

Honoring a Life Well Spent:

Katharine B. Kelley, who passed away September 27, 2005.

“Dedication” is how one could summarize Katharine’s approach to each of her many interests, which, happily, included the Baldwin City Library. Whether searching through articles about anything related to Baldwin City, sharing a recollection about an event in the life of the town, or simply caring for the physical library building and her fellow staff, Katharine gave enthusiastically one hundred percent.

Katharine’s service to our library was evident as far back as the mid-1960s. She was on the Board of Trustees from 1967 to 1975, serving as treasurer some of that time. She took on janitorial duties, supervised the summer reading program in the 1970s, and always beautified the library with her many plants. After she retired from teaching the fifthgrade in the Baldwin school system, she worked every afternoon at the desk and began developing the library’s historical holdings.

In 1992, when the library moved to its present location at 800 High Street, Katharine saw a great opportunity to expand the town’s historical records, adding maps, artifacts, and news files on people, places, and events. She delighted in working in her “space,” organizing historical materials and responding to inquires about the county’s colorful past or the people who once lived here.

Katharine received many accolades over the years that attest to the enthusiasm with which she pursued her many interests and hobbies. Awards such as the Santa Fe Trail Official Ambassador of the Trail in 1989, Kansas Ornithological Society’s Outstanding Contributions and Service Award in 2004, an honorary doctorate degree from Baker University in 2005, Teacher of the Century from Baldwin High School Alumni Association in 2005, and the 1999 Best Friend Award from the Friends of Baldwin City Public Library for her volunteer service and commitment to the library demonstrate the true spirit of her dedication to each endeavor.

Following Katharine’s death, The Chamber of Commerce donated a young maple which was planted in her name on the library’s grounds. With this living memorial and the recent acquisition by the Friends of the Library of a handsome cabinet to house her collection of maps, we honor Katharine and all she stood for.

If one takes the time to stand quietly in the northeast corner “historical section” of the library, a presence is felt and one knows that Katharine is still smiling in her own way and encouraging all of us to preserve the memory of a life lived to the fullest.