The Towson Telegraph.

A newsletter dedicated to the Fort Towson Historic Site's activities, services, etc.

Fort Towson Historic Site, Oklahoma, August 2026

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March 5, 2026, Education Day at Fort Towson Historic Site

Students walk on the Fort Towson Historic Site as they head to the next interpretive station.

On March 5, 2026, the Fort Towson Historic Site held its annual Education Day. Though the week leading up to the event had a forecast for rain, no precipitation fell.

Eight hundred students and adults attended the event. Those attending included public schools and homeschool families and organizations. Attendees came from such areas as Choctaw County, McCurtain County, and even Paris, TX.

There were eighteen program stations which attendees could stop, watch, discuss, and at times, take part in historical activities with the presenters. Program topics were the sutler store, yarn making, nature, candle dipping, officer's wives, a soldier's life, historical games, laundresses, frontiersmen, blacksmithing, infantry drills, hardtack, woodworking, frontier militia, artillery, "Good Things Come From Trees," mounted trooper, and optical illusion toys.

The Fort Towson Historic Site staff are grateful to the Oklahoma Historical Society staff, other organizations' staff, and local volunteers who helped bring 1840s history to life for visitors.

Seth Goff, Historical Interpreter for the Fort Gibson Historic Site, leads students in 1840s infantry drill.

Welcome aboard to the site's new Historical Interpreter!

The Fort Towson Historic Site's new Historical Interpreter is Jacob Osborn. His first day as an Oklahoma Historical Society staff member was July 14, 2026.

Osborn was born and grew up in the southeastern part of the state. He attended East Central University in Ada where he received a bachelor's degree in history. He continued his education with a master's degree in public history from the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Osborn brings with him to the position experience in the museum world. While working on his master's degree, Osborn interned at the Pushmataha County Historical Society in Antlers, OK. He stated that "It was during that internship where I was convinced that local history is one of my passions."

His main duties at FTHS will be greeting visitors; researching Fort Towson, Doaksville, the *Heroine*, and Rose Hill; looking into research requests submitted by the public, providing tours, and living history.

"I am excited to work with OHS and the Fort Towson Historic Site to further my passion," Osborn stated.

Oklahoma Forestry Services Randy Holeman, left, presents award to Keith Couch.

Couch takes third place in local wood artwork exhibit

Keith Couch, head of Fort Towson Historic Site's maintenance, entered one of his wood artwork pieces in the 2026 Artist of the Year Gallery Exhibit at the Forest Heritage Center. His wind chime, "In the Wind," won third place in the category of Local Woodworking Artist of the Year. Couch's piece was on display for visitors from March 12–May 10, 2026.

October 2026, Doaksville Candlelight Tour will focus on Dr. Eli S. Penwell

A scene depicting 1820s Fort Towson during the 2024 Doaksville Candlelight Tour.

The 2026 Doaksville Candlelight Tour will be October 9 and 10, 2026. This year's theme will primarily focus on the story of Dr. Eli S. Penwell in the year 1864.

During the American Civil War, 1861 – 1865, the State of Texas joined with ten other states to form the Confederacy. Even so, not all those in Texas sided with the Confederacy. During 1862 in the north Texas area, there were executions of those accused of being pro-Union. These accusations would continue.

Dr. Eli S. Penwell was a northerner who by 1850 had made his home in Bonham, TX. Even though he lived in Texas for so many years, by 1864 he found himself in a group of men attempting to flee to Union held Fort Smith, AR. The men were overtaken by Confederate troops with some of the former reportedly being killed. Penwell and others were taken to the area of Fort Towson and Doaksville. There, the men awaited trial.

This year's tours will focus on why Penwell and his companions fled Texas, other historical figures involved with the incident, and what happened to Penwell.

The annual Doaksville Candlelight Tour will take place Friday, October 9 and Saturday, October 10, 2026, at the Doaksville Archaeological Site on Red Road in Fort Towson, OK. The cost for admission is $12 per person with guests age six and under admitted for free. Each evening, the first tour leaves at 7 p.m. and the last one beginning at 9:30 p.m. During that time, tours will go out every thirty minutes. This event is first come, first served with advanced ticket holders seated first. Guests should be aware that each tour will last approximately forty-five minutes to an hour and the terrain is rugged. Tickets will go on sale September 8, 2026.

For more information and to reserve tickets, call 580-873-2634 or email fttowson@history.ok.gov.

Top Photo: On May 16, members of the 24th Missouri Vol. Infantry present a program on 1860s military discipline as the public looks on.

Below: During May's Dutch Oven Gathering, cooks and attendees visit and eat under the Fort Towson Historic Site's pavilion.

Left: During the evening of May 22, Oklahoma Historical Society Board Member Kenny Sivard and Fort Towson Historic Site Director David C. Reed lead a night tour of the main grounds at the historic post. Members of the tour learned about the history of the fort, the use of the structures which once stood at the post, and life for some of the individuals who were at Fort Towson during its heyday.

Upcoming Events and Important Dates

-2026-

October 9 and 10	Doaksville Candlelight Tour
October 24	Dutch Oven Gathering
November 26 – 27	Closed for Thanksgiving
December 12	Christmas at the Fort
December 24 – 25	Closed for Christmas

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January 1	Closed for New Year's Day