

## Chariton County Heritage Tours, Inc. Named September Business of the Month

The Keytesville Chamber of Commerce is spotlighting Chariton County Heritage Tours, Inc. as the business of the month for September. That organization began in 1996 with Jack Jones of Keytesville's Redding-Hill Homestead as President. The mission was to promote tourism in Chariton County and to encourage preservation of historic buildings and significant features within each town of Chariton County. Shortly after organizing, the group applied for and was granted a 501(C)3 status.

The organization originally had many members and a good portion of them took on various responsibilities, personally visiting each of the towns, photographing interesting sites, and reporting back to the group about features that would potentially interest tourists as well as formulating tour packages that could be promoted and providing tourists with the three things the industry outlines that tourists want the most: 1. Something to see and learn 2. A good place eat, and 3. Places to shop.

Early members also produced, with the assistance of the Ingram Trust and a Missouri State program, some brochures outlining various aspects of Chariton County such as Natural Resources, Agriculture, Civil War History in Chariton County, etc.

Chariton County Heritage Tours, Inc., with the co-operation of property owners Bob and Sandy Gladbach (from the Rothville area), also assisted by Mr. Mauzey (Sandy's employer at the time) and Ann Walton of Mendon succeeded in erecting a very nice sign regarding the Charles and Caroline Ingalls homestead. Fans of Laura Ingalls Wilders' "Little House on the Prairie" series had been making it their goal to visit every place Laura had ever lived as a child and as an adult. Since Bob and Sandy currently own the property where the Ingalls family had resided in Chariton County for only one year, that was one site that needed to be adequately marked, so at least the tourists could stand beside the sign for a photo opportunity. This was done about 2003, and a dedication of the sign (complete with fiddle music to honor Pa Ingalls who played the fiddle) was held. This event drew many visitors from out of state (representing other areas Laura had lived) as well as interested county residents and county officials.

Another project that CCHT, Inc. has done was making sure each town in Chariton County has its own brochure telling about the town's attractions and features as well as a short history that could interest tourists. In the 1990's only Keytesville and Salisbury had any brochure featuring their own towns. Now, all the towns do—including small places such as Forest Green and Dalton. Brochure racks have been installed in the towns with numerous slots to hold each town's own brochure as well as the other towns within the county. Printing costs for these brochures are financed from dues to CCHT, Inc. which remain very minimal: \$10 for an individual and \$15.00 for a business for a year.

The group has had some organized tours visit over the years. The largest groups have been busloads of about 40 people from Kansas, (visiting the Wien area), A "Mystery Tour" from Kansas City, a group of Civil War buffs from Jefferson City visiting Keytesville's museum, dining at Sherry's in Brunswick, before going on to Laclede. A smaller group traveling in individual cars came from Marshall, Missouri, and visited at least twice—one time visiting Salisbury's Chariton County Historical Society, the home of Kay Quinn, and having a meal catered at the Brummal House by Kay Kessler, and a few years later, the same group visited Brunswick and enjoyed the attractions there.

Chariton County Heritage Tours, Inc. is a member of the MO Travel Council, the various Chambers of Commerce in Chariton County, as well as the Sumner Community Betterment group, and the Friends of Swan Lake. The group is also represented on the internet under [www.keytesvillemo.com](http://www.keytesvillemo.com). Click on organizations once on that site. Current officers are: Janet Weaver, President; Dorothy Kaye, Vice President; Sharon Hutchinson, Secretary; and Colleen Johnson, Treasurer.