Pumpkinfest
Submitted by Carlene Makawski

The 22nd Annual PumpkinFest celebration at the Pony Express National Museum opened Friday, October 12, 2018. Once again the anticipated lighting of Pumpkin Mountain drew a large crowd. And the predicted rainy weekend was only one of many bumps in the road to getting the mountain erected. First, due to the previous rains, many of the pumpkins exploded, rotted or just plain fell apart, leaving us with a severe pumpkin deficit. Thus, many additional pumpkins had to be purchased and the carvers worked with haste. But by Friday night all was well and Pumpkin Mountain lit up to the ooh’s and aah’s of the crowd.

Saturday was a good day. Visitors enjoyed the many offerings of the festival—the Petting Zoo, the Pony Rides, the new Panning for Gold event, the children’s activities, mouthwatering food and the excellent entertainment.

The children’s Parade was a success despite the weather and every year it seems the costumes get cuter and cuter. Kids of all ages, as well as adults, pondered their purchases at the little Lil’ Pumpkin Shoppe where great bargains were to be found.

Prior to Pumpkinfest, many attended the Patrons Party, where good food, fun, and an exciting auction were offered. But perhaps the highlight of the evening was watching artistic competitors in a game of Pumpkin Express Pictionary.

The whole concept of PumpkinFest could not be attained without the hard work and support of our volunteers and sponsors. Our thanks to each and every one of them and to the local students who painted the small pumpkins at the base of the mountain.

The end came for PumpkinFest on Sunday (early closure due to weather). But...Monday morning revealed something that has never been seen before...SNOW ON PUMPKIN MOUNTAIN! The Sunday rain had changed to snow and dusted the pumpkins on the mountain.

Once again, the Pony Express has made HISTORY! Carlene Makawski a.k.a. The Imperial Pumpkin

Rotary International President, Ian Riseley, visits St. Joseph and Pony Express Museum

Submitted by Staci Thornton

On May 30th, 2018, the President of Rotary International was the guest of three rotary clubs from St. Joseph and one from Andrew County.

Although Rotary is best known for its international goal of eliminating polio Worldwide, President Riseley, who hails from Australia, had made it a personal goal of planting a tree for every Rotarian in the world, which numbers over one million members. This day began when he planted trees at the newly opened Buchanan County Convention and Tourism Bureau. At the same time he was planting those trees, Rotarians from all clubs in conjunction with the St. Joseph Parks and Recreation Department, planted over 150 trees along our historic parkway.

When he finished planting the trees he then went to the museum where he was given a tour by Executive Director, Cindy Daffron. As an owner of a good natured horse President Riseley posed on a mochila and ended up at the new Hall of Riders Exhibit. A team of East Side Rotarians led by Ryan Dowell had volunteered to take the old Buffalo Bill exhibit down and help build the new Hall of Riders exhibit. He then greeted around 150 Rotarians and posed with many Rotarians who wanted to share this “Moment in Time”.

Following the luncheon, President Riseley challenged all Rotarians to continue providing “service above self” and thanked the clubs for participating in such a historic day. Each club president responded with great appreciation of his willingness to come to St. Joseph and assist in the tree planting.

Club Presidents: Melissa Koch - Eastside, Dr. Mike Lane - Downtown Club #32, TJ Sampson - Southside, and Philip Frank - Andrew County VP, each spoke about their clubs and projects they had done throughout the year. It has been several years since the RI President has come to St. Joseph, so all clubs wanted to tell their stories of service. East Side President elect Ryan Dowell then talked about how all clubs came together for the tree project.

A highlight followed when all Paul Harris fellows were presented with commemorative medals by President Riseley. Paul Harris fellows made a minimum $1,000 donation to Rotary International. Some fellows have contributed many thousands of dollars. Historian Robert Crouch estimated the fellowships have totaled in excess of $300,000 over a period of years.

To commemorate the historic visit, the museum presented the President with his own horse shoe and he nailed it to the “Keep the Legend Kicking” wall. President Riseley then joined several Rotarians taking a tour of St. Joseph to see the trees each club planted. Stops included the new YWCA in the North Shoppes, Ashland Boulevard, and Bartlett Park. Riseley then made a quick trip over to Atchison, Kansas for a tree dedication with their Rotary Club.

We were so pleased with the response from the donors and members for our 2018 Year End Appeal. Your funds allowed us to receive a matching charitable grant so our dream of a new roof on Annex 1 has become a reality! We will be doing some wall repairs allowing us to have a pitched roof on the entire building instead of the partially flat roof. We use the building, which is currently full, for storage. In 2019, the building will be a completely dry storage area where we can store anything that we need to. Your generosity is, once again, allowing the museum to move forward.

Mark your Calendar now for the 2019 Tuesday Night Talks Series:

January Dates 15, 22, 29 • February 5, 12, 19
"2018 Postcard Story: A Marketing Success!"

Submitted by Cindy Daffron

Cindy Daffron, Executive Director, attended a Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area meeting and heard how tour operators look for Profile Sheets on websites for planning trips. Another presenter suggested mailing postcards about new events/dispersals instead of using email. Cindy took her suggestion to heart and designed "Hall of Riders" postcards. Michelle Jones, Gifts Shop/Admissions Manager, mailed out over 250 of these postcards. The response has given us 20+ new schools in addition to Rec Center groups and new tour bus travel agencies. West World Tours took a full guided tour of the museum after their dinner.

"Love to tell people about our founders on Family Day!" – Annie Updegraff

"Montana (left) started as a camper now, she is a winner!," says Dave Buckles (right)


"Miss Kathy" shows the group what happens if you mishear one or not follow directions while at Pony School. Sticking your nose on the circle on the chilk board could be the result and all children do not wish to have that happen.

"Thoroughly enjoy sharing St. Joseph/Pony Express stories on Smithsonian Day with visitors that come through. How about a pair of Buffalo Gals ready to dance to the light of the moon?" says Karen McClellan.

Family Day Submitted by Dana Frizzell

Our total visitor count for Family Day is 576. Many volunteers serve as docents in museum and Pony School, Sarah Eldor loves interpreting the working world of the riders during her volunteering on Family Day. "We so appreciate all of their generous volunteer hours at the Pony Express Museum. What can I say about Carlene Makawski? She is like the Energizer Bunny as she just "keeps on going" to volunteer events, serving as treasurer of the board, and bringing candy treats to our museum functions," says Cindy Daffron. Way to go, Carlene! A very special thanks to ALL of our volunteers! Without your help, these events would not be possible!

Smithsonian Day Submitted by Dana Frizzell

"Free Museum Day" on Saturday, Sept. 22nd was presented by Smithsonian Magazine. This is the 11th the year the magazine has promoted this event. Many organizations in the Museum Association of St. Joseph will feature special exhibits, programs, and activities and the Pony Express Museum is a proud participant! Re-enactors were on site at 914 Penn to take guests on a visit through the era of the Pony Express and spend time in our 1860s Pony School with a school marm. Offering free admission and holding the event on Saturday makes it affordable for entire families to share the museum experience together. The pictures tell the best stories of the fun had by all at Smithsonian Day!

"Tuesday Night Talks Celebrates 20 Years"

Plat Map

The Plat map was acquired this year through funds from Tuesday Night Talks by chair Joseph K. Houts Jr. In 1843, the movement of Buchanan County seat from Sparta, MO to Blacksnake Hills was initiated. A committee for the town found a spot for a new courthouse. They selected as site owned by Joseph Robidoux. As a result, Robidoux commissioned a plat for the common town, choosing the design of St. Joseph’s first postmaster, Frederick Smith. Robidoux signed the map and sent it to St. Louis to be filed with the Court of Pleas, and on July 26, 1843, St. Joseph officials became a town.
Volunteer Luncheon  Submitted by Cindy Daffron
On May 18, 2018, the Pony Express Museum celebrated the volunteers who give endless hours and are dedicated to the mission of “educating future generations”. Our theme for the day was “You Light Up the Pony Express Museum and the Pony’s Birthday.” There were 36 people in attendance. Stephanie Gummel was the featured entertainer for the event. “Thanks, Stephanie, for the music.” Everyone enjoyed the slide show featuring all of the events from the previous year. The meal and cobbler were catered by Spanky & Buckwheat’s Smoke Pit. The museum provided ice cream, fruit, and toppings for a fun time of “sundae making.” At the end of the celebration, the museum presented each volunteer with a mini LED flashlight. The overhead lights were turned off, the flashlights were turned on, and the glowing faces of the volunteers truly lit up the room.

Special guests of the day were: Mike Allegretti from Wells Fargo Bank, Kalynn Copenhagen (MWSU student intern), and Ryan Dowell, East Side Rotary member.

Museum Receives a Grant: Kiosk Project  Submitted by Jackie Levin
In February, 2018, Cindy wrote a grant request for $3,374.80 to the National Freedom’s Frontier Heritage Area. “The Pony Express National Trail: Historic Photos Kiosk Project” has been developed to share historic photographs that were taken across the National Trail from the 1950s and 1960s and to highlight the work of one of the first employees of the Pony Express National Museum, Don Reynolds. With the completion of the project, our museum will continue to convey the story of the Pony Express through a photographic kiosk highlighting photos of the trail around the time of the centennial celebration of the Pony Express.

We were gifted nine slide carousels containing photos from Don Reynolds as he traveled the Pony Express Trail. MWSU’s Dr. Kaye Adkins and her Technical Documentation and Editing Class digitized all of the slides and assisted in cataloging them. Her students were divided into four teams: Scanning and Cataloging, Editing and Tagging, Writing and Project Management, and Multimedia. The students accomplished more than they expected to in the time allotted. They were very excited to be a part of something so significant to history. Once the slides were digitized, Cindy was able to view the photos for the very first time. After project completion, she attended a NFFHA meeting with the Board of Directors.

Separate to the grant project, the collections department received a $2500 grant for the project, “The Liberty Tree.” The Liberty Tree was planted by the Buchanan County 4-H at the Pony Express National Museum to commemorate the誕生 of the Pony Express. The grant was used to purchase a large tree in support of the project, which was the Liberty Tree. The tree was planted on the grounds of the Pony Express Museum and is dedicated “Liberty Trees” in support of the resistance and community service. During the Revolutionary War, towns designated “Liberty Trees” in support of the resistance and these trees became symbols of American independence. The tree planted by the Buchanan County 4-H at the Pony Express Museum was a gift from the last original Liberty Tree, a tulip poplar, which stood on the grounds of St. John’s College in Annapolis, MD. Youth Specialist, Cindy Wells said “I could not think of a better location to place this historical symbol of American independence. This important piece of history can be enjoyed by 4-H and other youth as well as their children and future generations for years to come. The rich history of the Pony Express Museum and the Liberty Tree will serve to complement each other.

Front row right to left: Cindy Wells, Logan Casick, Johny Gertnaea, Thomas Gertnaea, Emmaline Gertnaea, Elliot Gertnaea, and Rebecca Gertnaea. Back row right to left: Cindy Daffron, Megan DeShaw, Jim Lide, Dan Houseman, Dick DeShaw, and Gordon Robakka.

Celebrating a Birthday  Submitted by Kelsey McCrory
Patricia Dashiel and her daughter, Janet, celebrated Patricia’s 84th birthday by revisiting the Pony Express Statue. Patricia, who now resides in San Jose, California, had witnessed the unveiling of the statue as a child, almost 80 years ago. Janet had asked her mother whether she was going to go celebrate her birthday. Her mother responded with, “I want to go to St. Joseph, Missouri.” Beth Conway at the St. Joseph Convention and Visitors Bureau was the orchestrator behind this birthday celebration. They threw a birthday party for Patricia with attendees including members of local St. Joseph museums and Rep. Pat Conway.

Regarding the 1940s unveiling ceremony, Patricia said “It was a big occasion and it was really something important for the citizens because it had speeches and band and more speeches and then they unveiled the Pony Express rider. And I was very unhappy because I wanted the real thing and my mother had to take me home because I threw a tantrum. So, today, I promised my daughter I wouldn’t throw a tantrum.” Patricia and Janet were gifted tours of several museums after seeing the statue, saying they wanted to see as much of St. Joseph as possible.

Pony Express Statue Unveiling  by Marshall White
Herman Atkins MacNeil (1886-1947) became a noted American sculptor. One of his most famous sculptures is “Justice, the Guardian of Liberty.” It became the east pediment of the U.S. Supreme Court building.

His most famous piece of work became the “Standing Liberty Quarter” (1916-1930). The government minted some 30 million of these quarters.

In the midst of the Great Depression, St. Joseph raised $35,000 and received another $28,000 in federal money to pay for a Pony Express memorial.

The city’s Park Board conducted a national contest. MacNeil’s design of a rider in full-gallop was accepted and he began work in December, 1931. Mounted on a pedestal of Vermont granite, the city officially accepted the statue on April 18, 1940. Two days later, Jessamine Wallace, had the honor of officially unveiling the statue in a public ceremony at 10th & Frederick Avenue.

Westward Gateway Chapter International Grant  Submitted by Karen Foley
Westward Gateway applied for the 2018 International Preservation and Restoration Grant to preserve and restore fourteen pieces of art currently hanging at the Pony Express National Museum. The grant was received in May, 2018 at the International Convention in Kansas City.

Tom Duggins of the Frame Station has reframed two-thirds of the pictures and the project should be completed by March, 2019. All the artwork involved will be preserved using a new material called Optium Museum Acrylic.

The Quester Organization is an International study organization founded in 1944. It aims to stimulate the appreciation of antiques through study and to encourage the preservation of historical landmarks. There are five chapters in St. Joseph and 14 in the state of Missouri. Kathy Hill-Bahner was responsible for writing the grant. “The Pony Express Museum is truly honored to be receiving this type of restoration grant for the photos hanging at the Museum. It has been my dream for many years, so a big thanks to the club from us,” says Cindy Daffron.

She added, “One day in the museum, I overhead visitors remarking how beautiful the paintings looked and how they were going to take a closer look to see who the artist was. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, never in my 14 years plus at the museum have I ever heard anyone comment on those paintings. So proud of Tom’s work on this project and the support of the Westward Gateway Chapter #1066 Questers on a much needed preservation work.”
On October 15, 1938, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt unveiled “The Pony Express Map”, a mural by George Gray, for the Hotel Robidoux in St. Joseph, MO. At the dedication, she stated, “It is in the spirit of the pioneer spirit of the past that we honor the Pony Express and Waddell.”

The Commission has received many of the objects depicted in the mural, but there are still a few that need to be obtained. These include a trunk used by a Pony Express rider, William Pridham. His name is printed on both ends with a sticker inside identifying it to 1873 Wells Fargo in San Francisco. After working as a Pony Express rider, William Pridham was employed by Wells Fargo for 50 years. Presently, it is being restored by a conservator and should be ready for display sometime in February. Acquisitions of this type are so important to the museum because much of its collection is on loan from the St. Joseph Museum.

The trunk was gifted to the museum in November by Mrs. Frances Haywood of Cape Cod, ME. We are absolutely thrilled to acquire such an authentic artifact! Being a true “treasure chest”, it is something to look for in 2019!