

County



Costumes of yesteryear show how our ancestors dressed.

Museum offers glimpse of life in old Smith County

By Linda Baetz
Smith County Pioneer

Many amazing people have come from the grass roots area of Smith County.

And Gloria Snow is working hard to preserve their history by establishing Kanza House Genealogy History and Resource Library in the former Lebanon High School.

"I wanted to do a community service project and give back to the community. I know that genealogy is a big attraction," she said.

It is open every other weekend Memorial weekend through Thanksgiving. The library collects and preserves local, county and state history and genealogy. The library holds 8,000 books, 4,500 sheets of microfiche and 2,000 rolls of microfilm.

Right now, however, the biggest need is to get the roof fixed.

"If we continue our current level of fund raising, we should have enough money by next spring," Snow said, "Not the whole roof, everything but the gym. Then we will work on raising money for the gym."

There are three rooms open now with eight more ready to go.

The next step would be to start on the second floor with cubicles, where the viewer would start with the Pawnee Indians and go through to the present.

Another idea is a media room to showcase people from the area that are or have been in the entertainment business.

Fatty Arbuckle, a silent film comedian, director and screenwriter, was born in Smith Center in 1887

Warren Durrett, born in Lebanon in 1920, was a part of the big band era and the Kansas City music scene.

Snow would like to feature those from Smith County who have done something extraordinary, like Gladys Kennedy, who has been a Girl Scout leader for 58 years; Randall Maydew, who did aerothermodynamic studies and conducted wind tunnel tests of nuclear bombs and missiles in Los Alamos; Mitch Holthus, who is in his 11th year as the "Voice of the Kansas City Chiefs"; Viola Olso Koon, who just turned 105 and has been on the Today Show; and Keith Hooper, known for starting the HELP Foundation (Humanitarian Efforts to Lessen Poverty of Underprivileged Children in the Philippines).

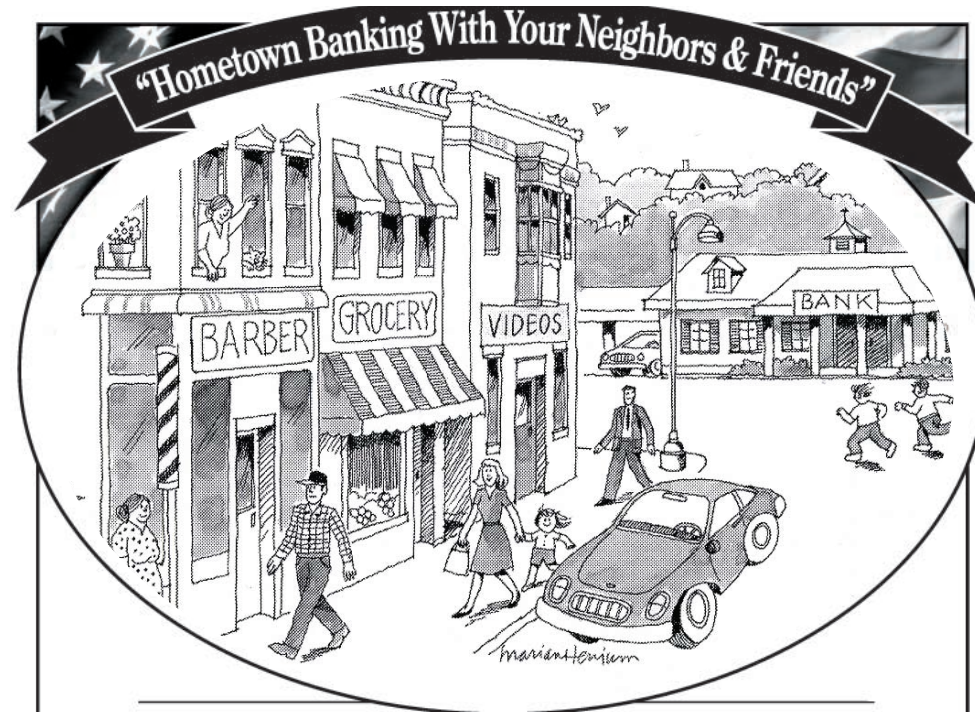
"We want to showcase all of that and all the media for Lebanon and the geographical center of the United States items," Snow said.

"Lebanon has been published in the Christian Science Monitor and USA Today. Everyone wants to come here to get the pulse and the feel of the nation since we are the geographical center of the 48 states. They come here to see what's going on in middle America and you can't get any more middle American than here."

Smith County is rich in history and overflowing with amazing people, she said.



Artifacts from the early days of Smith County are displayed at the Kanza House Genealogy History and Resource Library in the former Lebanon High School.



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