

# Old Stagecoach Stop Foundation President's Annual Report 2024

*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 another record year – in so many ways! The Old Stagecoach Stop has kept a visitor register since it first opened to the public three decades ago. The reader should keep in mind that not everyone who has visited the museum signed the guestbook. 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 2024 maintained this upward trend in a notable way.

## **Regular Saturdays**

The OSS was open for 27 "regular" Saturdays that were not associated with special events in 2024. These Saturdays hosted as few as six visitors on September 9<sup>th</sup>, to as many as 38 visitors that visited just the week prior. Every OSS volunteer hosted one or more Saturdays that had more than 30 guests. The mean number of visitors for a regular Saturday in 2024 was about 24. Compare this to the first five years that the OSS was opened to the public (1995-1999) when the average number of visitors on a regular Saturday was only about 11.

**The 637 visitors associated with regular Saturdays in 2024**, was the second highest on record, failing to surpass the all-time record set in 2023 by only 28 visitors.

## **Special Tours**

**In 2024, volunteers conducted 24 tours by appointment to a total of 211 guests.** The tour groups ranged in size from a single person to 22 visitors (homeschoolers and a Girl Scout troop), with the average tour group size of about 9. We hosted more special tours and special tour visitors in 2024 than in any year in the past!

## **Special Events**

The OSS was open to the public for four annual events in 2024; they were Freedomfest, Old Settlers Days, Fallfest (formally Octoberfest), and Christmas on the Square. **The total number of visitors associated with these special events was 904.** This was the fourth highest number of special event visitors recorded in the past three decades, only being surpassed by special event visitor totals for 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Visitation during Freedomfest, Old Settlers Day, and Fallfest (aka Oktoberfest) has remained fairly stable in recent years with an average number of visitors of about 62, 50, and 52, for each event, respectively. **In 2024, these three special events hosted a total of 173 visitors.**

We provided live music and served food and drink to **731 visitors that passed through our doors during the 2024 Christmas on the Square** event. While arguably still a very good turnout, the 2024 event did not surpass the numbers set of Christmas on the Square in 2019 (904), 2022 (794) and 2023 (777). Between 2019 and 2024, about 47% of all visitors for the entire year, showed up at the OSS during this 3-hour holiday event! While these numbers are one way of "judging" the success of an event, it is easily argued that the smiling faces and kind comments of many of our guests regarding the tasty food, live music by talented youths, attractive decorating, and the WARMTH was what made the evening a success.

## **Residency of Visitors**

In the past three years, we added 18 countries to the **total of 70 countries from which we have hosted guests since 1995.** For the first time, in 2024, we hosted visitors from Cuba, Hungary, and Norway. In 2024, we hosted visitors from 40 states; however, this did not add any additional states to our total, given that the **total number of states has been at 50** for a number of years. We hosted Missourians from 32 counties in 2024. Somewhat disappointingly, we have only managed to host folks from **91 of the Show-Me state's 114 counties** over the past three decades.

## **Summary**

In 2023, we set a new all-time visitation record of 1,741 guests. **In 2024, we managed to beat that record by a mere 11 visitors, with a total of 1,752!** Looking at this trend, we should (barring any unforeseen circumstances) look forward to a 2025 season that will be increasingly rewarding for OSS visitors and volunteers alike!

The increasing visitation trend raises a question. How many guests will the OSS be able to host in future years? While many factors may play a role in answering this question, one thing stands out... **VOLUNTEERS**. The more volunteers we have, the more visitors with whom we will be able to share this unique historical treasure.

This detailed Visitation Summary was submitted by Mark Zurbrick

### **Award from Meramec Regional Planning Commission**

In July, 2024, we received congratulations from the Meramec Regional Planning Commission for being selected as a recipient of one of MRPC's 2024 Annual Dinner Awards, declaring, "This award recognizes your outstanding contributions to your community and the Meramec Region." Jeanie Porter, President of the Old Stagecoach Stop and Jeannie King, Co-Chairman of the local Salvation Army traveled to Linn, MO to accept the award at the annual dinner held at the Osage View. We were nominated for this award by Sean Wilson, Mayor of the City of Waynesville and board member of MRPC.

### **Maintenance and Repair**

If you somehow manage to make it to the age of 100, chances are that you will have a few visits to the doctor's office to address things that just don't look or work as well as they used to. The Old Stagecoach Stop (OSS) which is now more than 160 years old, is no different. Every year the buildings and surrounding grounds develop "aches and pains" that have to be addressed in order to make sure the oldest publicly accessible building in Pulaski County remains in good condition and welcoming to its many guests.

Most of these tasks are simple reoccurring items, like dusting and oiling furniture, sweeping and mopping floors, cleaning out gutters, and washing porches, siding, sidewalks, and windows. Thankfully, other tasks occur less often. For example, applying a chemical repellent before resetting donor bricks upended by energetic moles and trapping a pack rat (hopefully only one) that had developed a taste for lye soap and old-fashion potpourri in the McDonald Cabin.

Most of the tasks are performed by volunteers, many of whom also lead visitor tours. But occasionally, bigger "fix-it" projects arise that require additional help and expertise from the surrounding community. We would like to highlight two of these special efforts during the summer of 2024.

The exterior wood and glass door in the Black Hotel kitchen no longer opened easily with large cracks and crevices allowing outside air (and possibly pack rats?) in. Several years ago, our friends at the St. Roberts Lowe's donated thousands of dollars of materials, including a new wood door with a 9-pane glass window that was historically appropriate. Problem was that the door was slightly larger than the existing door opening that was no longer perfectly square. Cabinet-maker and long-time volunteer, Randy Yocum, came to our rescue, cutting the door down to a workable size, reinstalling the original hinges and door knob/lock assembly, and installing new door jams...all in one day! A few of our newsletter readers might recall that it was Randy who repaired the rotting windows and sills of the three large windows in the Dentist Room back in 2008, using cypress for the sills which is particularly resistant to moisture and rot.

Several storms over the past couple of years brought down a couple of large trees in the lot behind the OSS. Other vegetation, both desirables like pawpaw trees and flowering hibiscus, and undesirables such as poison ivy and wintercreeper were in need of trimming or outright removal. Moss and vines had covered the top of the brick-lined cistern to the point it was difficult to show our visitors where Mrs. Black obtained water via the hand pump in the kitchen. In addition to mole damage, some of the donor bricks were being covered with unwanted weeds. Bottom-line, the grounds surrounding the OSS needed a good cleanup.

In late July, we received an unexpected phone call from an active-duty Soldier seeking a community service project for a group of fellow military police who were finishing the Military Police Advanced Leadership Course at Fort Leonard Wood. On Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, nearly three dozen service members arrived at the OSS with helping hands, strong backs, and a "can-do" attitude. Less than two hours later...mission accomplished. To show our appreciation, not only for their help, but also their service to our country, OSS volunteers provided a one-hour program with hands-on artifacts about the life of a Civil War soldier, and also general tours of the entire OSS.

This outdoor cleanup also involved a volunteer who has helped the OSS a number of times in recent years. Retired soldier and local businessman, Chad Bone, owner of Ridgeline Roofing and Renovations provided the 15 cubic yard dump trailer (that the MPs loaded to the top) along with the truck that took this wood and weeds to the local landfill.

Submitted by M. A. Zurbrick

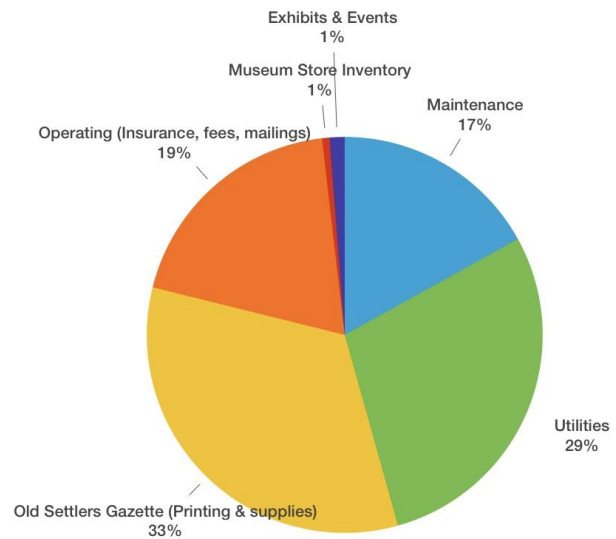
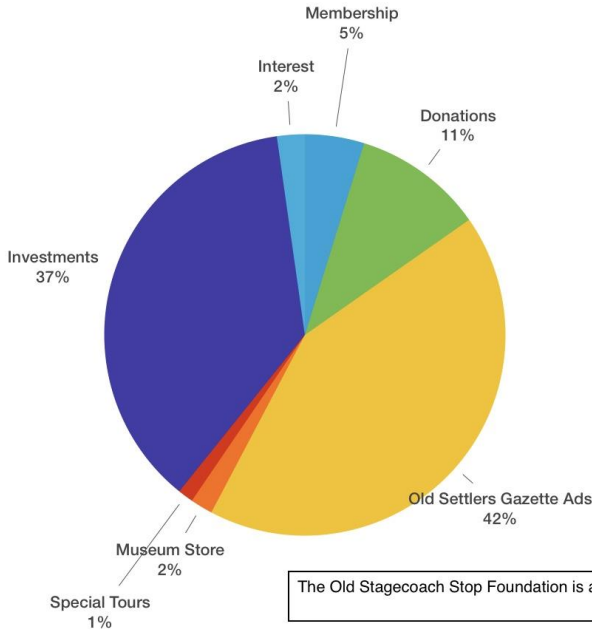
# Treasurer's Report

FY 2024 Income

Membership	\$1335.00
Donations	\$2937.57
Old Settlers Gazette Ads	\$11875.00
Museum Store	\$504.90
Special Tours	\$348.00
Investments	\$10347.59
Interest	\$626.52

FY 2024 Expenditures

Maintenance	\$1385.07
Utilities	\$2346.92
Old Settlers Gazette (Printing & supplies)	\$2714.18
Operating (Insurance, fees, mailings)	\$1576.94
Museum Store Inventory	\$50.00
Exhibits & Events	\$100.00



The Old Stagecoach Stop Foundation is a nonprofit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

Due to the dedicated efforts of our Board members who contacted businesses and individuals for ads, and to the amazing writing and layout abilities of Terry Primas, the annual Old Settlers Gazette was published and distributed in July of 2024. We appreciate all of our advertisers who were generously supportive of our efforts to continue this amazing publication. As Ronald Reagan once famously stated, small businesses are the background of this great country!

We would like to extend a special welcome to new Board Member, Matthew Ledbetter and Volunteer Docent, Roy Clevenger. Both have been instrumental in keeping the tours going for our visitors.

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 2024, 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 2025 being open to share our amazing history every Saturday from April through October, plus during numerous special events.