

Harvey House Notes

Florence Historical Society



May 2008

2008 Historical Society Officers:

- ❖ President-Judy Mills
- ❖ Vice President-Sarah Cope
- ❖ Secretary-Marjorie Jackson
- ❖ Treasurer-Twilah Williams

Board of Directors:

Sarah Cope
Cathy DeForest
Mary Jane Grimmatt
Marjorie Jackson
Judy Mills
Edna Mae Robinson
Neva Robinson
Vickie Turner
Harvey Wells
Twilah Williams

Items for publication in the newsletter can be sent to:

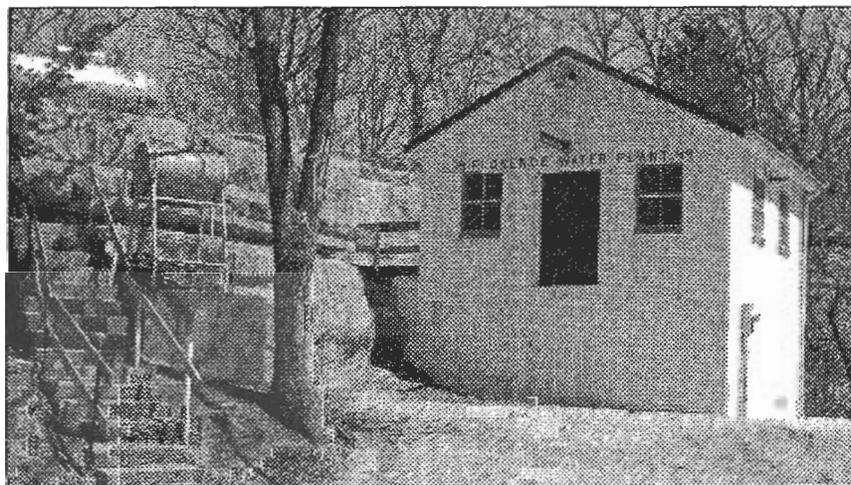
Mary Jane Grimmatt
414 W. 8th Street
Florence, KS 66851

or emailed:
mjpg1@kans.com

CITY SPRINGS WELCOMES FLORENCE ALUMNI

How the year has flown. It is time to welcome the Florence Alumni for another year of getting together. We want all alumni to know that the Historical Society has taken the City Springs under its wing to help restore. There has been painting, building repair, tree trimming, gravel work and the addition of a large rock sign. We hope you will venture out to the springs for a day of reminiscing. If only the springs could talk, just think of the stories it could tell! What a cool and shady place for pictures, picnic or just a gathering. Please come see and enjoy. Let us know what you think! Pictured below is a picture of the city springs taken from the florenceks.com web page. Jackie Sigwing is the webmaster of the community web site. She does a wonderful job of updating the Historical Society page. Thank you Jackie!

Judy Mills, President



OF INTEREST.....

The May 6th "Wichita Eagle" told of a story of a couple who had given a \$8.5 million gift to WSU. Paul and Evelyn Cassat are the couple. Evelyn was the daughter of the John Hendrens. Her parents ran a grocery store on east 5th street and she was a high school teacher of journalism and English in Florence.

PICNIC IN THE PARK



Our "Picnic in the Park" this year will be on Saturday, June 28th, either on the lawn at the Harvey House or at the shelter house in Grandview Park.

Our great Harvey House cooks will prepare fried fish and mountain oysters and an array of fresh green beans, roasting ears and other in-season veggies. There'll be salads and a great variety of desserts.

Please join us for good food and visiting with old friends. It's always fun.



A BRICK FOR T.P.

PRIDE is busy making plans for our Veteran's Park renovation. Since we use and get a lot of history from T.P. Alexander's Diary, published in the "Florence Bulletin" we have decided to honor him with a veteran's brick for our park.

T.P. Alexander served in the Civil War 1861-1863. From some of his notes from the diary:

1883-February 15th-Twenty two years ago today I was in the Battle of Donaldson, Tennessee.

1890-April 7th - 38 years ago today I was in the battle of Shiloh. I was Co. 1, 11th infantry and in Low Wallace Division. The war ended in 1865.

Mr. Alexander had a very successful hardware business. He was the first mayor of Florence in 1871 and in later years active in county government. He was born in 1840, died in 1913. He is buried in Hillcrest Cemetery.

If you have a favorite veteran, you too, might order a brick for the walk in Veteran's Park.

FROM 1935 FLORENCE BULLETIN

New Fence At Cemetery

The Mount Calvary cemetery, two miles west of Florence on the 50-S highway, has been encircled by a new fence. The north line of the grounds has a fine, ornamental fence with an arched gateway. Over the gate in large Gothic letters is the wording "Mount Calvary." The other three sides of the grounds have lower woven wire with strands of barbed wire at the top of the posts.

This is a great improvement to the cemetery and is a fulfillment of the wish of Miss Ellen Doyle, who had expressed her desire to pay for such an improvement before her death here on March 12th. Because she had expressed such a desire before several witnesses, the cost of the improvement was allowed by the probate court from the estate left at Miss Doyle's death.

J.B. Meirowsky and his men completed the job of placing the new fence and did a fine job of it.

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE AT CITY BUILDING

For those who don't receive a newsletter by mail, copies are available at the city building. If you want to be on the mailing list please contact Twilah at 878-4237 or at the Historical Society mailing address listed below.

Memberships are still only \$10.00 for 1 year or \$100 lifetime. Since we are a 501c3 corporation, all dues and donations are tax deductible. We have received dues from 8 members since our March newsletter.



We would like to invite the alums to visit us on Saturday, May 24th, and welcome you as new members. Remember, we are a small group, and we do need your support.

The red dots again indicate your 2008 dues are unpaid.

Twilah Williams, Treasurer
P.O.Box 143
Florence, Kansas 66851



CLASS VISITS HARVEY HOUSE

On April 3rd, the Leadership Marion County class of 2008 held their class at the Harvey House in Florence. Jackie Rice and Trayce Warner were the facilitators for the class of seven, and Neva Robinson and Peggy Goertzen were guest panel members. Neva gave a presentation about the history of the Harvey House and of the Florence Historical Society and some of the significant events and struggles they have experienced. Peggy Goertzen is from Hillsboro and is the Director of the Mennonite Archives at Tabor College. She also gave a presentation about her organization and their job of collating as much of Marion County's history as possible.

Leadership Marion County is an organization that was begun in 1989 in Marion County. Each year the students are sponsored into the class, usually by a business or a civic organization. The curriculum follows a nationally recognized outline and the classes are facilitated in various locations around the county. This year the Board is inviting community leaders to be panel members at different classes. The goal of the classes is to build up a strong group of future leaders and to provide a networking opportunity to them, along with a chance to see some of what the county has to offer.

The presentation by Neva and Peggy went very well and the class seemed interested in these ladies' stories of the history of the county. Prior to joining the Florence Chamber of Commerce for lunch, Neva took the class on a tour of the Harvey House and answered questions from the class. The LMC Board made a \$50 donation to the Museum and expressed their thanks for the opportunity to meet there.

By Trayce Warner

The Old El Dorado District

By Robert Harris

The old El Dorado district extended from Florence to Winfield, Kansas. As part of World War Two, steel was in very high demand and several rail lines were removed to use the rail in other places. These lines were light used or had other ways to be serviced. Believe it or not five stations were lost between Florence and El Dorado. The track from El Dorado onward remains today and is well used as part of the main lines to California and Texas. The stations that were south of Florence were Hampson 5.0 miles, Burns 11.3 miles, Alka 14.6 miles, De Graff 19.0 miles, Ramsey 25.0 miles, and El Dorado 30.5 miles. This track was abandoned in November of 1942. Some of the rock from this line was hauled to Florence and placed on the streets, so it is still here so to speak. As a side story, some of this rock contained railroad spikes. When growing up with my grand parents, George and Sallie Williams, I was told the story of grandfather running over one of those spikes. He was not too pleased as it ruined the tire and it was very difficult to get tires during the war.

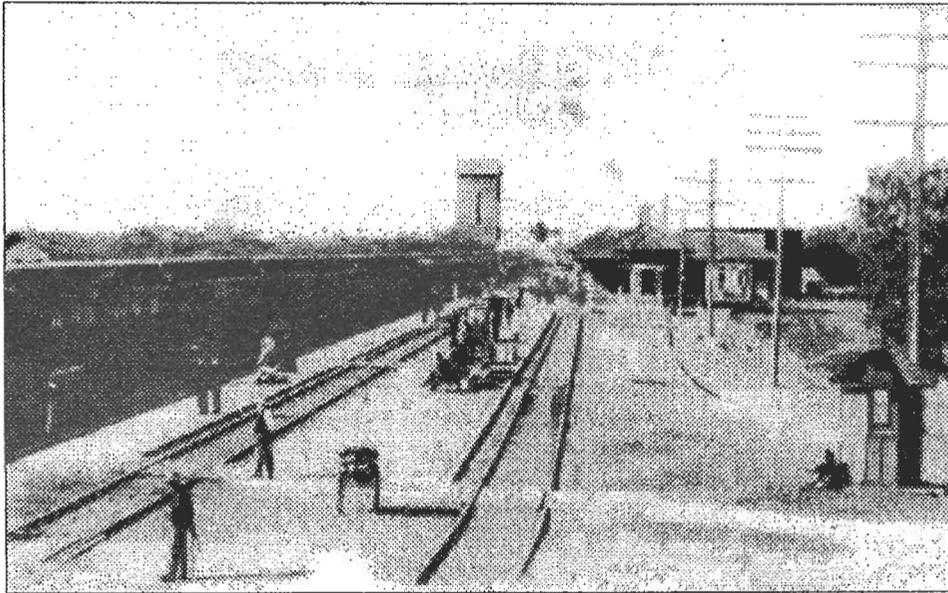
The motor car as pictured in the middle on back page is the one that served this line. It left Winfield daily at 8:25 AM and arrived at Florence at 10:55 AM as train number 54. It departed Florence at 2:45 PM and arrived at Winfield 5:15 PM as train number 53. There were two freight trains that served this line daily also.

Some of the old right away can still be seen when driving to El Dorado on highway 77 on the west side of the road. The track that the Co-op elevator now sets next to is all that is left. This track at one time went west and then crossed Doyle Creek beyond the highway bridge which was built after the railroad was removed. We all know where Burns is and the elevator and depot at De Graff are still there but the other stations have faded into the past.

After the last story on the McPherson trains, Bob McMillen called to talk about his grandfather Lou McMillen who was the Engineer on the trains to El Dorado and then on the trains to Ellinwood until he retired in 1950. Bob grew up in Florence and his father Frank ran a grocery store in the building that is now the American Legion. After the flood in 1951, he built a grocery store and the 77 café (now the Town & County) and ran it for many years.

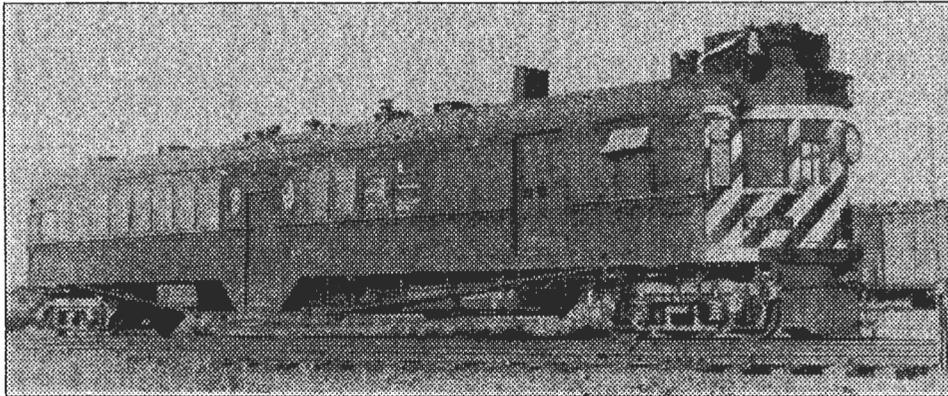
The top picture is looking west with the depot on the right and the tall building to the left of the train, I can not identify. The bottom of the picture is main street and the man standing on it is the crossing flagman. The small building to the right of him is his shanty with the child sitting by it.

The bottom picture is the motorcar for the McPherson District. The front part contained the controls, the next door with two windows is the railway post office, the next large door is the baggage compartment, and the windows behind it the passenger compartment.



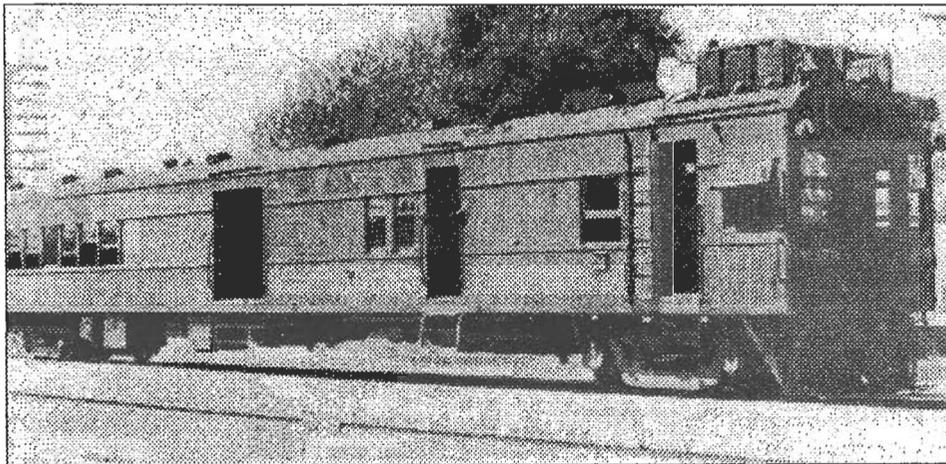
Wichita State University Libraries

Eastbound Passenger Train Stopped at Florence 1920



Otto Perry Denver Public Library

Motorcar used on El Dorado District South of Florence



Otto Perry Denver Public Library

Motorcar used on McPherson District Northwest of Florence

ALL ABOARD FOR THE WAY CAR RENOVATION

By Sarah Cope

The way car renovation is now officially underway! Last month we had a work day and began by tearing out all the paneling. It has now been gutted and we are ready to begin the sandblasting. Once that is complete we will paint it and take it back to its original state. If you have any ideas on how an original way car should look we would love to hear from you, all suggestions are greatly appreciated!

Bob Harris has accepted to be our fierceless leader on this project. THANK YOU BOB!!!

The following is taken from the autumn 1996 Historical Society News about the purchase of the way car:

Way car purchase by Historical Society

Over the summer, we purchased a way car from John Younkman of Newton. It has been moved behind the Harvey House, through the efforts of member, Reilly Reid. It was built in 1928 by American Car and Foundry Co., St. Charles Missouri - one of an order of 100 Way cars, #1659-R. The "R" indicated that it had a radio. The brakeman and the conductor rode in the way car. When the work of the conductor was finished, he joined the brakeman in the "dome" or cupola, to observe the train ahead and the track behind. The conductor could communicate with the engineer, or stations, or trains along the way, with the radio. Way cars were phased out by 1987.



THANKS!

THANK YOU JOHN!!!

We asked for volunteers to help keep our lawn mowed and trimmed this summer and John Swarm, who is a new resident of Florence, stepped up and offered to take care of the job this summer! We really appreciate John volunteering his time!

Notes from T.P. Alexander's Diary by Neva Robinson

December 5th, 1891: John Alexander, Willie Twyford and Ralph Smith were out gunning and brought in a grey eagle, 6 feet and 11 inches from tip to tip of wings.

April 30th, 1892: I gave the eagle to Robert Walters. If he sells it for \$5.00 or more I am to receive \$2.50 of the money. If he sells it for less than \$5.00 I am to receive half of the money. It is the eagle John captured last December 5th. I got tired of feeding the bird.

Pictured to the side is a photo of the eagle:

HISTORY SUBMITTED FROM OUR MEMBERS

Robert McMillen emailed us interesting items he found in the Topeka Kansas Daily Commerce dated 1871.

This was from the July 18th edition:

Florence is evidently a business town, and yet though the town is only four months old, they have earnestly begun a good stone schoolhouse, the first story of which is nearly up. We found the Florence hotel, at this place, to be an excellent place to stop at, commodious and well kept. There is a beautiful country about this place with plenty of timber and stone.

Taken from the June 30th, 1871 edition:

To the editor of the Commonwealth: knowing your desire to keep the readers of the COMMONWEALTH posted on all matters pertaining to the rapid growth and development I take the liberty of sending you a few items concerning the flourishing condition of Florence and its surroundings. The town is now about four months old and contains a population of some five hundred people. It stands on the west bank of the Cottonwood River, about forty-five miles west of Emporia and is surrounded by a rich agricultural and stock growing country, abundantly supplied with the best quality of water, stone gypsum and a very fair quality of timber. The stone is a fine texture of pure white lime, soft and easily worked. Inexhaustible quarries adjoin the town on the west, which are being opened by Mr. Horner of Topeka, who ships by rail both east and west. One of the greatest wants in this portion of the state is a good mill, there being none as yet in Marion County. At Florence, on the Cottonwood River, is one of the best mill sites or water powers in Kansas. The site, together with land adjoining sufficient for mill purposes, is offered as a gift to any responsible party who will erect them on a first class flouring mill. Those wishing further information on the subject can obtain the same by applying to or addressing to Capt. L. A. Thrasher, Florence, Kansas. How very interesting, THANK YOU so much Robert for sending this bit of history!



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEWS

At their May 1st meeting Chamber members voted to purchase a swimming pass for a family to enjoy at the pool this summer.

Nominated for the monthly community volunteers were: January-Joe Heath, February-Neva & Ed Robinson, March-John Swarm, April-Jackie Sigwing. Volunteers chosen will be honored at a city-wide meeting and meal in November.

Tourism plans were made to promote Florence and its attractions and events on Kansas web pages.

HARVEY HOUSE OPEN ON MEMORIAL DAY

WELCOME!

The Harvey House will be open on Saturday, May 24th from 2-4 p.m. Everyone is welcome to visit. We would love to have you!

LABOR DAY PLANS

The Labor Day Committee has announced that Michael Martin Murphey will be performing on Sunday evening at 8 p.m. at an outdoor concert. The Diamond W Wranglers will be the opening act prior to Michael Martin Murphey at 6:30 p.m. The committee is recommending everyone bring their lawn chairs and to join in for a once-in-a-lifetime western music concert under the stars. Please check out the Florence web site for additional information or call 620-878-4676.

ALUMNI BANQUET INFORMATION

"Coming Home" is the theme for the 110th annual Florence Memorial High School Alumni Banquet. All alumni of Florence and Marion/Florence schools, their guests, teachers and former classmates are invited to attend. Entertainment will be: Jeff, Jake and Barry with songs from the 60's and 70's. The banquet meal will be catered by Reilly Reid, Florence Alumni 1965.

The Florence Historical Society
Box 143
Florence, Kansas 66851

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit #7
Florence, KS

**BECAUSE OUR
HISTORY MATTERS!**