



October 2025 Newsletter

Jefferson County Historical Society & Old Jefferson Town

2025 Annual Meeting & Presentation

Join us at the **Annual Meeting** of the Jefferson County Historical Society. The meeting will be held in the Edmonds Chapel on the grounds of Old Jefferson Town on **Sunday, November 2** from **1:00-3:00 pm**. After a brief business meeting and election of officers, Chris Hotchkiss will present the history of Perry, KS. Chris draws information from his parents' extensive research through the years.

Declaration 1776: The Big Bang of Modern Democracy

We were chosen to host a traveling exhibition from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, from **March 14 – April 12, 2026**, at Old Jefferson Town. The Kansas tour of "Declaration 1776" is presented by Humanities Kansas. The Jefferson County Historical Society will also host and sponsor coordinating events throughout 2026. Our local programming plans include: an Art Display, School Field Trips with hands on activities, Patriotic Quilt Displays, and Native American & Early Settlement Exhibits of Jefferson County. Additional details will be on our website, and Facebook!

Spring and Summer Events

The busy spring and summer season at Old Jefferson Town included:

- Annual Easter Egg Hunt, sponsored by the Lion's Club
- Hosting a community Sunrise Service by Oskaloosa's ministerial alliance.
- The Oskaloosa 4th grade presented their wax museum interpretations in May.

- We held a Car Show on the grounds in May with refreshments served by the Historical Society.



- The Edmonds Chapel continues as a popular venue for small weddings by hosting two weddings in May.
- Mary Luse led the annual Memorial Day Service in the Edmonds Chapel honoring veterans.



- Many enjoyed the display of vintage bridal gowns during the month of June.

- Our hard-working volunteers hosted an ice cream social including a live band for our listening pleasure.
- In July, 30 school age children from a local daycare spent a half day with us. They loved getting a chance to see our buildings and experience hands-on activities such as apple peeling, using a wringer washer and hanging clothes on the line.
- Also, during the month of July, military uniforms in our collection were displayed in the Tibbott building. WWII Marine uniforms were recently donated by Alvis "Al" Shaw of Perry including "dress blues". Arlene Reist Bates donated her WAVES WWII uniform, the only female uniform in our collection.
- Retrospect, an art display, curated by Layne McAfee, was in the Curry building during the month of August.
- We also held our annual fundraiser including a tractor drive, events throughout the grounds and a delicious lunch.
- Signature and community quilts from our collection were displayed in late summer in the Edmonds Chapel.
- In September, we hosted our first annual "Quilt Turning" event where many from Jefferson County brought quilts and took turns telling the story of the quilt.
- Temporary displays this season were Camp Fire Girl dresses from the early 1900's and Girl Scout dresses from the Society's collection.
- Cabinets in the Tibbott building and the Research Library were filled with patriotic and military displays as well as information on the Oskaloosa family Critchfield mansion and opera house.

Other News

Leanne Chapman continues to give interesting historical presentations each year throughout the county including at the Oskaloosa High School, Valley Falls Historical Society and various organizations.

Clarke Davis & Holly Allen of the Oskaloosa Independent and the Valley Falls Vindicator used the

treasure trove of records available at JCHS to gather information on the 100 one-room schools in Jefferson County. Leanne Chapman was interviewed and photographed for the article that appeared in the September 25th newspapers.

Mary Luse coordinated four events recognizing Jefferson County Authors. This year the events were co-sponsored by the Oskaloosa Public Library and Friends of the Oskaloosa Library. Nine authors shared information about their book with many attendees. Authors recognized this year included: Blake Watson, Julie Rice (pen name Jules Parker), Jim Weishaar, Linda Colvin Funk, James Thomas Crawford, Sr., Garret C. Tufte, Keith Middlemas, Kim Hurley Andrews and Delila Mize McCabe (co-authors).



Have you noticed the 8 ft marble stone on the OJT grounds by the highway. A new sculpture is in progress. Garret Tufte will begin work on a life-size piece depicting a prairie couple during the westward expansion of the US. He estimates the work may take up to 2 years to complete. Visitors are welcome to watch the progress (usually evenings or weekends), easily visible from the highway.



Our dedicated maintenance volunteers work many volunteer hours on the never-ending projects for upkeep of buildings and grounds. In addition, they completed the remodel of the outhouse, cleared the brush between the church and the school, cleaned

out basement of bandstand, installed dusk to dawn lights on Boardwalk, Curry House and Bandstand, oversaw completion of the tree removal, rocked the parking lot and drive/road to school, scraped, primed, caulked and painted windows at the Nincehelter House. One new volunteer repaired and refinished the benches on the boardwalk and the many school desks found under the bandstand. If willing to help or volunteer email us at info@jchsk.com.

Resource updates: Volunteers work weekly adding data in Past Perfect pertaining to items and photos located at Old Jefferson Town, Valley Falls Museum and other locations in Jefferson County. **Over 23,000** entries have been created since 2019. You can search (i.e. your last name, an object, a place, etc.) in Past Perfect on our public access page at <https://oldjeffersontown.catalogaccess.com/search>

Over many years, JCHS volunteers cataloged **65,000 obituaries** available at the JCHS research library. These obituaries are the most often used resource in the library. One volunteer, Mary Luse added 443 this past year.

One of our newer volunteers took the lead to transfer all family files into neatly labeled hanging folders. In addition, she organized all the business, church, school and organization files with an index for easy research access.

If you would like to become a volunteer, please contact us by email at info@jchsk.com Days and times for volunteers are typically Tuesdays 9am–1pm, Wednesdays 1pm-3pm or remotely. You choose the amount of time that works for you, and we have needs for all types of tasks.

The library is open year-round for research on Saturday mornings from 9:00am to 1:00 pm (except for holidays) and on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00pm-4:00 pm. Or you may email us at info@jchsk.com to make an appointment during other hours. Volunteers are happy to provide tours of the grounds by appointment.

Newspapers.com can be accessed during open hours or by appointment at the library of Old Jefferson Town through the Historical Society's subscription.

Our online presence includes new YouTube videos (search [Old Jefferson Town](#)), [Facebook posts](#) (follow Jefferson County Kansas Historical Society -KS and Old Jefferson Town History Museum) as well as updates to the website oldjeffersontown.com. A new addition at Old Jefferson Town is QR codes visitors can use for information about the buildings and objects.

The Jefferson County KS Historical Society is an 501c3 not for profit and the home of Old Jefferson Town and the Genealogy Library. Please consider a direct tax-free transfer of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMDA) from your IRA or include us in your estate plan. We are managed by wonderful volunteers including our Board of Directors. Donations can be made online with the QR code below or at www.jchsk.com/donations.

Donations may also be mailed to:

Jefferson County Historical Society
PO Box 146
Oskaloosa KS 66066





CONTACTS

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