

## Old Stagecoach Stop Foundation President's Annual Report 2023

*Our Mission: "to preserve, restore, protect, and maintain the historic structure in Waynesville, Missouri known as the 'Old Stagecoach Stop' in order to permit its educational value to be appreciated by future generations; to engage in educational and charitable activities related to the 'Old Stagecoach Stop'."*

It's been a grand year for the Old Stagecoach Stop! A year of broken records! The Old Stagecoach Stop has kept a visitor register since it first opened to the public three decades ago. While more than 31,500 visitors have signed the register, the reader should keep in mind that not everyone who has visited the museum signed the guestbook. Looking at past annual visitation totals you will notice a couple of things. Visitation can fluctuate substantially from one year to the next, but more importantly, there has been a fairly steady rise in annual visitation totals over the years. And 2023 maintained this upward trend in a notable way.

When summarizing visitation, our guests are placed in one of three categories: those that visited on the 28 Saturdays that were not part of a special events; families, school groups and organizations that arranged for tours on 17 days other than Saturdays; and those that came to the museum in conjunction with one of the four special events, such as Old Settlers Day or Christmas on the Square. Let's look at the 2023 totals for each category. This past year, 665 guests visited the OSS on "regular" Saturdays, setting a new record for this category! While we hosted more special tours in 2023 than any year in the past, the 105 guests this year was not a record. One highlight was a group from Lions Club International including individuals from nine different countries. The total number of visitors associated with special events was 968. While an impressive number, this special event total was slightly less than the totals noted in 2019 and 2022. Christmas on the Square is by far the most popular of these annual events. While we were thrilled to host the 777 visitors that passed through the door during the three-hour holiday event, it was not a record turnout. That occurred in 2019, when 904 visitors enjoyed the museum's holiday decorations and food. So...adding these three categories together gives us a grand total of 1,741, **which is the highest number of visitors for a single year in the museum's 30-year history.** Barring any unforeseen issues, we look forward to a 2024 season that will be even more interesting and rewarding for OSS visitors and volunteers alike!

Submitted by: M. A. Zurbrick

Thanks to community support and our able volunteers, we published and distributed the annual Old Settlers Gazette throughout the community and beyond for the enjoyment of our faithful advertisers and readers. A huge thanks to all of our advertisers who were generously supportive of our efforts. Thanks to Terry Primas's deft writing, typing and layout skills, the Gazette was published and distributed on time! Also, thanks to the board members who pounded the streets to contact advertisers and then delivered the bundles to them.

**2023 marked a celebration of 30 years** since the Foundation purchased the Old Stagecoach Stop building. The Old Stagecoach Stop Foundation was formed in April of 1983 and bought the condemned building for \$40,000. A matching grant of \$13,200 was obtained from the Department of Natural Resources. With the grant, the exterior of the building was stabilized and restored to its 19th-century appearance. The original debt was retired in 1992 and interior restoration began. The rest of the historic property, along with a small brick building, was acquired in 2003. Maintenance of the nearly 160-year-old building and continuing improvements consume most of the Foundation's resources. The Old Stagecoach Stop is the oldest publicly accessible building in Pulaski County. The rooms are restored to different periods and/ or use, ranging from 1860 to 1960. The ten rooms reflect the history of the building. The house museum is open Saturdays, April through October, from 10 AM to 4 PM. (This is an excerpt of an article by Terry Primas which will be in the 2024 Old Settlers Gazette. Be sure to read "the rest of the story" when the Gazette comes out in July, 2024.)

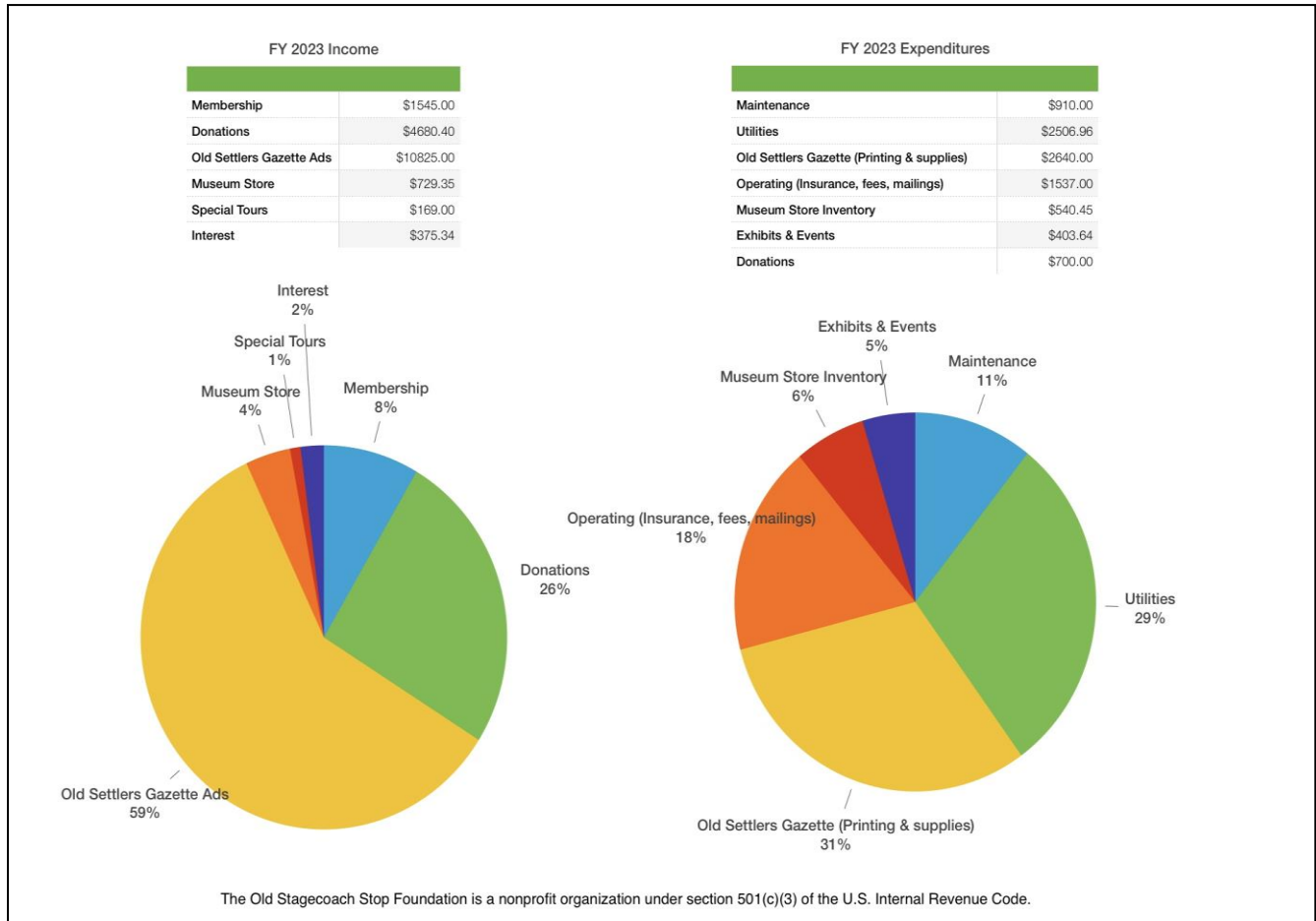
### **Maintenance and Repair**

One might expect the list of annual maintenance and repairs to the 160-plus year-old building to be rather long; however, 2023's list was somewhat shorter than usual and thankfully comprised of relatively low cost (in materials and labor) tasks. Indoors, we replaced air filters and batteries in the HVAC systems. We also elected to try a new strategy when incandescent light bulbs burned out by replacing them with longer-lasting and more energy-efficient LED bulbs. When not hosting visitors on Saturdays, youthful volunteer Joseph Chaney washed windows, oiled furniture, and swept

floors. Outdoors, we power-washed the exterior of the building and cleaned the gutters, twice. Matt Ledbetter and volunteers from Delphi Brands spruced up the east side of the property by cutting up and hauling away a number of dead trees. Unfortunately, we also had to deal with vandalism to the donor/supporter bricks in front of the museum. While the culprit that had pushed a number of bricks completely out of the ground was identified with circumstantial evidence, we were unable to apprehend and prosecute the criminal...a mole. A bit of cement and wire placed under the bricks before resetting them will hopefully convince this worm-eating scoundrel to tunnel elsewhere.

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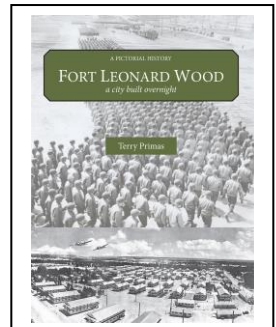
**Treasurer’s Report**



**Memberships, November 2022 - December 2023**

Individual: New-0, Renewal-2; Family: New-0, Renewal-0; Patron: New-3, Renewal-6; Sponsor: New-3, Renewal-3; Life: New-2, Existing-45. Total Members: 64

**A Pictorial History, FORT LEONARD WOOD, a city built overnight**, a new book by Terry Primas was introduced this fall. Originally destined for construction in southcentral Iowa, the Army’s Seventh Corps training camp was relocated to the Ozarks in Pulaski County, Missouri. The sprawling 68,000 acre camp subsumed part of the Gasconade National Forest and the private land holdings of over 500 citizens. Construction reached its peak in April of 1941 with more than 32,000 workers employed. The construction of the camp, christened Fort Leonard Wood, significantly altered the natural and cultural landscapes. More than 320,000 officers and enlisted soldiers were trained at Fort Leonard Wood during World War II.



This pictorial history provides nearly 250 images that depict the construction, training, and

leisure activities of the soldiers during the period 1941-1946. The book concludes with a chapter showing views of Fort Leonard Wood today. Softcover, 128 pages, \$20.00

Available at Lone Oak Printing • Eclectic Originals • Old Stagecoach Stop • Pulaski County Tourism Bureau • Route 66 Community Art Gallery and by mail (\$24.00) from Terry Primas, 10925 Western Road, Duke, MO. 65461.

Our website, [www.oldstagecoachstop.org](http://www.oldstagecoachstop.org) continues our mission of preserving the history of the Old Stagecoach Stop and the surrounding area. It includes historic pictures, archives of all the *Old Settlers Gazettes*, and podcasts with past residents telling stories from the “old days,” including Dru Pippin, Jaretta Laughlin, Robert Lee Bates, Pearl Brown Wilson, Louise Skaggs, Jiggs & Dorothy Miller, and Irene Mitchell Morgan.

Another popular feature on our website is a virtual tour where visitors can start a guided tour or click on a map of the building and explore each room. Terry Primas spent many hours taking pictures, processing historic images, and laying out and revising the new web pages. The virtual tour provides an enjoyable journey for visitors. The website is a rich source for research of our county.

Also, visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/OldStagecoachStop](https://www.facebook.com/OldStagecoachStop) where Jan Primas posts many lovely pictures of the Stagecoach Stop as well as short stories or articles from yesteryear.

As we look back on 2023, we are grateful for the great privilege of continuing to meet the goals established by the founders of this historic site. We are thankful that so many people have visited and enjoyed our museum, faithfully preserved for future generations. We are looking forward to 2024 being open to share our amazing history every Saturday from April through October, plus during numerous special events.