

Coffee County Historical Society Newsletter



DECEMBER 2023

Society News: The Historical Society and the Joanna Lewis Museum for Coffee County History will be closed from December 25-January 1, 2024.

General Membership Meeting is January 13th at 1:00PM. Our meeting will take place at the Coffee County Courthouse on the square at 101 W. Fort Street Manchester. Bonnie Gamble will present a program about the operation of schools in Coffee County from 1905-1944. She researched the school board minutes from this period to provide information.

A big thank you to all the volunteers who put together the open house events on Veterans Day and during the Manchester Christmas Parade. Both were very successful and many new people came in and experienced the work of the Historical Society.

Recent Donations: Thank you to J. Stanley Rogers for donating pictures of the Manchester City Square from the early 1900s. Sue Banks donated several items documenting local sports history. We also appreciate Dwight Alford donating several items to advance our collection of artifacts in the museum.

101 W. Fort St., Box 2, Manchester, TN 37355,
Phone: 931-728-0145

Email: cchs1969@att.net. Facebook:
Coffee County Historical Society,
Webpage: cctnhs.org

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS President: Larry McIntosh Vice President: David Welborn
Recording Secretary: Patricia Anderson
Corresponding Secretary: Bonnie Gamble
Treasurer: Butch Niederhauser
Asst. Treasure: Frances Simmons
Museum Curator: Bonnie Gamble
Office Manager: Beverly Vetter
Publications: Susan Wilson James
Directors: Brent Parsley, Jeff Haley



Summitville Elementary School 1925

Joanna Lewis Museum for Coffee County History News

The Museum volunteers took our new mobile exhibit "When I was Your Age" to Hillsboro and Hickerson Elementary schools in December. It was a great experience as the students were very interested in how students attended school in 1905-1944. We will take the exhibit to East Elementary school in January.

Two new exhibits are planned for the first part of the new year. One will feature the history of our black citizens in Coffee County in February. It will emphasize the accomplishments of those men and women who taught in a segregated school system. Another is in March that will focus on Women's History. It will include many of the prominent women in Coffee County.

We welcome any items people may wish to share on these topics and any others that center on our local history. Please contact us as we build our collection.

The museum is open Tuesday-Saturdays 9:00am-1:00pm. **We will have the museum open only on Tuesdays-Fridays in December. We will be closed December 25-January 1, 2024.** If you are interested in volunteering, email Bonnie Gamble at cchs1969@att.net.

New Books in the CCHS Library

The Library has recently received four books for its collection:

Tennessee Blue Book 2007 – 2008.

The Blue Book contains facts about Tennessee and her citizens for a given two-year period, including information about each of the State's three branches of government. Some important Tennessee history and state statistics for the two year period and information about Tennessee's Representatives and Senators at the Federal level. The Society thanks David Welborn for the donation of the 2007 – 2008 Blue Book.

1999 Westwood Middle School

Yearbook. This yearbook was actually when Westwood was still a Junior High School since it includes Freshmen.

1963 Coffee County Central High

School Raider. If you or a loved one graduated from Central High from 1963 to 1966, you'll enjoy browsing through this yearbook. The Society seeks yearbooks from both Coffee Central and Tullahoma High Schools. If you have one you could donate, please send a message to cchs1969@att.net.

Knights of Pythias

Coffee County had many different civic groups, some still in existence, during the 1900s. One of the most unique was the Knights of Pythias. This group was a fraternal benevolent association founded in 1864 by Justus H. Rathbone in Washington, D.C. It began as a secret society for government clerks but soon expanded its membership. The order's founding was an effort to bring together both northern and southern citizens in the aftermath of the Civil War. The society took its inspiration from the Greek myth of Damon and Pythias. In the legend, King Dionysius sentences to death Pythias but his friend Damon offered himself as security so that Pythias could return home to say goodbye to his family. If Pythias did not return, Damon would be killed in his place. Pythias was delayed by robbers while returning and Damon was nearly executed, but Pythias arrived just in time to save him. The king was so impressed by the true friendship of the two men that he released both and made them his counselors. The Knights of Pythias thus took "Friendship, Charity, and Benevolence" as their motto and their mission. Knights of Pythias was the first fraternal organization to receive a charter under an act of the Congress of the United States after careful investigation by then-President Abraham Lincoln.

The Nashville Knights of Pythias erected a monument, based on Monticello, at the Tennessee Centennial Exposition in 1897. This building was later moved to west of Franklin Tennessee and is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Many orders of the Knights of Pythias erected meeting spaces in "castle" like structures beginning in the 1890s. This was the case in Tullahoma where there was an order of the Knights of Pythias at Ovoca. It was about 400 acres and was purchased in 1908 by the Knights of Pythias for a Pythian home for widows and orphans. Many buildings were constructed there, including a home, barn, cottages, administration buildings, dormitories, dining hall, etc. It had a lake and 70 foot waterfall. They also operated a private school until 1925 when it consolidated with the Ovoca public school. One of the more unique aspects of the Knights of Pythias is that black citizens in the south founded their own orders because of segregation. In 1894, the white Knights of Pythias in Georgia filed suit against the Colored Pythians. They alleged that the Colored Pythians were wrongfully using the name "Knights of Pythias" in their attempt to incorporate themselves and were fraudulently using the titles, orders, insignias, and emblems of the white Knights of Pythias. The case was eventually heard by the Supreme Court, which ruled in 1912 that the Colored Pythians were

entitled to use the name. They became known as the Colored Knights of Pythias.

It is known that there was a Colored Knights of Pythias order in Manchester. Citizens remember attending the "KP" hall for social events, especially during World War II, when the black soldiers were getting training and serving in Coffee County. The "KP" hall served as the black canteen.

PYTHIAN LODGE AT OVACA

One Will Be Instituted in the Castle
There on July 28.

OVACO, Tenn., July 19.—(Special).—Plans have been perfected for the institution of a subordinate lodge at Ovoca, the Widows and Orphans' Home of the Knights of Pythias. The charter has been granted by Grand Chancellor, H. W. Stratton, and the work of launching the new organization will be done on the night of July 28, in the Castle at Ovoca. From the beginning of the Pythian Home movement the promoters have had in view the institution of a "home" lodge at Ovoca, the headquarters of the order in Tennessee. It is intended that the membership of those who are in good standing in lodges that become defunct and who do not desire to sever their connection with the order will go into this home lodge. The new lodge will be known as R. L. C. White Lodge No. 242. The next convention of the Grand Lodge will perhaps change this to Home Lodge No. 1, the original No. 1 lodge having been defunct for a number of years. The list of applicants or membership in the new lodge number twenty-two, and include many prominent business and professional men from various places. One of these is a near-octogenarian, Prof. J. T. Ross, assistant of city schools at Paducah, Ky., who will be admitted by special dispensation. Prof. R. Thompson Webb and Prof. A. T. Whitaker, of the faculty of Webb School at Bell Buckle, will also take the ranks. The grand lodge officers and other prominent Pythians will be present at the institution of the lodge.

and all knights have an invitation to attend and witness the work.

Among the newest arrivals at Ovoca are Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hunter and children, of Nashville, who have taken Launcelot cottage for the balance of the summer.

SPAIN TENDERS AN APOLOGY

Deeply Regrets Arrest of French Consular Agent in Morocco.

PARIS, July 19.—The Spanish ambassador to France, J. Perez-Caballero, today called on M. DeSelves, the French foreign minister, and expressed the regrets of the Spanish government for the recent arrest of M. Bolisset, French consular agent at Alcazar, Morocco, by a Spanish patrol.

The ambassador said the Spanish foreign minister had not yet received a report on the subject, but that after reading the French official version of the incident, he had expressed regret to the French ambassador at Madrid and his government. Perez-Caballero added that the minister requested him to repeat this expression to M. DeSelves and inform the French foreign minister that as soon as he receives a full report from the legation at Tangier he will instruct Col. Sylvestre, commander of the Spanish section of the Moorish police, to convey adequate apologies to M. Bolisset.

In addition the Spanish ambassador said his government was desirous of maintaining cordial relations with France and had forwarded instructions to its agents at Alcazar to that effect.



1910 Annual Convention of Knights of Pythias at Ovoca at the "Castle".