

**Ralls County Historical Society**  
September 21, 2021  
6:00-7:30 p.m.  
Mark Twain Council of Governments Building

The Ralls County Historical Society met on Tuesday, September 21, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. at the Mark Twain Regional Council of Governments facility in Perry. Individuals in attendance included Ron Leake, Delores Woodhurst, Sharon Lake, Phyllis Hart, Barbara Hibbs, Imogene Karaff, Madonna Petijean, and Martha Baker. Individuals also participated in the meeting online via Facebook Live.

The meeting began with an update provided by the Society's president, Ron Leake. On July 9, 2021, the Ralls County Historical Society in Perry sustained serious damage from the straight-line winds that impacted the entire town. Currently, the building is housed in three buildings on Main Street in Perry. Two of the three buildings had substantial roof damage, causing water to leak onto many of the artifacts that are stored in these two buildings. Community members banded together to remove as many items as possible, including paper and documents that would be damaged by future water damage. About fifty plastic totes of paper documents and other artifacts were removed from the facility and are currently being stored in a citizen's secure shed. As much as possible, items were moved to the one building (library) that did not sustain damage. The building's owner, Tony Elam, continues to make repairs to the buildings as needed. Unfortunately, it has become obvious that the Historical Society cannot return to its current location, making the priority of the organization to secure a physical location for the Historical Society.

The discussion then turned to an exploration of various locations and options that may be available for the Historical Society. These items included questions about the availability of several existing buildings throughout the county. The group also discussed partnering with the Ralls County Library to explore various options. Railroad-related artifacts and documents may be able to be stored at the Center depot, which Sharon and John Lake are working to return to good condition. Attendees are encouraged to seek out alternative locations and solutions to this problem.

Currently, the Historical Society does not have the funds needed to buy or lease a new facility, nor the funds needed for both regular and future upkeep. One of the first steps moving forward will need to be restoring 501 3c status for the group. Delores Woodhurst will check into this application process and work to complete the application process. Once this status is restored, hopefully, grant opportunities will become available.

Trophies from Perry, Center, and New London Elementary were moved to the Historical Society in Perry when each of these buildings closed, but it does not seem feasible that the group will be able to continue to store these trophies. Options for the trophies were discussed, including donating them to individuals that wish to have them and/or selling the trophies for a donation to the Historical Society.

Other topics of discussion included:

- There are a variety of book titles that can be republished, which might provide a small income.
- A variety of communication methods must be used to get the word out about meetings, needs, and updates. In addition to the Internet, this includes the newspapers, radio stations, and tv stations.
- Ralls County has a rich history and using a variety of avenues to share the unique history of the county may build interest in the society and the maintenance of its history. A variety of topics were generated. Hopefully, the newspaper will work with our group to provide a spot for sharing local history.
- Sharon Lake contacted school superintendent Tara Lewis to see if the school is interested in partnering with the society to develop a focus on local history without the school. Ideas of a history club or

working to restore history fairs in the school district were discussed. It is hoped that a partnership can be developed with the school to involve students in the organization.

- The existing website has not been updated since the individual responsible for the website moved away. Delores Woodhurst will explore options for website renovations.
- The reorganization of officers, board, and committees will be a part of the next meeting. A slate of officers will be presented for consideration.
- A lot of people have shown interest in the historical society, and those in attendance are encouraged to make personal contact with any/all individuals to make them aware of the efforts of this group.
- An updated membership list will need to be created, and membership fees will be discussed at the October meeting.
- Elsberry, Shelbina, and Vandalia's historical societies were offered as models/examples as we move forward. Ralls County has an outstanding variety of resources available to its communities, and with a thorough organizational system, this information can be easily accessed.

The Historical Society's next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 19, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. at the Mark Twain Council of Government facility in Perry. Again, the meeting will be streamed through Facebook Live, but all individuals interested in preserving the rich history of our county are encouraged to attend in person, if possible.