

**HIGHLIGHTS
OF
THE WILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM
OCTOBER 2008 – OCTOBER 2009**

**By
Carole Gandy Pinches
November 2009**

**“To achieve all that is possible, we must attempt the impossible.
To be as much as we can be, we must dream of being more.”**

In celebration of our eleventh year as an Historical Society (1998) and our eighth year of operation as a Museum (2001), it is time once again to provide you with an update of our news for this past year. Even though this has seemed in many ways to be a fairly uneventful year, there are still a variety of exciting items we want to share with you.

OUR WEBSITE

Perhaps the most exciting news is the launching of our website last April as it has broadened the visibility of the Museum to those who live far away as well as to those who live in Wilson or Carter County. Two of our life-time members living in Kansas City took the website on as a project – a labor of love, as it is called. Therefore, I have asked our daughter, Susan Pinches, and her friend, Chris Hammett, who have become our Society’s webmasters, to tell you in their own words of their adventure!

“Let’s set the stage – four lifetime members of the Wilson Historical Society hidden away in the public library of Eureka Springs, Arkansas in the summer of 2006, meet to discuss a new project for the Wilson Historical Museum. Their mission – to determine how to update the functional, but outdated, Museum website. But did they have the resources and the

knowledge to take on such a daring challenge? It would take nearly three years to find out the answer to this question...

Ok, so maybe creating the new website wasn’t quite as cloak and dagger as suggested above, but it was certainly an adventure. That meeting between Susan, Chris, Carole and George was the first step towards creating the labor of love known as –

www.wilsonhistoricalmuseum.org.

We spent that day on a high level overview of the content the website should support, and left thinking that while there was a significant amount of work to do, the website should be up and running in less than six months!

It’s amazing how off we were with our initial time estimate! While both Chris and Susan were experienced computer programmers (Chris had actually created a basic website as part of a class project), the Museum website presented unique challenges that neither of them could imagine. The first step, gathering the website content, proved to be the easiest piece of our puzzle. More difficult, however, was mastering the computer programs used to build the website. Finally, our skills were really put to the test when it came to building the obituary database that’s become the centerpiece of the website.

Now that the dust has settled, and the website has been up and running for the last six months, we have been able to look back on the process with satisfaction and pride. The website is easy to navigate, interesting to look at, and provides a unique opportunity for visitors to interact further with the Museum via the genealogy request pages.

In the very near future, we will be adding functionality to the website to allow purchase of Museum store merchandise online, as well as donations to the Museum and Historical Society memberships via Paypal. If you haven't visited the website, we encourage you to do so. We are always open to your comments and questions, as we are committed to continue developing the website into a springboard that we hope will bring more visitors to the Museum."

Needless to say, we are deeply indebted to Chris and Susan for their willingness to take on this monumental project – a project that doesn't end here – it will be on-going far into the future as it becomes necessary to maintain, update and improve the website by continually adding new information. We appreciate immensely Susan and Chris' tenacious efforts and dedicated service to the Museum's mission.

OUR ANNUAL CELEBRATION

In March, we held our Annual Celebration at which time we honor those who have made significant contributions to the Society or Museum during the past year(s).

This year, there were two recipients of the Volunteer of the Year Award, and two that

were honored with our most coveted award, "Friend of the Museum".

Mary Jones Wilson of Lone Grove, a noted collector of historical and genealogical information in southern Oklahoma, was recognized as a "Friend" for the significant contributions she has made toward preserving the history of southern Oklahoma. In 2006 the Wilson Historical Society created the Mary Jones Wilson Archives, to house Mary's vast collection. Since then, a small portion of the information she has accumulated over the past twenty years has been placed in the Museum for our visitors to enjoy. More will be forthcoming in the future.

Dr. Bob L. Blackburn, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society was present to accept a "Friend" award for the Oklahoma Historical Society. Through the efforts of our own Senator Johnnie Crutchfield over the last few years, the Museum has received a number of grants from the OHS which have been crucial to the Museum's operation. Dr. Blackburn spoke about the importance of preserving the history of each city and town in Oklahoma so that Oklahoma's history can be preserved for future generations. He also spoke of having a goal of setting up a permanent source of funding – especially for the smaller museums throughout the state. The latter was music to our ears!

Claud Burris was recognized with a "Volunteer of the Year" award for his unwavering dedication as a docent at the Museum each Friday. For several years, Claud has been serving in that capacity and is quite qualified given his knowledge of the area; he is able to provide much insight and information to our visitors.

Peggy Herrin, who has served as the Society's reporter for the past ten years was also recognized with a "Volunteer of the Year" award. Peggy serves us by providing on-going coverage of the Society's and Museum's activities to the *Wilson Post-Democrat*. She is an enthusiastic supporter of any fundraiser the Society holds and is always drumming up interest for the Society's activities.

To our "Friends" and "Volunteers" we offer our most sincere gratitude for the many ways in which you have helped make the Wilson Historical Society and Museum what they are today! We couldn't have become as successful as we are without each of you!

OUR VOLUNTEERS

While recognizing volunteers, it should be mentioned that in January it was announced to the Historical Society that this year was going to be known as "2009 – The Year of the Volunteer". This is not the same as the "Volunteer of the Year" award – this was established primarily to give recognition through the *Wilson Post-Democrat* to each of our volunteers for assisting in whatever ways they have through the years. We hope that those of you who have a subscription to the newspaper have enjoyed reading about each of them as they have appeared throughout the year. Those having been recognized thus far are, in order of their appearance in the paper:

Peggy Herrin
Vivian and Sonny James
Anna Clark Cumpton
Bill Miller
Juanette and David Miers
Maudine Horn Herrell

Anna Clark Heath
Billie Potts Kerr
Maxine Horn Clark
Carl Cumpton
Ella Herrell
Orval Segroves
Barbara Jones Burris
J.C. Kerr
Mindy Horn Taylor
Susan Pinches and Chris Hammett
Wilma Meyer Miller
Claud Burris
Correna Wilson-Pickens
Nita Segroves

Others will be recognized within the coming weeks and a complete listing will be shown in next year's newsletter. Every single one of our volunteers is extremely important to us no matter what they do – each one brings a different ability to our organization than someone else – that is what makes us function as well as we do. We could not do without each and every one of them and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts!

While on the subject of volunteers, what is written below is only one example of what our volunteers do for us.

Melinda Horn Taylor, better known to us as "Mindy", has been volunteering at the Museum since 2004, and loves to work with genealogy, projects having to do with lawmen and wars, and she also compiles information from the old Wilson newspapers into a column entitled "Museum Memories" that appears weekly in the *Wilson Post-Democrat*. Compiling historical and genealogical data is of great interest to Mindy – therefore, she was delighted when asked to write an article for this newsletter regarding the first of several

war books she has been working on for sale in the Museum Store. Enjoy!

WILSON'S KOREAN WAR VETERANS

“Unlike many people, I did not grow up listening to war stories told by my father or grandfather. Dad never talked about his WWII experience, and Grandad was excluded from serving in WWI due to double vision. Also, being of the girl persuasion, I was simply never interested in such affairs, but I was taught to honor and respect our service men and women, especially those who served during war time. Now you may be wondering why anyone with such a lack of interest in the history of wars would compile a book about the Korean war.

My “usual” job as a volunteer at the Wilson Historical Museum is finding, clipping and filing obituaries. At this time I am extracting the obituaries from the copies of the Wilson newspapers kept on file at the museum. When it came time to read through the newspapers from the early ‘50’s, I began to notice articles about the young men who were fighting in the Korean War and it occurred to me that the veterans and/or their relatives would appreciate having this information together in one place. So the idea of the Korean War book was born.

“Wilson’s Korean War Era Veterans” is a book which was finished in 2008 and is now available for sale at the museum for \$25.00. This book includes a list of Korean War veterans who grew up in Wilson or who live in Wilson and consider our hometown as their own. The “meat” of the book begins with pictures and biographies of the veterans. The 1950’s Wilson Post-Democrat articles appear next and consist

of “News From Our Boys With The 45th” written by Curtis Harris, “From the Ninth Naval District, Great Lakes Illinois”, and “Service Mother’s Club”. Various articles including enlistments, awards received, weddings and visits home can be found there as well. Veterans’ reunion articles and obituaries are found in the last part of the book. Information for readers who have not been educated on the Korean War is included as part of the introduction in the form of related websites, a map of Korea and a time line.

Although this book started out as a simple compilation of articles and bios, it has turned out to mean much more than that to me. I have enjoyed visiting with some of the veterans of this “forgotten” war and deeply appreciate the time they spent educating me on the facts and sharing their experiences. I would like to especially thank Claud Burriss and J.W. Haynes for their time and patience.

Compiling this book has inspired me to continue doing the same for all our service men and women. I am at present extracting articles for WWI, WWII and Vietnam books, and hope to finish either the Vietnam or WWII book by the end of 2010.

In the past I asked for biographies and pictures of service men and women who served in the service at any time, whether it be war time or peace time; although the deadline for these contributions is past, I will still take this information since I’m still in the compiling stages of all the books.

To learn more about “Wilson’s Korean War Era Veterans” and see a list of veterans included in the book, please visit: <http://koreanwarvets.homestead.com/index.html>”

OUR OFFICERS

As is traditional at our November meeting, we have, just this past week, elected our officers for the coming year. They are as follows:

President: Carole Gandy Pinches
Vice-President: Carl Cumpton
Secretary: Farah Bazzrea
Treasurer: Bill Miller

The only change in the officers for this coming year was the position of Secretary. Wilma Miller had held that position since January 2004 and felt it was time to turn it over to someone else. We thank Wilma immensely for her dedication and her very well written minutes; we will miss her in that capacity, however, she has indicated she still plans to come to the meetings; therefore, we won't miss her smiling face! Thank you, Wilma, for a job well done!

OUR BOARDS

Museum

George Pinches, Chair
Anna Heath
Orval Segroves

Endowment Trust Fund

George Pinches, Chair
Carl Cumpton
Maudine Herrell

By virtue of their positions, Carole Pinches and Bill Miller automatically serve on both boards.

And now some information from George Pinches, Chair of the Museum and Endowment Trust Boards:

SPEAKING OF THE MUSEUM!

“Let’s see – is anything going on at the Museum? Well, there is the website – which has attracted additional inquiries and requests for research. And, the number of obituaries continues to increase – we now have over 6,500 in our collection and estimate we are about half-way through all of the obituaries published thus far in the Wilson newspapers (1915 – 2009). Current obituaries are added on an on-going basis. Due to the continued expansion in our historical and genealogical albums in the Museum, we have run out of bookcase space; therefore, sometime in the very near future we will need to raise money to have more bookcases built.

The Annex is making progress – but we need more time and volunteers to really “put it together”. We have acquired shelving and are in the process of organizing many of the artifacts that are not on display in the Museum. One of our acquisitions this year was a large miniature train set and layout. We have some volunteers who are planning to completely redo this layout, construct some buildings that depict Wilson, and eventually have a first class miniature display of the train and its location in Wilson. Since Wilson was founded when the train came west from Ardmore, we anticipate this display will become an important part of the Museum’s displays.

Finally, we acquired the widely used museum software, PastPerfect. We have scanned most of the pictures in the Museum’s collection and are gradually accessioning, (i.e. recording) all of the

artifacts in our collection. We anticipate this process will occupy us for at least all of 2010. But, once it is done, we will have much better control of the Museum collections, and have the ability to readily find people, events, etc. in the Museum's collections. This will be a major step forward in our development as a first-class museum!"

OUR ENDOWMENT

"About ten years ago the Society started an Endowment – in order to help meet the expenses of operating and growing the Wilson Historical Museum. With the help of many individuals and organizations the Endowment's value has reached about \$100,000. Starting in 2010, distributions from the Endowment are planned – the first yearly distribution will be \$2,000 - \$2,500. This will defray about a quarter of the Museum's 2010 operating expenses.

Our goal is to continue to grow the Endowment to a minimum of at least \$250,000. At that level we can meet the Museum's current operating expenses and also make some improvements at the Museum. You can help grow the Endowment by making gifts in memory – or in honor – of loved ones or friends. We have a number of individuals who make regular contributions to the Endowment when a loved one or friend passes away. Others make donations in honor of present or former Wilsonites. All donations made in memory/honor of are placed in the Endowment as a permanent means of remembering that person by helping to preserve the history of Wilson and the area. And, the donor and relatives/friends of those remembered receive a written acknowledgement of the gift.

It was also decided to memorialize these loved ones or friends in some way in the Museum. Since names would need to be added from time to time, instead of a plaque, it was decided to maintain a listing in an album showing those being remembered as well as the donor(s). This album is on prominent display in the Museum.

We hope you will consider remembering loved ones and friends by starting to make periodic donations to the Wilson Historical Society's Endowment."

A 2010 DUES REMINDER!

For those of you who like to be reminded that it is time to pay your dues, this is that reminder! Yearly dues are \$15.00 per individual, and Lifetime memberships are \$125.00; Student dues are \$8.00, and Organizational memberships are \$35.00. In order to maintain an active membership in the Society, dues must be paid no later than March 31, 2010. Please use the enclosed form to pay your dues or to make a donation to the Society/Museum.

We are always looking for more artifacts and pictures from Wilson and the surrounding area; please contact us if you have some to share. Also, we welcome you to visit us at:

The Wilson Historical Museum
1270 8th Street
Wilson, OK 73463

Open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or visit us on the web at:

www.wilsonhistoricalmuseum.org