

# Fort Towson Historic Site TELEGRAPH

BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2025



FTHS Director Calista Stephens serves up warm cinnamon rolls with OHS Museums and Sites Director Chantry Banks

## FORT TOWSON'S 200<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

2024 was an event-filled year for the Fort Towson Historic Site, with a historic eclipse and 200th anniversary commemoration in addition to our regular programs. Through the year our staff gained a more personal perspective of the soldiers who served at Fort Towson, along with the nation and Native peoples they were here to serve. We are thankful for each volunteer, guest, colleague, and friend who participated and made the year momentous.

To begin the next chapter in the life of Fort Towson, we have decided to share a bi-annual newsletter. We hope you enjoy learning about the great programs and events we are involved in and that you will come and be a part of the fun.

Here's to the next 200!

## CAROLYN WATSON RURAL OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT



Presley Couch wearing clothing from the FTHS living history closet

The Fort Towson Historic Site received a \$10,000 grant from the Carolyn Watson Rural Oklahoma Community Foundation to support the annual History Camp and to add clothing to the site's living history closet. History Camp is a three-day camp for students ages 9-13. The camp was free in 2024 thanks to the grant. Clothing from the living history closet includes military, women's and children's garments and may be checked out by volunteers to use in OHS programs.



13 students attended the 2024 History Camp

# Fort Towson Historic Site

## PROGRAMS



### DOAKSVILLE CANDLELIGHT TOUR

OHS staff from across the state, volunteers, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma staff, and Fort Washita staff came together to present the 2024 Doaksville Candlelight Tour. The program focused on the early years of Fort Towson and its relationship with the Choctaw community of Doaksville. The event featured full tours and a special late tour for local Scouts. The Fort Towson Volunteer Fire Department provided food for the event as a fundraiser. Thank you to the volunteers, staff, and community partners who made this event a success.

Lilah Thompson,  
River Noel,  
Presley Couch,  
Jennifer Frazee,  
Ken Golden, and  
Seth Goff during  
the 2024  
Doaksville  
Candlelight Tour



OHS Board members  
Kenny Sivard and  
T.S. Akers



### CHRISTMAS AT THE FORT

Guests young and old enjoyed a day of remembering Christmas traditions during the annual Christmas at the Fort celebration on December 14. Gingerbread decorating, tree trimming, historic games, site tours, wreath making, and campfire cocoa were some of the day's activities. New this year were Zoetrope Old Time Music, Dutch oven cooking, and a 4-H petting zoo. Santa and Mrs. Claus greeted youngsters with handmade toys provided by the late Ron Engel-Wilson.

A special thank you to Lanny and Leslie Noel for bringing a jolly spirit to the program.



### CINNAMON ROLL SOCIAL

Correy Twilley, US Army, presented about the Army's contributions to the nation's food supply. Correy will be back by popular demand at the 2025 social.

# Fort Towson Historic Site

## OUTREACH



### BENNINGTON CHILDCARE

Bennington Childcare staff got in the spirit of living history by donning dresses from the FTTHS living history closet for a foodways program by Calista Stephens. The childcare center is a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma program.



### BEAVERS BEND FIRST DAY HIKE

David C. Reed shared Oklahoma history with visitors to Beavers Bend State Park during the annual First Day Hike.



### CHOCTAW COUNTY FAIR

Gail Gooding (top) and Kara Richardson joined FTTHS staffers David C. Reed and Calista Stephens for three days of history education outreach during the annual Choctaw County Fair in September. Thanks to these great volunteers for sharing their knowledge!



Sue Teska, David C. Reed, and Chantry Banks

### BEAVERS BEND FOLK FESTIVAL & CRAFT SHOW

OHS staff members from Fort Towson, Hunter's Home, Will Rogers Memorial Museum, Oklahoma History Center Museum, and OHS Research Division presented living history education during the three-day Beavers Bend Folk Festival & Craft Show.

### RED RIVER GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY



David C. Reed presented an educational program about using online tools, finding primary sources, and OHS resources for genealogical research. To schedule a site tour or outreach program, call 580-494-6497 or email [fttowson@history.ok.gov](mailto:fttowson@history.ok.gov).

# Fort Towson Historic Site

## OUTREACH

### WOODTURNING CLASSES AT WRIGHT CITY SCHOOL

Keith Couch, Fort Towson Historic Site's head of maintenance, assisted with the Beginning Woodturning classes at Wright City School. The classes, led by the Southeast Oklahoma Woodturners, allow young people to get hands-on experience in the historic art of woodturning. During the classes, Keith worked with students to help them build foundational skills and confidence in themselves.



Keith Couch and Jett Roberts turning at Wright City School

The Southeast Oklahoma Woodturners, with Keith's help, will be leading a hands-on woodturning class at the Fort Towson Historic Site later in 2025.



### BOSWELL 4-H LEARNS ABOUT HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

David C. Reed and Calista Stephens debuted a new program, "Interpreting History," to the Boswell 4-H club. Students learned about going beyond dates and names to get excited about why and how events in history happened. They watched a third person interpretation and a first person impression, then tried their hands at interpreting objects.



### OHS RESOURCES SHARED IN THE OHS STORE

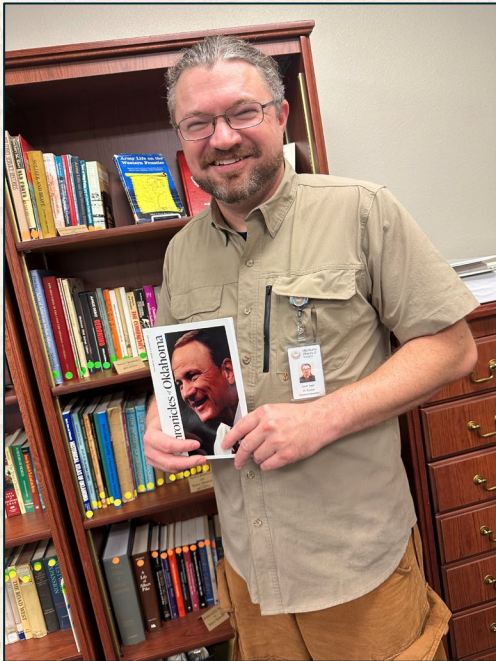
Calista Stephens attended the Wewoka Sorghum Festival with the OHS Store. The store is organized by the Research Division and is used at festivals and events throughout the state to raise awareness of OHS resources and provide patrons with cool Oklahoma-themed merchandise. To get your own Oklahoma swag, go to [okhistory.org/researchorders](http://okhistory.org/researchorders).

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## NEWS AND UPDATES

### TOWSON TALES

As part of the year-long 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the establishment of Fort Towson, we introduced Towson Tales, a twice monthly YouTube series. The simple format delivers hard-core history with a historian providing background and reading from a primary source. The series will continue with new videos shared to YouTube and Facebook once a month. To watch past videos and follow our channel, go to [YouTube@forttowsonhistoricsite8968](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...).



### DAVID C. REED ARTICLE FEATURED IN THE CHRONICLES OF OKLAHOMA

Congratulations to David C. Reed on being published in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*! The article tells of the life of Patrick Alden Farrelly, including his time at Fort Towson during 1850. To learn more, read the article in *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* Volume CII, Issue 2, Summer 2024.



### SUTLER STORE GETS NEW SHINGLES AND GUTTERS

The sutler store received an update with new cedar shake shingles and historically accurate gutters. The gutters are simple, unlined troughs that channel water, protecting the exterior of the store from excessive water damage. In addition to work on the sutler store, new shingles and exterior work were done on the "old lab" in the maintenance area.

# Fort Towson Historic Site

## COMING EVENTS

- BEGINNER KNITTING** February 15 and 22 9 a.m.-noon  
 No cost, registration is required and limited. Learn the historic art of knitting with hands-on instruction. This two-part class will focus on the foundational skills of casting on, knit stitch, purl stitch, and casting off. Some supplies are required.
- EDUCATION DAY** March 6 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 No cost, registration is recommended. Learn about life and historic skills of the 1840s during this annual living history program. It takes roughly two hours to go through the stations so plan to arrive by 1:00 to fully enjoy the experience. Picnic areas are available.
- DUTCH OVEN GATHERING** March 22 9 a.m.-noon  
 No cost. Bring your Dutch oven and enjoy a day of cooking or stop by to learn about using cast iron pots to cook up delicious food. All are welcome for this informal day of food and fellowship.
- INDIAN SCHOOLS CONTINUING EDUCATION** March 27 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Registration is required. Morning session will focus on Choctaw education and the Wheelock Academy. Afternoon session will emphasize practical application. For more information call 405-534-1978 or email [sarah.dumas@history.ok.gov](mailto:sarah.dumas@history.ok.gov).
- BEGINNING WOODTURNING** Date TBD Time TBD  
 No cost, registration is required and limited. Learn the historic art of woodturning with this hands-on workshop at the Fort Towson Historic Site. Classes will be led by the Southeast Oklahoma Woodturners.
- SPRING FLING** April 26 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 No cost. Fun for all ages! Learn about the travels of Thomas Nuttall, the first botanist to document his travels through the area in 1819. The day will begin with a map making activity for kids at 10, to be followed by a lecture on Nuttall at 11. Guests are encouraged to bring a sack lunch and enjoy a picnic on the grounds before taking a guided nature walk at 1.
- HISTORY CAMP** May 27-29 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 No cost, registration is required and limited. This annual program is for young people ages 9-13. Applications will open in March. Students will learn about the history of Fort Towson and life in the 1800s through hands-on activities and outdoor exploration.
- NIGHT TOUR** June 7 8:30-9:30 p.m.  
 \$5 per person. Join us for a tight time guided tour of the Fort Towson grounds. The museum will be open after hours for this special event.

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## COMING EVENTS

### NIGHT ARTILLERY FIRING

July 12

7:45-9:00 p.m.

\$7 per person. Experience the drama of a night firing of Fort Towson's Mountain Howitzer. The program will start with a boom, with a daylight firing at 7:45, to be followed by a talk about the artillery piece. A second firing will be done at twilight and a third will happen after dark.

### CINNAMON ROLL SOCIAL

September 27

10 a.m.-noon

No cost. Enjoy a fresh, hot cinnamon roll and a history lesson at the Fort Towson Historic Site. Guests will be invited to tour the museum, explore the grounds, and fellowship with other community members.

### DOAKSVILLE CANDLELIGHT TOUR

October 10-11

7:00-9:30 p.m.

\$10 per person at the Doaksville Archaeological Site. Guests ages six and under admitted for free. Advance tickets available.

### CHRISTMAS AT THE FORT

December 13

1:00-3:00 p.m.

No cost. Experience living history interpretations of Christmas traditions that continue to be practiced today, and others that are long forgotten.

Programs and events are subject to change. For updates, follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Our Calendar of Events and more information about the Fort Towson Historic Site are available at [okhistory.org/fttowson](http://okhistory.org/fttowson).



### ODOT PROJECT SET TO BEGIN

Construction is scheduled to begin on February 17 at the Fort Towson Historic Site. A new concrete walking path, interpretive signage, and plaza will be added at the visitor center. The project is expected to take 90-120 days, and the site will remain open during construction. Any changes to operating hours and accessibility will be posted on our Facebook page. This work is made possible through a grant from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.



Oklahoma Historical Society  
Fort Towson Historic Site

Get updates on our programs and events! Call 580-494-6497 or email [fttowson@history.ok.gov](mailto:fttowson@history.ok.gov) to subscribe to our email list.