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Donita Shields

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Speck Lester shares his covered wagon with elementary students at Clinton's Pioneer Festival held last May.

Four Hundred Children Become **Pioneers at Old Town Museum**

by
Donita Shields

A caravan of automobiles and seven buses filled with students from Clinton's Southwest Elementary School recognized Oklahoma's Museum Week, May 13 through 18, at Old Town Museum Complex in Elk City. More than 400

students from first through sixth grades participated in Pioneer Festival activities organized by the Mothers' Committee of the Cultural Arts Program of Clinton.

Wearing festive pioneer dresses and cowboy regalia, class groups

toured Elk City's Old Town Museum during carefully scheduled periods and then spent the remainder of the day experiencing various pioneer activities held on the Museum Complex grounds. Old-fashioned games such as leap frog, red rover, shoe

shuffle, and gunny sack races took place on the playground adjacent to the museum's Rock Bluff School.

On the front porch of the one-room school, Denna Damron, Chairman of the Cultural Arts Program, conducted spelling bees for all grade levels. Finalists in the First Grade Spelling Bee were Natalie Duncan, Stacy Hupfer, Bret Brittain, and Kendy Cruson. Kendy was blue-ribbon speller of the Grade One contest.

Betty Cabaniss of Clinton set up her personal spinning wheel in the Pioneer Chapel. Students observed as she carded freshly shorn wool and then spun it into thread. Mrs. Cabaniss also displayed and modeled an attractive shawl that she had woven from the wool of white, black, and brown sheep. Betty apologized for the fact that her fleece was clipped from Blackwell, Oklahoma sheep even though the Cabanisses have their own flock of 700 sheep on their ranch north of Clinton.

Students filled the museum's livery barn to watch eight Elk City pioneer ladies quilt a colorful "Glorified Nine Patch" design of patchwork that was stretched across old-fashioned quilting frames. Throughout the action-packed day these quilters, some of them eighty-plus years young, chatted among themselves and the youngsters while their nimble fingers and needles sped around the tiny squares.

Ladies participating in the Pioneer Festival Quilting Bee included Lea Wiseman, Letha Pennick, Hazel Maxfield, Helen Clark, Wanzell Davis, Anna Wilson, Dorthea Nesser, and Eutha Simmons. They have long been famous for their quilting. Since October, 1983, they have completed 23 patchwork quilts which they donated to the Battered Women's Shelter at Clinton, Westview Boys' Home at Hollis, and to various families that lost their home furnishings to fires.

With her bread-making process, Sharon Flick of Clinton provided another interesting pioneer activity at the livery barn. She explained to

each class group how the grain originated in the wheat fields of Western Oklahoma and ended in a delicious loaf of bread fresh from the oven.

Sharon, who has made her family's whole wheat bread for the past eight years, allowed each little pioneer to assist with the milling (grinding) of the grain and observe the procedure of punching down the dough during its rising process. She also provided each child with a sample of buttered

er, students became 'Henry,' 'George,' or 'James' while reading the McGuffey lesson to the class.

During lunch hour, all school children, mothers, and teachers enjoyed old-fashioned brown bag lunches and cold drinks beneath the cottonwood trees on the museum's camping grounds. At the same time, the Mothers' Cultural Arts Committee treated the quilting ladies and other assistants to a fried chicken picnic in the



The Pioneer Festival activities were organized by the Mothers Committee of the Cultural Arts Program of Clinton.

bread and stressed nutrition values of whole wheat products.

Speck Lester of Cheyenne displayed one of his authentic covered wagons hitched to two colorfully harnessed gray mules named Kit and Jen. Every student petted the gently animals before climbing aboard for an imaginary ride on the prairie schooner's roomy spring seat. While waiting their turns, many students enjoyed sitting on the metal seats of horse-drawn plows displayed in the pioneer implement yard behind the livery barn.

Clinton's Southwest Elementary students also boarded Old Town's caboose and viewed the depot and its surroundings from observation windows high above the railroad tracks. After a pretend train trip, each class then strolled to the museum's shady gazebo for study time. Standing beside Pat Downs, their reading teach-

gazebo.

Escorting the elementary school's Pioneer Festival group were Principal Darrell Trissell, 16 teachers, and 26 mothers of the students. Coordinating the day's well-planned events were Denna Damron, Lynn Thompson, Marian Tisdall, Linda Meachum, Lucia Sewell, Kay Brown, Kaye Green, and Pat Downs of Clinton. Wanda Queenan, receptionist, and Lucy Stansberry, curator of Old Town Museum, assisted.

Clinton's Southwest Elementary School Cultural Arts Program was organized five years ago by Emily Stratton. The organization schedules two field trips annually. The Pioneer Festival at Old Town Museum Complex was rated as a tremendous success, and the group hopes to return for another festival next year.