



## Smithville MO Historical Society

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appreciation in the future.

**May 2026**

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### Smithville MO Historical Society

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## Award to Jack Klein

Jack Klein, who has spent forty-eight years assisting families with internment arrangements and memorial services, was presented with an achievement award at the Society Board's April meeting. The Hixson-Klein Funeral Home just celebrated its 25th anniversary serving the Smithville community. Jack's motto is "always treat people the way you would want to be treated." Dewayne Knott applauded his work, saying "Jack knows what he's doing for veteran funerals ... He honors Vets and sometimes didn't charge a penny."



*Carol Dawkins, Jack Klein, Dewayne Knott*

## Smithville Historical Marker

Dewayne Knott has announced that the historical marker commemorating the founding of Smithville has been ordered and delivery is anticipated in June. A location for the marker is still being discussed. The Smithville Historical Society has donated \$2,000 and the American Legion has donated \$3,000 to cover the cost of the plaque. It will describe the settlement of Smithville by Humphrey and Nancy Smith, the development of the town, challenges with floods, building of the Jefferson Highway, and early firefighters of the American Legion.

## Smithville Fourth of July Celebration

The Smithville Historical Society and American Legion have finalized arrangements for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. At 10:00 am Nellie's children's parade will kick off the event. The American Legion will make a presentation of the colors. Mayor Boley and Hon. Shane Alexander will make speeches, followed by a brief recitation of our history by Society President K.D. Stafford. Becky Rose of D.A.R. will give the closing prayer. The 25th anniversary of 9/11 will also be commemorated. The American Legion Band will play and free refreshments will be provided.

## 100 Years Ago in Smithville

*Clearer microfilm copies of the Smithville Democrat Herald allow us to resume coverage of the news 100 years ago.*

**May 7, 1926** – Hope that the State will replace the Little Platte River bridge have faded. The County engineer proposes a 135 foot long steel structure with a concrete floor for \$20,000. Smithville High School won 3rd and 4th place in interscholastic events held at the State University in Columbia.

**May 14, 1926** – C.C. Kindred delivered 17 new Chevrolet cars in April, a new record. The Kansas City Smithville Fair Association was incorporated last week and 75 stockholders attended a banquet. Smithville High School had 27 students participate in commencement.

**May 21, 1926** – The plan for construction of a new bridge over the Little Platte River will proceed. The first car has crossed the government bridge across the Missouri River at Ft. Leavenworth but traffic is still closed for now. The Rex Café opens next week, purchased by C.G. Curtis and R.C. Robertson.

**May 11, 1926** – Actor Noah Beery planned to come to Smithville to meet with relatives while visiting Kansas City but “didn’t show up.” Peter Manning, the world’s greatest trotting horse, will appear here for an exhibition race in July, which will draw people from hundreds of miles.

## 50 Years Ago in Smithville

*News in 1976 Smithville Democrat Herald in the Clay County Archives. B.J. and Vera Bunch, editors.*

**May 6, 1976** The State Senate has authorized \$3.1 million for development of a recreational area adjacent to the lake project. Spelman Memorial Hospital is the first in the area to connect to the MU School of Medicine online drug information center.

**May 13, 1976** The float sponsored by the Breakfast Club won second place in the 180 unit bicentennial parade held in North Kansas City. The Smithville Saddle Club, High School Band, and second graders were also in the parade.

**May 20, 1976** Charles S. Shinn will be Grand Marshall in the 36 unit local parade. Charlie turns 92 on May 30th. The City Council granted a 30 day permit for the Smithville Gun Club shooting range while it addresses a petition to prohibit the gun range in city limits.

## 250 Patriot Celebration

*Patriot ancestors of Smithville residents and society members are featured here to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.*

**William Vance** was born in Lancaster County, PA in 1752, son of Johann Diel Wentz (anglicized as Handel Vance) who immigrated at the age of 20 from the Palatinate region of Germany in 1748. William initially refused to serve in the local militia after moving to Augusta County, VA. He was ordered to produce a certificate that service was against his religion at a court martial session in 1776, and he did so. William married Barbara Greider in April 1777. Her father was a Mennonite and Tory who was tried and convicted for treason. William was a character witness for him at the trial. Sentiments changed however, and William and his father provided supplies and horses to a local regiment. In 1779 William served in Capt. Willson's company and was recommended for appointment as an ensign. In 1782 William served under George Rogers Clark in a “militia of horse and foot.” William made Kentucky his home until he and his wife moved to Clay County, MO with their son Handel Vance in 1824. They were among to organizers of First Baptist Church of the Platte in 1827. William died on Handel's farm in 1833. The farm is now the grounds of the Google data storage campus being built on the east side of Highway 169. Vance descendants reserved the quarter acre burial plot, which will be in a campus park setting. The White Aloe Chapter of DAR is planning to designate the patriot burial site when the digital data campus construction is complete.

50 Years Ago – cont'd

**May 27, 1976** American Legion Post 58 placed flags at the cemetery to observe Memorial Day. The City Council discussed the sale of the old high school property to C.F. Kindred and Ron Major. A 200,000 gallon water tower will be erected between Highway 169 and Commercial Street at a cost of \$105,740 for its construction.



Breakfast Club Bicentennial float

