



A Walk In Time...

Past, Present & Future

Chartered on July 4, 1983

OFFICERS

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Treasurer: Cecil Crowe

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Woody Duncan

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Sue Orick

"A Walk in Time" is published by and for the Oliver Springs Historical Society. Anyone may submit material for the newsletter. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions. For questions or to submit material, email suezzee@aol.com.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Thursday 4-8 PM

By appointment contact:

865-617-0813

Oliver Springs Historical Society:

P.O. Box 409

Oliver Springs, Tn 37840

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Oliver Springs Historical Society Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 3 November 2025

The Quarterly Forum - Woody Duncan

On behalf of the Oliver Springs Historical Society, we owe you an apology. You may have noticed that we missed sending out a newsletter last quarter and wanted to acknowledge the oversight. We were busy planning for October Sky Festival along with a couple other unforeseen complications and just dropped the ball. Please accept our apologies for the interrupted schedule.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



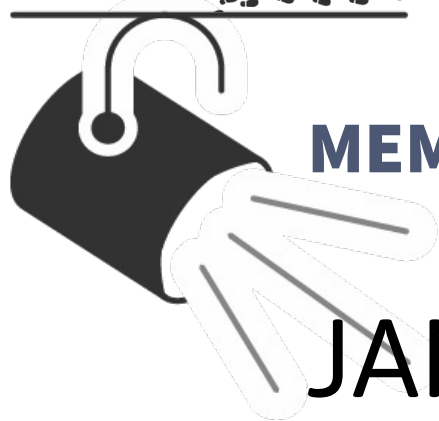
Miss Clara's 105th birthday!

Ms. Clara Hughes celebrated her 105th birthday Sunday evening at the Bridgewater Event Center in Knoxville, TN. Ms. Clara planned her own birthday party with the theme of "**Fruits of the Spirit**" which she attributes to guiding her through her wonderful and long life. Over three hundred of her friends and family attended that day! A special treat for her and everyone, was a video shown made by Dolly Parton wishing her a very special "Happy Birthday". Ms. Clara a loving and generous person known by many in our community, did mention she was looking forward to her 106th birthday party next year!!!



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

JANE HOLLAND



Our Spotlight this quarter is on Jane Holland. Jane had attended meetings at the Historical Society several years prior to 2004 with Terry Holland but did not become a member until 2004. Could it have something to do that Jane and Terry were married in 2004 and becoming a member was part of the deal?

Jane is the mother of two daughters, Sara and Susan and is a bonus mom to four others. Jane grew up on a farm in Andersonville where she loved to ride horses. She graduated from Norris High School and pursued a career in nursing until she retired in 2021. While living in Andersonville, Jane attended Andersonville United Methodist Church where she played the organ and piano. Jane's interest in hobbies includes camping, going to estate sales, antiques, wood carving and volunteering.

Jane sees the past as something to be cherished and combines her love of antiques with volunteerism, turning her passions into volunteer work at the museum. She sees antiques as not only objects, but as pieces of history with a story speaking to us of the blending of traits, values and traditions with a connection to the past.

Jane is also our Facility Rental Coordinator. The OSHS offers a beautiful selection of rooms, for your event. To reserve a unique and beautiful setting for your event, call Jane at. (865) 291-7204. In addition to that, Jane is not afraid to get her hands dirty as you will find her at the museum cleaning up prior to an event as well as after.

Not only at the Museum where Jane volunteers, but there is a lot of history surrounding the home where Jane and Terry live. The home was first built in the 1890's and was eventually sold to the Taylor family in the early 1940's. The home is now owned by Jane and Terry Holland where they have been restoring the home throughout the years.

Did you know there is more history regarding the house? During the filming of the movie October Sky, the interior of Jane and Terry's home was used to replicate the home of Homer Hickam. Jane Holland lives in history and we are lucky to have her!



by Wes Lee

A Death in Question,,,

There are many ongoing mysteries that surround the Richards family. I was reminded of the death of the youngest son, Joseph J Richards in 1932. If you remember he was married to the former Nettie Sienknecht and they had two sons, Henry Sienknecht Richards and Benjamin Thomas Richards Sr.

As a reminder, Joseph was in charge of the Richards coal mine operations and later served as a coal mine inspector for the state of Tennessee and became the General Manager of the Blue Diamond Coal Company when he moved to Winchester, KY in 1922. He was quiet successful in his own right when he bought the remaining interest of his brothers in the existing portions of their father's estate in Oliver Springs.

In 1930 he was living on Maple Dr in Winchester KY, an exclusive section in the most expensive home. By this time he was General Manager of the Alex Bonnyman Coal Company and his son, Henry Sienknecht Richards was the Safety Director for the Blue Diamond Coal Company.

But something happened with Joseph and for reasons unknown he went to the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan. Keep in mind the word sanitarium, back then was defined as a health resort. In 1928, Battle Creek Sanitarium expanded with a fourteen-story tower shown in the photo. The sanitarium became a destination for both prominent and middle-class American citizens but after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 few previously well-to-do patients came to the sanitarium. What caused Joseph to go there in 1932 is a mystery to me but on June 20, 1932 he would either fall or jump to his death from a sixth floor window to the pavement below. He was 66 years-old. His wife, Nettie would leave Winchester and move to Knoxville while his oldest son would move to Middlesboro, KY. His youngest son, Benjamin Thomas Richards Sr had a successful career in New York as a magazine editor.

Could his death be an accident, or related to the Wall Street Crash? Could it possibly be for some unknown health issues or maybe stress from past squabbles over the handling of the Richards estate? He seemed to have so much to live for....



Battle Creek Sanitarium

Joseph J. Richard's family





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Teens and History

The Oliver Springs Historical Society and the Oliver Springs Academy are partnering with each other to unlock significant benefits for both institutions. The Academy has instituted a Project-Based Learning (PBL) program to enhance their Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) initiative and partnering with the Historical Society gives students hands-on opportunities to assist in projects relating to the history of Oliver Springs.

Partnering with the Oliver Springs Academy offers mutual benefits, from enhancing student skills and career readiness to providing the Historical Society with a talent pipeline to help preserve the town's history. Students involved in museum projects can build essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, creativity and digital literacy.

A task list was developed and provided to the Academy. This on-going task list is a tool that adapts to changing circumstances to provide structure and clarity. Students are also encouraged to present their ideas on projects and make suggestions for improvement. Project Base Learning will provide students with opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in practical, real-world settings and enhance their learning experience.

Students are given hands-on learning opportunities to create and develop museum signage and labels; conduct research on various people, historical buildings and other historical objects; curate an exhibit; build a digital platform that makes museum content more accessible to the community; and conduct and record oral histories.

Partnerships require planning and commitment between both parties and our goal is to become a "learning lab" which helps students develop critical skills while invigorating our museum with new perspective and energy. By working together, we can foster a sense of shared responsibility and pride in our students' success while strengthening our community bond.

Student Projects at the Museum





EVENT CALENDAR

November 2025

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
* MOVIE 1947 original: "Miracle on 34th Street" **PLEASE NOTE NEW MUSEUM HOURS						1
2	3 OSHS Monthly Meeting 6:00 pm/Hot Dog supper afterward at the museum	4	5	6 Museum open 4-8 pm	7	8 *OSHS Movie Night at the Museum at 6:30 pm Doors open at 6:00
9	10 Christmas Decorating at the museum.	11 VETERAN'S DAY Christmas Decorating at the museum.	12 Christmas Decorating at the museum.	13 Museum open 4-8 pm Christmas Decorating at museum	14 Christmas Decorating at museum	15
16	17	18	19	20 Museum open 4-8 pm	21 Senator Yager's 30th Annual Chili Supper & Auction 5-7 PM Roane State Comm College \$5/ticket	22
23	24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving Private Event	28 Museum closed for Thanksgiving	29
30						



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Oliver Springs – A Busy Place

Big-time railroading began in Oliver Springs when the Southern Railway Company bought the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railway Company (E.T.V. & G) at a for-closure sale in July of 1894. At that time, the area coal mines were booming and Oliver Springs was rapidly developing into a freight distribution center.



Settlers came for the rich wildlife and mineral waters, leading to a period of rapid growth and a bustling tourism-focused economy. Life in early Oliver Springs revolved around its natural mineral springs, which led to the establishment of a grand hotel, the nationally-known Oliver Springs Resort Hotel that was built in 1895. Passenger trains stopped in front of the Hotel to accommodate the high society and ever-increasing passenger traffic.



Continued on next page...



Oliver Springs – A Busy Place (CONTINUED)

In addition to the various smaller stores and coal company commissaries, the H. Sienknecht Department Store was opened in 1901, which was the largest retail outlet in the Oliver Springs area.



A brick plant was put into operation, a canning factory became a new town industry, numerous saw and planing mills were doing big business, a bank was established in 1904, slaughter pens were built, a consolidated school was an asset, and Paul Deblieux and Dennis Letorey had opened the Oliver Springs Bottling Works for the manufacturing of “soda pop”. The Southern Railway’s business expanded in proportion with the town’s growing needs with little competition from the horse and buggy and none from paved highways and the yet unborn trucking industry.

At one time, Oliver Springs was indeed a busy place, as it advanced from coal mining to a popular resort town and continued to grow with the development of numerous industries. During World War II, The United States Government established the secret city of Oak Ridge nearby for the Manhattan Project. This created new jobs and partially shifted the local economy toward government employment.

The town still features numerous buildings from before the 20th century. Oliver Springs has since shifted its focus to tourism, emphasizing its history and taking advantage of the surrounding mountains for off-road recreation. Once again, Oliver Springs is becoming a busy place.



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Volunteerism

As the October Sky Festival is fast approaching, we would like to thank all the volunteers who have been preparing for the festival to be held on October 18, 2025. Volunteers are people who freely and willingly offer their time, energy and skills to support the organization without receiving payment for their services. Volunteers are essential to the functioning of our organization and we are thankful for everyone who volunteers their time to help make the Historical Society and October Sky a success.

Volunteers are often the welcoming face of the festival and are essential for a successful festival, helping with everything from setting up and guiding attendees to managing logistics and cleaning up afterwards. Volunteers have been working behind the scenes for the past few months in advance of the festival – processing vendor applications, contacting sponsors, updating signs, advertising, contacting individuals and making arrangements for needed items and equipment in addition to arranging entertainment, preparing baked goods, etc.

Not only are volunteers essential for October Sky, there are many other ways for individuals to volunteer throughout the year. Volunteerism takes many forms, and anyone can be a volunteer. One of the best things about volunteering is that it allows you to connect to our community and make it a better place. There are multiple ways for individuals to make an impact and even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference. You may think you are not able to help, but just ask!

A true volunteer is motivated by a desire to help others and gain a sense of purpose by finding meaning in their actions and contributes something other than themselves.

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE – BECOME A VOLUNTEER Call 865-617-0813 or email Museum Director, Woody Duncan, w.duncan@oshistorical.com.



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October Sky Festival 2025



The 18th annual October Sky Festival was held on Saturday, October 18th, 2025. This year's festival is being hailed as a resounding success, a testament to the vibrant energy of participants and vendors and the tireless dedication of our volunteers. A record-breaking 175 vendors participated through the festival sponsor, the Oliver Springs Historical Society.

The festival was a vibrant showcase of local art, live music, crafts, car show and food vendors. There were rides for the kids, rocket launches and it offered something for everyone. With Dudley Evans as Master of Ceremonies, we were bledded with great entertainment at Arrowhead Park. As the location of the filming of the 1998 movie, October Sky, the Oliver Springs Historical Society uses the festival to showcase the town of Oliver Springs and the rich history it has.

The Oliver Springs Historical Society , as organizers of the October Sky Festival, would like to thank our sponsors. Our sincere appreciation to all who have contributed to make this event a success.

2025 Festival Sponsors:
Adkins Heating and Air
Cristy Martin
Fox Insurance Group
Harvey's Furniture
Leach Pharmacy
ORNL Credit Union
Premier Physical Therapy
Ruby's Diner
Tennessee Deisel Repair
Terry Frank
The Real Estate Office
Turnkey
ZFG UTV
Kathy Pinkston



**aerial shot before
opening of festival**



The Oliver Springs Historical Society uses the festival to promote the town of Oliver Springs and as the event becomes larger, it requires more planning and takes a lot of volunteers. The success of the festival can be attributed to the dedication of our volunteers who are the heartbeat of this successful event.

Oh what fun



Christmas Open House at the Museum

Please join us for a holiday Open House at the Oliver Springs Historical Society Museum, 301 Kingston Avenue, Oliver Springs, Tennessee 37840.

The Oliver Springs Historical Society Museum warmly invites the community to celebrate the holiday season at its Annual Christmas Open House on **Monday, December 1, at 6:00 p.m.**

The museum will be beautifully decorated for the season, offering guests a nostalgic holiday atmosphere surrounded by the rich history of Oliver Springs. Visitors can enjoy walking among the many exhibits of days gone by in Oliver Springs. Guests will also have the opportunity to visit with friends and neighbors.

The Christmas Open House is a wonderful way to celebrate the season and our community's shared heritage. We're proud to open our doors and invite everyone to experience the spirit of Christmas surrounded by the stories and memories that make Oliver Springs special.

Admission to the Christmas Open House is free, and all are welcome.. **Come celebrate the magic of Christmas in historic Oliver Springs!**





Christmas Concert at the Museum

Presented by the Oliver Springs Historical Society

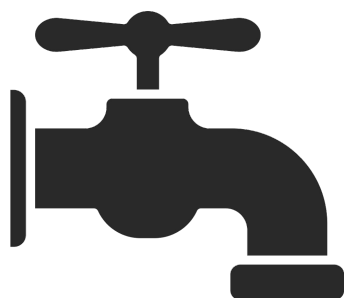
Performances by

MAHONEY & Rachel Smith

Join us for a joyful evening of holiday music and cheer featuring: MAHONEY & Rachel Smith. Come and enjoy the warmth of the season with friends and family.



Admission is free, and everyone is welcome!



Bathroom Update

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Maintenance and Improvement Grant from the State of Tennessee did not cover the full cost of this project. We are fortunate to have a community that is willing to help in the well-being of its neighbors. This project completion was made possible by the generosity of Mark Ollis, who donated the labor for a full-scale renovation to transform the bathroom into a safe, functional, and beautiful space. Mark is a great example of what Volunteerism is all about. Thank you Mark for your support with this project.

The Oliver Springs Historical Society invites you to help preserve the history of our town by becoming a member. We meet at 6 PM, on the first Monday of every month at the Museum, 301 Kingston Avenue in Oliver Springs.

Whether you are joining for the first time or renewing your membership, you will be contributing to the restoration of our new museum and archives. Your support is vital to the Oliver Springs Historical Society, and we appreciate your generosity and confidence.

GET INVOLVED BE A MEMBER

home page, click GET INVOLVED.

A Membership form can be found on our website, www.oshistorical.com, on the

Oliver Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 409
Oliver Springs, TN 37840

PLACE
STAMP
HERE