Steamboats on the Missouri River". Drawings, photographs and information tell about the boats that made Weston a regular port of call.

2011 Cemetery Stroll Will Be April 30th

The biennial Cemetery Stroll Into the Past is slated for April 30th from 4:30 to 7:30 in Laurel Hill Cemetery.

As in past years, actors will be dressed in period costumes and portray individuals who are buried within the cemetery. Standing near the headstones, they will give a short talk about their character. This is an entertaining way of learning local history and about the people who lived and worked in Weston.

Welt Street will be closed to traffic from Mulberry to Highway 45 from 2:00 until 7:30 so that those attending the stroll can park along the front fence of Laurel Hill.

A souvenir booklet is included in the \$5.00 donation collected at the front gates.

Among the characters this year are Julius Rumpel, Jesse West, Lizzie McCarten and Jacob Benner.

We hope you can join us for the afternoon.

Bits and Pieces From Bertha's Morgue

In April of 1913, the Star Playhouse burned to the ground shortly after one o'clock Wednesday morning. The two-story frame building, occupied by John Hollied and George Weigman, also was burned. The nearby residences were in great danger, but heroic work of fire volunteers saved them. It is believed that the fire was of an incendiary nature.

The heaviest loser was Julius Rumpel, whose telephone cable, carrying 300 coupled wires, was melted. Several telephone poles were also burned.

A week later on April 12, 1913, a small blaze was discovered in the two-story brick warehouse owned by Mr. B.J. Bless, on Leavenworth St. The fire had been started just inside the iron doors and was quickly extinguished. It is evident that the warehouse was also set afire.

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An advertisement in the issue of *The Weston Chronicle* dated July 12, 1913:

"Doppler's Dry Goods now has high grade standard make silk gloves, double finger tips, in black and white, 69 cents. Also ladies silk hose in black, 29 cents a pair."

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March 12, 1915 an article in the local newspaper reads: "Forty-two years ago this month R.O. Shenkner, with a partner, started a general merchandise store in the building now occupied by the Shenkner-Robbins Merc. Company. Geo. E. Robbins joined the store as a clerk and later as a partner. He has been in it twenty-odd years.

A small line of queensware, tobacco, and dry goods comprised the first stock. The first sale was made to E.W. Railey and consisted of a spool of cotton thread at 10c. Calico sold in those days, according to Mr. Shenkner, at 12-1/2c per yard and tobacco at \$1.25 per lb. Although they did not handle stock, Mr. Shenkner can well remember that hogs and cattle sold at 3c per pound at that time."

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In a local newspaper item of November 24, 1944 we find the following:

"Among the records written into the Ledger kept by the founders of the Old Holladay Distillery are some interesting figures on labor and commerce in Weston in 1856. J.G. Winslow made the trip from Beloit, Ill., and located the distillery as of Dec. 2, 1856.

According to his records, a team of oxen costs \$100; and ox care \$25.00; for chopping wood he paid 80 cents per cord; for such common labor as splitting hand made shingles from native timber, cutting barrel staves, heading and hoops from native oak and manufacturing barrels for whiskey, flour or pork, \$20.00 per month was considered good pay.

In that time, substantial board and room could be procured for \$2.50 per week. There are freight bills on consignments to steamers *Morning Star*, *Minnehaha* and *Soverengen*. The Holladay Distillery when completed and stocked in 1858 was valued on the company's invoice sheet at \$34,796.91."

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The Weston Chronicle had an item in the issue of May 18, 1962 that gave a bit of history about the Weston Study Club:

"In March 1941 a meeting to organize the Weston Study Club was held at the home of Mrs. Howard Dale. The first regular meeting, with 27 members, was held at the home of the late Mrs. L.C. Calvert. On the program that day were the new president, Mrs. E.C. Wilson, Mrs. Early Foley and Mrs. George Z. Hull, Sr.

During the 21 years a meeting or a program has not been missed. The Club had meetings 12 times each year until the last few years when a picnic is held in July and no meeting in August. Earlier the picnics were held at the Cottage home at Bean Lake of Dr. and Mrs. R.J. Felling."

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During the summer of 1963, the Owen O'Neill family was named by the Platte Co. Extension Council to represent the county at the Missouri State Fair that year.

"The O'Neills operate some 1500 acres of land and have produced good yields of corn, milo, soybeans and wheat by using practices that encourage good and efficient crop production. One thousand head of hogs and some 250 head of cattle are annually fed on the farm.

Mr. O'Neill is a member of the Platte County

University Extension Council. The family has membership in the Platte County Farm Bureau and the Platte County Balanced Farming Assn.

The O'Neills have two sons, Robert and James, both of high school age. They are members of the Catholic Church in Weston."

Long-Time Burlington Employee Is Dead

(The following is an article found in the issue of The Weston Chronicle dated July 1, 1960.)

George Edward Bell, 74-year-old son of "Aunt Liza" and John Bell, died at St. John's hospital in Leavenworth Tuesday night after a serious illness of several weeks, following a heart attack. George was born in Weston on September 12, 1886 and spent all his life here.

At an early age he went to work on the section for the C.B. & A Railroad. He retired in 1954, two years after his wife, Mabel, who retired after 39 years as a successful teacher in the Weston system.

He was married Dec. 27, 1917, to Mabel Emery of Kansas City. Together they built an ideal marriage, bought themselves a home and cooperated in many civic projects. Not only did they do this, but they were leaders among their own people. This influence bore evidence in their nice homes, beautiful and well-kept yards, in church and service circles.

Deprived of children of their own, they gave homes to the aged in their family and reared two nieces and a nephew: Mrs. Margaret Love, Los Angeles; Mrs. Cleo Lewis, Denver; and L.H. Parker, St. Louis. They also took in and raised Raymond Dydell, who is employed with Rumpel Hardware.

Great sympathy is felt for Mrs. Bell whose ill health keeps her confined to the home.

George was a member of C & E church in Parkville, and was a Veteran of W.W. I.

Funeral services will be conducted at the Vaughn Chapel today at 12:30 p.m. Burial will be in the National Cemetery at Fort Leavenworth at 1:45 p.m.

Pallbearers will be James Williams, Omega Anderson, Ira Kelly, Floyd Jackson, Douglas Pearl and T.W. Brown.

High Winds, Bad Weather No Stranger to the Area

This past winter has been filled with reports of high winds, tornadoes and destructive types of weather throughout not only the mid-west, but across the nation. People have remarked upon the strangeness of these events, but in fact they are not new to the area. The following is an article from *The Weston Chronicle* dated May 14, 1886 and is headlined:

The Storm

On Tuesday morning last the weather looked threatening. The lowering clouds seemed to settle closer to the earth and at 10:30 it was so dark many lamps were lighted. People could be seen hurrying along the streets, with countenances betraying fear of an expected cyclone. The distant roll of thunder, the increasing darkness and the shrill whistle of the wind above us was calculated to appal everyone. Shortly before eleven o'clock the rain began falling and for fifteen minutes descended in torrents; the wind increased to a gale force, but being high passed over without doing much damage in the immediate vicinity. Reports from Leavenworth and Kanss City however, which places seem to hav been in the direct path of the storm, prove that the fears of those who expected a cyclone were well founded. Though the visitor was more of a hurrican than cyclone the awful work done in our sister cities was none the less terrible.

At Leavenworth

The roof was blown from the market house and two valuable horses were killed, which were hitched to a wagon standing near by. Many other buildings were inured and great damage done to the sidewalks of the city.

The most terrible portion of the storm visited Kansas City where twenty-eight persons were killed and about forty were injured.

The tower on the Lathrop school building was blown down and fell on the building, killing fifteen children and maiming 12.

The overall factory of Hear Bros. was blown down and nine operatives, females, were killed

and several injured.

The Spice Mills of Smith & Moffat were destroyed and four men killed.

The court house was unroofed and several occupants injured.

One span of the bridge over the river was blown away.

We copy the following editorial from the *Times* of May 12:

"Kansas City has been overtaken by a frightful disaster. Today there is mourning for the dead and compassion for the suffering and business halts in its career for a respectful moment while those proper offices are performed. There is also a feeling that in the occupancy of the buildings where life was lost, some one has blundered. . .

The court house is a loss easily repaired and if the lives of citizens could be restored the disaster would not be much regretted. A new, strong and more creditable building should be erected in a locality more respectable and accessible.

Kansas City mourns the dead and regrets the loss of private property but she assures the world that her strong heart beats no less sturdily than before.

At Parkville

We clip the following from the *Parkville Independent*:

Quite a number of buildings were unroofed and otherwise damaged, but strange to say, no one was injured during the progress of the storm.

The following is a list of damages:

The roof of the bank building was entirely carried away and scattered over the streets in every direction. The interior of the building was also greatly damaged by the heavy rains which accompanied the storm.

The building, adjoining the bank, and occupied by Messers. C.S. and C.V. Ringo, was partially unroofed and a portion of the brick wall of the west end blown in. . .

The old mill standing east of town was entirely demolished. It was used as a stable for Park College teams, on span of mules being in

the building at the time of the storm, and strange to say, they escaped injury.

About one-third of the roof was torn off the depot. Further than this the damage to the building was slight.

The front of the building owned by C.P. Summers & Son, and Dr. J.W. Ringo, in which the *Independent* office is located was caved in a distance of some six or eight inches, and had not the storm suddenly abated, it would undoubtedly have added another to the list of wrecked buildings.

In The County

Roundabout Parkville and other areas of the county several houses were blown down, others were unroofed and trees, fences and outbuildings were hurled in every direction.

Houses on the farms of James Naylor, Hadley Newkirk, C.W. Broadhurst and Mrs. Cross were destroyed or badly damaged.

The colored church in the north part of Weston was also considerably damaged.



"Music Through the Ages" is a new display this year in the museum. It contains instruments such as a zither, violin, ukulele, and clarinet. It also holds an old music box, a record player, sheet music and records of various years.

Did You Know That . . .

...Weston's first vaccination of school children was on April 29, 1955? On that day 126 school children and younger ones were vaccinated.

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...the first mother-to-be to graduate from West Platte High School was Connie Jameson Schulze? Connie had dropped out of school after her marriage and was pregnant with her second child when she decided to return to school. She graduated in May of 1963. Despite being a busy mother and wife, Connie continued her education, eventually getting her Masters degree.

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...Weston's first public school Kindergarten class began in the fall of 1967? They met in the Weston Baptist church as there was no room in the regular school buildings. A new addition was built the following year.

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...the first complete Republican slate for County offices was offered in 1968? In a long history of Democratic dominance, this was the first time in 129 years any Republican won. Two were voted into office.

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...the flood of Kansas City and surrounding areas in 1951 was the first major disaster of its kind ever televised? All major television stations showed the \$300,000,000 flood that inundated the mid-section of the country for several days.

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...the first Ecumenical service held in Weston occurred on Good Friday? In 1969, all five churches, their ministers and many parishioners attended this very special event.

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...near Beverly, on the Theodore Lentz farm, was one of the few pecan groves in the county?

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... according to the *Corn Husker* edition dated November 15, 1929, "on Good Friday, April 20, 1895, the heavenly bodies, which gravitate around the sun, were in exactly the same position relative to each other that they occupied on the day Christ was crucified? It was the first time such a thing had occurred since that eventful and special day."

Friends of the Museum Enjoy Great "Maifest"!

(This article was found in "The Weston Chronicle" in August of 1974.)

The warehouse hasn't looked that good since the old tobacco shows . . . on second thought, it looked much better than it did then. The décor was very effective. Saw horses (remember them?) were used to hold up the long boards, which made tables, and cement blocks held the planks for the seats. Red and white-checked tablecloths covered these tables and the extra tables were constructed of old utility wire spools on low-wheeled platforms. They were just the right height for standing up to munch pretzels, peanuts and popcorn. Candles melted over bottles to add lighting and a small bouquet on ever table.

The 'nibble foods' were held in red and white-checked cardboard meat dishes.

Red and white streamers enclosed the area of the warehouse, which was used for the party.

Oh yes, centered in all of this was the maypole which was an interesting attraction all its own. After many people asked us why there was a small evergreen tree on top of the pole (and we couldn't begin to answer) we went to our best source for this information . . . Mrs. Clyde Rowland.

Sigi is a native of Germany and had assisted the committee in making the proper plans. She says, "Well first of all, I'm not sure why the word was translated through the years to May pole when it really is a May tree In Germany they select a pine tree 20 to 30 feet tall and strip all the branches off from the ground up to about maybe the last five to six feet. This they leave, which gives the Christmas tree effect.

"Then they put wreaths around the tree which are suspended by wire, the wreaths getting larger in circumference as they come down the tree and the streamers are tied to the wreaths."

Mr. and Mrs. M.M. Ohlhausen donated the tree and Mrs. Bernard Meeker made and donated the wreath. Red geraniums and big red bows alternated between the streamers around the pole's base.

Maifest in Germany was a celebration of Spring coming and the maypole was a symbol of fertility. . . Every small town in Germany has a Maytree for the Maifest celebration.

Sigi thought Weston's Maifest was "great, wonderful, a ball . . ." She liked it.

The band which plays at the Levee in Kansas City mixed their songs up nicely and even added a surprise touch to the evening. Seems the leader of the Levee band spotted a lady in the crowd he had known "some years back" (we know how many but won't say) as he had played piano for the lady when she sang on radio station WHB in Kansas City. The gentleman walked up to the lady, inquired if she perhaps might recognize him and while it took a few minutes in the dim light, Marge Hull made the connection and the folks at the Maifest got an extra added attraction . . . several numbers sung by Marge. Judging from the applause, the crowd appreciated a good thing when they heard it.

One couple had come from Milwaukee, WI, to St. Joseph, Mo., to visit friends and had decided to take the McCormick Hospitality Days tour. "We saw an advertisement for the Maifest on the door at the Distillery, so we went home, cleaned up, changed clothes and here we are. This is really fantastic. My wife and I can't believe a little town like this could have such a marvelous party."

Around 300 attended the gala which began at seven and ended at eleven p.m. Singing, band music and dancing, all to the accompaniment of the famous Levee Band of Kansas City and refreshments were the order of the evening, which prompted folks from great-grandparents to teenagers to have a good time.

The Maifest was the first of a series of get-togethers to be sponsored by "Friends of the Weston Historical Museum: in an effort to cement the community spirit long enjoyed by and because of the Museum's universal appeal to a town of Weston's significance. It was partly, too, in celebration of the entry of Weston as a district in the highly regarded National Register of Historical Landmark Preservations.



WESTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

P.O. Box 266
601 Main Street
Weston, Missouri 64098

Non-Profit Org.
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Permit No. 7

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Felling
904 Blackhawk Street
Weston, MO 64098

"If we do not know our history, we will lose our road to the future."

Unknown

Today's Mystery Corner

Was It Murder? Suicide?

A young man of 19 years was found face down in an alley in downtown Weston in March of 1902. It was quickly ascertained that he had been murdered, but it was never said how the 19-year-old died. Was he shot? Stabbed? There are no records to tell us.

Did he have a name and a family? His name was John Railey. However, the Railey family of banking history in town said he was not one of theirs, and no one else claimed him.

The only thing known for certain about John Railey was that he worked as a saddler for someone in Weston.

Strangely enough, that same month and year, a young girl aged 17 years also died, circumstances unknown. Her name was Sarah Railey and again she was not a member of the banking family. Was it a case of murder/suicide? Were the two connected in some way?

Whatever the story of these two, they were buried in Laurel Hill and it appears there was no one left to mourn the loss of these two young souls.