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## 1859 JAIL, MARSHAL'S HOME AND **MUSEUM CELEBRATES 45TH ANNIVERSARY**



BEFORE restoration of the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum, 1958. (PHL5177)

AFTER restoration of the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum, 1961. (PHL5176)





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## AN EDITOR'S EPISTLE

BY DAVID W. JACKSON

embers of the reorganized Jackson County Historical Society were busy in 1959. They had rallied to save the 100-year-old Jackson County Jail from being demolished, had successfully renovated the building, decorated it with appropriate 19th Century furnishings acquired through donations, and had opened the site to the public as the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum. Early Historical Society members also had the vision to list the site on the National Register of Historic Places, to adopt professional museum practices, and to establish an archive of primary materials (documents, photographs and artifacts) that would vividly recount for successive generations the daily life stories of Jackson Countians.

Those early Society members were ordinary citizens just like you and me. The extraordinary thing they did was to devote whatever they could (their time, talents, personal and family mementoes, and financial resources) to cultivating what has become an invaluable local history treasury.

The Society's mission has never changed. We remain dedicated to collecting primary materials, dedicating enormous resources for their preservation, and striving to make them readily available to the public through research, exhibition and educational programming. The JOURNAL is just one of our educational tools, and this issue is packed with well-written, documented articles.

Our lead article by Linda Ann Camp, Jackson County's Jail and Its Jailers: Early Sheriffs Enforced the Law to 1859 is the first of two in a series celebrating 45 years of the Society's operation of an engaging history museum on the historic Independence Square. An historic depot on the same Courthouse Square once saw Missouri's first railroad come and go. Take A Short Ride on the First Railroad West of the Mississippi.

Genealogists with Jackson County connections—and even health care professionals and residents of Lakewood in Lee's Summit—may find interest in how *Jackson County's Poor Farm Transformed into a Rich Healthcare Center*, which appears here in abridged format; the full-length work has taken two years for myself and colleague James A. Tharp to assemble.

That success story is printed here against *The Tumbledown of Gilliss House*, which should reinforce how each of us is responsible for preserving items relating to local history . . . and saving notable historic structures whenever possible.

As the Jackson County Historical Society celebrates a special anniversary year we invite you to join us. Memberships are foundational to our ongoing efforts. If you are already a member, we thank you. And we invite you to seek ways to ENHANCE your involvement with our not-for-profit organization. See *Low-C.A.R.B. Giving* on the back page.

THIS IS YOUR ANNIVERSARY, TOO. Enjoy! And, thank you for reading and responding with your support.

CORRECTION: Regarding the provenance of George Caleb Bingham's Order No. 11 paintings on the front cover of the Autumn 2003 JOURNAL, the one formerly owned by the Mercer's is now at the Art Museum in Cincinnati; his first painting is at the State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia.

MISSION STATEMENT: The Jackson County Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation and understanding of its county's heritage and will promote the study, appreciation and interpretation of local and regional history.

# JACKSON COUNTY'S JAIL AND ITS JAILERS: EARLY SHERIFFS ENFORCED THE LAW TO 1859

BY LINDA ANN CAMP

[Editor's Note: This is the first of two installments outlining a history of the Jackson County Jail in Independence. This study commemorating the 45th year of the Jackson County Historical Society's ownership of the 1859 Jail, Marshals Home and Museum is part of a larger project to document the origin and evolution of the structure and its inhabitants. The 100-year-old brick and limestone edifice at 217 North Main Street was slated for demolition in 1959, and area residents rallied to save the building. After former United States President Harry S Truman made the first capital campaign call to J.C. Hall at Hallmark Cards, Inc., (who pledged \$1,000), the Jail was renovated between 1958 and 1959 and opened that year to the public. Upkeep of an historic structure requires ongoing dedication. Today, the Jail is in need of major repairs and restoration. Call the Society today at 816.461.1897 to see how you may help.

The Autumn 2004 JOURNAL will conclude this interesting and insightful overview of the people who have been associated with the 1859 Jackson County Jail. Readers with family connections to the former occupants and workers at this site are encouraged to donate related materials to the Historical Society for proper preservation and future exhibition at the museum.]



Fundraising campaign for the restoration of the "Old Jail." Harry S Truman is telephoning Joyce Hall, who gave \$1,000. Standing left to right: Phil K. Weeks, Mrs. Fred W. Hinks, and Phil Davis. (PHL5175)

There were three early jails in Jackson County, Missouri. The first two structures proved incapable of preventing escape, while the third built of quarried limestone in 1859, could be considered a fortress.

The first jail in Jackson County was constructed in 1827 of hewed logs ten to twelve inches in diameter and

designed to be 20 feet square on the outside.¹ It was a two-story, 16 feet high building above a three foot thick rock foundation.² The Jackson County Court, the governing body of day-to-day operations of Jackson County government, decreed on September 3, 1827, that Lot No. 2 in "Old Town," Independence, Missouri, was reserved for the site of a "common jail." Pearl Wilcox, in her book Jackson County Pioneers relays that the first County Court was looked upon by some as inconsequential and its intentions regarded with levity. One citizen who continued to make sport of this unimposing body was quickly brought to gain respect for this body of early settlers when he was fined one dollar and ordered to apologize for his disrespect.³ The County Court

and the elected Sheriffs of Jackson County were keepers of the peace in the formative years of the County.



Joe Walker (PHS1295)

In 1827 Governor John Miller appointed Joseph (Joe) Reddeford Walker as the first sheriff of Jackson County, Missouri. Sheriff Walker, then 29 years old, was rather experienced for a man of his age. Mountain man and explorer with the qualities of a natural leader, he was said to be soft spoken, never a braggart, and well suited to maintain discipline on the frontier. Documents signed by the Circuit Judge suggest that Joe Walker won the vote over Richard Chiles in the

1828 election. Sheriff Walker kept law and order in Jackson County for four years, and it appears he had the respect of the people of Jackson County. Walker moved on to explore the West. His travels took him to the Great Salt Lake, the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and the Kern River. Walker Pass was named for him. He wintered in California 1833–34. In the spring he moved south and then northward along the Sierra Nevada range, through Owens Valley, across the desert, and back along the Humboldt. He was a man who could be described much like the people he represented in Jackson County . . . daring, adventuresome and courageous.

Joseph Brown followed Walker as the next Sheriff of Jackson County. Extensive research has failed to reveal much about Sheriff Brown. In July of 1827 he purchased Lot No. 53 in Independence at the cost of about \$42.00. Elisha Todd signed the note for Brown and the next year Brown did the same for Todd. Brown married Miss Nancy King in January 1828. Her family had also previously moved to this area and settled. After his term in office Brown removed to the Platte Purchase, north of the Missouri River.

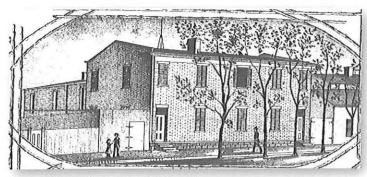


Jacob Gregg (PHS1411)

Jacob Gregg, who served as Deputy Sheriff for Walker for three years, became the next law-enforcement officer in Jackson County. Gregg was elected Sheriff in 1832 and served until 1837. Sheriff Gregg was a Quaker, but he made little pretension to religion. He was a man of high moral character and had the respect of the people of Jackson County. His name is mentioned often in early Jackson County history. He was previously appointed County Surveyor and he was a member of the group that

found and approved the location of the county scat at Independence. Gregg was a United States Census Enumerator for Jackson County in 1826 when it took him ten days to find and enumerate the inhabitants of the county and was paid ten dollars for his work. Jacob Gregg married Miss Nancy Lewis in 1828. They had nine children. In the U. S. Census for Jackson County in 1850, the Jacob Gregg family consisted of Jacob, age 48, a merchant by trade; Nancy,

44; and children: Samuel D., 19, teacher; Christopher R., 17, farmer; Josiah, 15, farmer; William H., 13; Mary F.; Newmanth (female), 8; Jacob F., 6; Nancy, 4; John L., 21, teacher; Martha F., 18; and, 4 slaves. Two of Sheriff Gregg's sons, Frank and Will served the Confederacy during the Civil War riding with Captain William Clarke Quantrill.



The earliest view of the 1859 Jail, as seen in the 1877 Illustrated Atlas of Jackson County, Missouri.

In the 1836 election four men were seeking the office of Sheriff of Jackson County: Page Noland, Thomas G. Hudspeth, Amos Riley, and John King. John King was elected and the people of the County, satisfied with his performance, re-elected him to serve a second term before voting him into the Missouri State Legislature in 1840. Sheriff King presided at the first legal hanging in Independence, Missouri, on May 10, 1839. Henry Garster was tried, convicted and sentenced to hang for the murder of Williamson Hawkins. Garster's hanging was witnessed by many people coming from far and near to see Sheriff King adjust the noose and Deputy Joe Reynolds draw down the black cap. The 1881 History of Jackson County, Missouri, "The doomed man rode upon his coffin, which resided on the boards of a common wagon. The noose adjusted, the cap in place and the wagon was driven from beneath and the murderer was ushered into eternity."6

Joseph H. "Joe" Reynolds was elected to office in 1840. He served two successive terms. Sheriff Reynolds gained experience as a deputy for Sheriff John King. Reynolds was a native of Kentucky and came to Jackson County about 1834. He served as Justice of the Peace in 1837, and held the same office in 1880 in Independence.

It was during Reynold's early tenure as Sheriff that the 1827 log jail succumbed to fire in 1841, and a brick structure took its place on a lot across the street. In 1843 Sheriff Reynolds arrested an old man for stealing clothing. He came to Independence without sufficient clothing to keep him warm. The old man, over seventy, was put in the County Jail. His anguish from life's problems and his incarceration so troubled him that he cut his throat and nearly cut off his arm trying to sever the artery. Unbelievably, he recovered. He was released and continued his travel east with the money and supplies collected for his trip by Sheriff Joe Reynolds and caring townspeople. In 1844 Reynolds was elected to represent Jackson County in the Missouri House of Representatives.

From 1844 to 1846 Thomas Pitcher was Jackson County Sheriff. Thomas Pitcher came to Jackson County from Kentucky in 1826.8 He was married to Miss Nancy Parish. In the 1850 United States Census for Jackson County, six children were enumerated: Gilbert, Victoria, Julia, Thomas, Ardinia and William. In 1833 Pitcher was made a Colonel and was responsible for leading the group of militia that forced the Mormons out of Jackson County. Pitcher was a prominent citizen for his involvement in the early development of Jackson County. The Pitcher Cemetery along Blue Ridge Boulevard at 45th Street—is the final resting place of one of Jackson County's dozen Revolutionary War patriots.

Benjamin F. Thompson served one term in 1846. In 1852 he returned to be the ninth Sheriff of Jackson County, Missouri. Thompson was an early member of the Christian Church. His antebellum home, commonly called The Old Plantation survives—though in great need of restoration—along 40 Highway in Independence. The home, originally built facing north but turned to face south years later, had also previously been used as a restaurant.



Benjamin Franklin Thompson (PHL3517)



George W. Buchanan (PHS1409)

George W. Buchanan was elected sheriff in 1848. Sheriff Buchanan arrived in Jackson County in 1838. He found the town teeming with activities of the Santa Fe trade. Buchanan was not yet 25 years old when he left his home to come to the frontier where he established himself as a pioneer schoolteacher. He also was knowledgeable about the practice of the law and criminal justice. In the 1850 United States Census for Jackson County he is enumerated with his wife Eliza J., age 27, from Virginia. No

children are listed. In the 1860 Census Buchanan is listed as a lawyer. His family then consisted of four children: Catherine, James, Mary and George.

As mentioned above, Benjamin F. Thompson was reelected Sheriff of Jackson County in 1852. Sheriff Thompson later served in the Missouri Legislature. There was a rather interesting jailbreak during Sheriff Thompson's term. A flirtatious woman caused her husband to become quite jealous and he killed a man who he felt was paying more attention to his wife than was necessary. The husband was arrested. Sheriff Thompson kept careful watch when the young bride came to visit her husband. One day when the Sheriff was very busy and she begged the jailor to allow her to visit in private. While alone, they exchanged clothing and the man left in layers of his wife's clothes. The next morning the ruse was discovered. The young bride was in the cell and the man was free. Since she was well connected politically and by family she was allowed to go free. Her husband was eventually captured, tried, acquitted and divorced by the fair damsel.9 In 1856 Benjamin Thompson was Jackson County Assessor. In 1858-59 he was President of the Agricultural and Mechanical Association.



William Botts (PHS4129)

William Botts was elected the next Sheriff of Jackson County. He came from Tennessee and settled in Jackson County in 1841. His wife Elzira was from Kentucky. In the 1850 United States Census for Jackson County, Sheriff Botts was listed as a gunsmith. In the 1860 Census he was listed as a farmer. His children in 1850 were: Emma, age 6, born in Kentucky; Albert, 4, Missouri; Susan, 2, Missouri. By 1860 he had four additional children: Eliza, 9; Georgia, 5;

Breckenridge, no age; and, Marion, 1.

John W. Burrus followed Botts as Sheriff. Burrus was qualified in August 1858. Sheriff Burrus served two terms and died during his second term in office.

Botts and Burrrus both served during a difficult time in Jackson County history. As the country spiraled towards civil war, the need for more law enforcement required not only a County Sheriff but a newly created position . . .that of the County Marshal.

The County Court approved a plan by 1858 to build a new jail and add to it a residence for the Marshal. In 1859 a twelve-cell jail with two-foot thick limestone walls was erected on the site of the original 1827 log jail. Even the most brazen of desperadoes was discouraged by this state-of-the-art facility. Without considerable help from the outside, it proved to be escape proof. The original design of the building was such that the only entry to the jail was from the rear of the living quarters directly opposite from the marshal's office. A wooden staircase stood at the far end of the first floor cellblock, giving access to the second floor cell block.<sup>10</sup>

The stark, unyielding walls of each cell were lit only by what daylight filtered through the iron louvered windows on the first floor and two frames of iron lattice that covered the



1859 jail cells. (PHL5258)

second floor cell windows. During the night the solid iron doors were closed...leaving those who had been caught on the wrong side of the law in total darkness. The limestone walls may have kept the cells tolerable in the summer; but the cold winter months must have been cruel punishment for those inside. It appears that prisoners were given a straw pallet or shuck mattress for sleeping, however, this was not a

guaranteed luxury. The wood stove that sat in the center of the first floor cellblock provided the only heat to both floors.

Our modern theory of reformation of criminals was unknown to the pioneers. Jails were erected simply and solely to hold bad men—and light and sanitation were not even secondary considerations. Some effects of this first era of vindictive punishment of criminals still are to be found: county jails with massive walls, solid save for a few narrow inches half-filled with heavy grating; with dungeon-rooms, and with rings anchored in the floors and walls to which prisoners might be chained.<sup>11</sup>

The old fashioned jail [was] the most sociable institution...a common meeting place where all classes from the trained crook to the misguided lad of tender years get thoroughly schooled in the ways of crime. In more ways than one the county jail [was] a rendezvous of criminals. It [was] a legitimate question to debate, whether or not the average county jail has any reformatory value. And it is undoubtedly true that scores of men who later [were] committed to the penitentiary [were] jail-made criminals.<sup>12</sup>

The new County Jail and adjoining Marshal's home took only three months to complete. The first County Marshal, John Hayden, moved into the house with his family by Christmas 1859.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

to complement this JOURNAL article is available at www.jchs.org.

Linda Ann Camp has lived in Jackson County all her life. Her passion for history was sparked by stories relayed by members of the Wallace family about Frank and Jesse James, Cole Younger and all the boys who rode with Quantrill (The Wallaces held the Quantrill Reunions for many years). Camp completed her undergraduate work at Central Missouri State University and graduate programs at University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), with additional hours in history at UMKC. She continues to study history when reading, traveling and working with other living historians at re-enactment sites and the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum.

- 1 Birdsall, Williams & Co. History of Jackson County, Missouri: A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, etc. (Kansas City, Mo.: Union Historical Company, 1881), 639.
- 2 Hale, Donald R. and Vicki P. Beck. History of the 1859 Jail and other Early Jails Located in Independence, Missouri. (Independence, Mo.: Blue & Grey Bookshoppe, 2001), 1.
- 3 Wilcox, Pearl. Jackson County Pioneers. (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, 1990), 124.
- 4 Wilcox, 131.
- 5 Birdsall, 642.
- 6 Birdsall, 641. A complete account of the events leading up to and including Garster's execution may be found in William B. Bundschu's book Abuse and Murder on the Frontier: The Trials and Travels of Rebecca Hawkins, 1800-1860 (Independence, Mo.: Little Blue Valley Publishing Co., 2003).
- 7 Birdsall, 643.
- 8 Wilcox, 433.
- 9 Wilcox, 433.
- 10 Birdsall, 640.
- 11 Cross, William T. and Charlotte B. Forrester. County Almshouses and Jails of Missouri. (Missouri State Nurses' Association, 1912), 3-4.
- 12 Cross, 12-13

# A SHORT RIDE ON THE FIRST RAILROAD WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

In January 1967, Independence was set to approve an annexation proposal that would extend the city limits to the Missouri River. It wouldn't be the first time Independence had frontage on the River.<sup>1</sup>

Around 1851 the city, prosperous and growing from trade associated with outfitting emigrants embarking on the overland trails to the west, extended its old village limits north through a narrow panhandle to the river. Extending the limits to the river incorporated bustling Wayne City landing into the City's fold.

Helping bolster this burgeoning economy was a train powered by two mules (one in lead of the other) that ran between Wayne City and Independence. It was the first railroad built in Missouri, construction having begun in 1848. The track was made of steel-faced wooden timbers laid lengthwise, just as iron rails were later used. The wheels of the cars, too, were of wood. The railroad was nearly complete by the time the Missouri General Assembly approved the act creating the "Independence and Missouri River Rail Road Company."<sup>2</sup>

The five-page, 24-paragraph act begins,

corporate..."

"Whereas, it has been represented to the General Assembly that Lewis Jones, Samuel H. Woodson, John Parker, George W. Buchanan, Samuel D. Lucas, Wm. B. Hay, John McMurry, and others, of Jackson County, have associated themselves into a company for the purpose of constructing a railroad, hereinafter designated; and whereas, it has been further represented that the said company have already expended a large amount of money in commencing and have nearly completed said rail road, and that the interests of the citizens of the country as well as the objects of the company would be advanced by creating a body

The act continues to incorporate and detail the logistics and operations of the company, including: constitution of the board of directors and officers; stockholder voting and dividend declarations; appointment of engineers and other staff; record keeping procedures; acquisition of land along the route; collection of tolls for freight and "transportation of persons, commodities or carriages;" construction of a warchouse for use in "storing Santa Fe and other goods;" and, types of carriages and cars that could be regulated by the company.

Paragraph 6 stipulates details of the intended route: "The

directors, by their agents or engineers, shall have full power and authority from time to time to examine, survey, mark, and locate a route for a railroad, for a single and double track, the same not to be more than one hundred feet wide, commencing in the town of Independence, in Jackson County, and from thence to the Missouri River at Robert Rickman's landing, in said county, with full power in all cases to diverge from a direct line, or to extent [extend] the same to



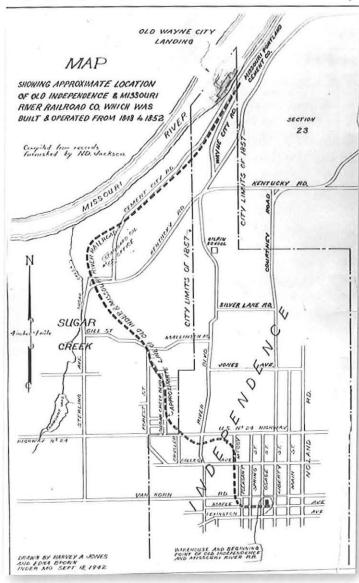
Railroad depot on Independence Square that stood on the east side of Osage between Maple and Truman Roads as late as 1964. (PHS6302)

any point below said Rickman's landing, where a good steamboat landing may be obtained, whenever in their opinion the interest of the company may require it."

The Council's move to extend the city's corporate limits was stimulated by the fantastic theory of Major William Gilpin that a great metropolis should be built there. Gilpin, a soldier, pathfinder, politician, editor, and resident of Independence since 1841, lived on North River Road, about halfway between the Independence Square and Wayne City, on or near the property of Gilpin School today. Said to be an enthusiast in any cause he espoused, Gilpin found "inflammable material" in Independence with his theory that a great metropolis of the nation would be on a site on the Missouri River directly north of Independence.

The City Council was so taken with Gilpin's theory that at his instigation it passed the ordinance to extend the limits to the river.

Plans were made for the plotting of Gilpin Town adjacent to the river. A company was formed, including such prominent citizens as Jabez Smith and Dr. David Waldo, for



Map by Harvey A. Jones and Edna Brown from records furnished by N. D. Jackson of the Independence and Missouri River Railroad, the first railroad west of the Mississippi. (PHL601)

the dividing and selling of town lots, laying out streets and ferries and other necessary improvements.

When all preliminary details were complete and the company was ready to build, it was discovered no one had the money.

The city didn't declare the area de-annexed until the early 1880s when the north city limits reverted to Jones Avenue.

Not only did failure to finance the Gilpin Town project discourage Independence city officials from any further plans with its annexed area, but also a sand bar that formed at the foot of Wayne City drastically stalled riverboat traffic to the landing. This, in effect, made the Independence and Missouri River Railroad useless, and it went into receivership by 1852. A limestone ledge that served as a natural landing was discovered at the foot of Main Street in Kansas City around

this same time, and Independence lost its riverboat landing and the majority of its favored trade status.

Besides Gilpin Town, at least two other towns are known to have been platted along the Missouri River. Wayne City, which stood atop the bluff at the landing, dated August 9, 1841. In 1967 this plat was in the possession of Raymond E.

Blake, a local collector of historical items. [Unfortunately, Blake's estate was diluted through various estate sales and documents, photographs and artifacts from his local history-related collection are not available to the public.] The other river town was "Missouri," the plat being in the possession of Floyd Snyder, Jr., in 1967.

Gilpin was a West Point graduate and a friend of Thomas Heart Benton and Fremont, the explorer. He served as a Major under Colonel Doniphan during the Mexican War and later commanded a Missouri battalion in the Indian War. President



William Gilpin went on to become governor of the Colorado Territory by 1861. (PHL4141 courtesy State Historical Society of Colorado)

Lincoln appointed Gilpin governor of Colorado when it became a territory.

In May 1883 a relic of the Independence and Missouri River Railroad was unearthed.iii While digging a trench for the purpose of laying gas pipe from the mains to the Baptist Church in Independence, workmen discovered some parts of what once was a railroad turn table. It was directly between the Baptist Church and Larkin's livery stable, which later was built for the depot of the "Independence and Missouri River Railroad." Contrary to the 1849 act stipulating, "the capital stock whereof shall be fifty thousand dollars," the 1883 article reported, "The capital stock was \$10,000 held by Independence men principally." At the time of the article, "The old road bed [from Independence to Wayne City could] also be seen almost the entire distance. A piece of the turntable was taken out and [was] in the possession of Mr. R. D. Wirt."

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

to complement this JOURNAL article is available at www.jchs.org.

- 1 Independence (Mo.) Examiner, 21 Jan 1967, p. 3A and 4A.
- 2 An act approved February 22, 1849, to incorporate the Independence and Missouri River Rail Road Company is found in the Laws of the State of Missouri Passed at the Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly (Jefferson City, Mo.: Hampton L. Boon, 1849).
- 3 Kansas City (Mo.) Daily Journal, 17 May 1883, p. 3, col. 2-3.

# JACKSON COUNTY'S POOR FARM TRANSFORMED INTO A RICH HEALTHCARE CENTER

BY DAVID W. JACKSON

[Editor's Note: For space considerations, this article has been edited. The original, full-length version is available for research in the Jackson County Historical Society's Archives and at the Mid-Continent Public Library's Genealogy Branch.]



The earliest view of Jackson County's Poor House, as seen in the 1877 Illustrated Atlas of Jackson County, Missouri.

Jackson County's commitment to caring for its poor over the last 150 years is the focus of this article. It also reveals to interested researchers the availability of pertinent historical records.

#### ORIGINS OF THE POOR FARM

Long before Jackson County established a special institution for caring for aged and infirm poor citizens, the County Court followed the "boarding-out" system, a common practice of allotting funds for private parties within the community—at the lowest bid—to provide room and board for those who could no longer care for themselves.¹ According to the Laws of the State of Missouri, "An act to authorize the county courts...to erect poor houses, whenever they shall deem it expedient" was approved on February 24, 1843.² "[The Courts] were authorized to purchase land not exceeding 160 acres and to erect houses which were to be used for the care of poor persons."

A decade later Jackson County discovered it would be more efficient to administer one institution rather than doling resources to individual caretakers. The Jackson County Court, in its January 1851 term, "ordered that a warrant issued to Henry W. Younger for the sum of one thousand two hundred dollars the first payment on the farm purchased from him for a poor farm, to be delivered to him when he gives up the County's note and payable out of any money in the County treasury." Colonel Henry Washington Younger, a well-respected businessman and politician, had a plantation of several thousand acres in three Missouri counties that

included land on Big Creek near today's Lee's Summit. (Younger and his wife Bursheba reared fourteen children; their sons Cole, Jim, John and Bob gained notoricty as the "Younger Brothers" when they rode with Frank and Jesse James.) A section of 160-acres was deeded to Jackson County, Missouri, for its Poor Farm.

At this time Jackson County's Poor Farm was located eighteen and one half miles southeast of Kansas City (9 miles from Independence, 5 miles from Lee's Summit). The site was on high ground in the Blue Hills countryside overlooking the scenic valley of the Little Blue River.<sup>5</sup>

A call for bids for a Poor Farm superintendent and physician were issued in the County Court minutes on January 9, 1851. William Cogswell was appointed as the Poor House superintendent for one year starting March 1, 1852. He was to be paid \$240/quarter. P. J. G. Sea was appointed physician to be paid \$15/year. Nelson Faukner contracted to "supply shingling, windows, doors, dressed flooring, dressed weatherboards, and the running of a stairway."

Paupers in the care of individuals before the establishment of the Poor Farm were not automatically transferred upon its completion. Jackson County apparently grand fathered those who had been assigned caretakers prior to the establishment of the Poor Farm. On May 2, 1859, the County Court provided a detailed accounting of County expenditures. One section of the report titled, "Pauperism Outside the Poor House," totaled nearly \$700 to 25 caregivers. Only three paupers were enumerated at the Poor Farm in 1860.10

# EXPANSION AND EVOLUTION TO MODERNIZED HEALTH CARE

Jackson County's Poor Farm (which, technically was an almshouse, or poorhouse, with a large working farm connected to its operations) eventually expanded from 160-to more than 300-acres with several institutional buildings.<sup>11</sup>

In July 1890 a new building at the Poor Farm was completed. The three-story brick building measuring 30' x 140' feet long had two entrances, two stairways, and a 10-foot wide hallway. Sixty-seven commodious cells were eight square feet with high ceilings. The superintendent's residence in 1890 was a 100' long, one-story brick house except about twenty feet of the center, which had two stories. The Poor House buildings were behind the residence.<sup>12</sup>

In February 1906 there was a debate to liquidate the vast farm owned by the county to issue bonds and build a "hospital" on 30 acres in Kansas City for the same purpose.

Discussion leaned towards modernizing the country farm with new buildings.<sup>13</sup> The \$250,000 bond issue passed for a "hospital" to be built at the Poor Farm site. By November 1907 the County Court had let the contract for the building of a new "county farmhouse."<sup>14</sup> Architects Charles A. Smith and Frank S. Rea designed the new three-story, 212-bed facility, which was built using stone quarried on the farm and hauled by inmates. The hospital offered seven acres of floor space—two and a half acres per floor not counting the basement, plus individual rooms measuring roughly 9' x 16'. <sup>15</sup> The new stone facility was erected on the hill one half mile west from the road and replaced the brick structures of the Poor Farm that had been in place since post-Civil War reconstruction."<sup>16'</sup>

In July 1908 the cornerstone to the new County Hospital officially dedicated "Patterson Hall," named after J. M. Patterson, the presiding judge of the County Court. A time capsule was sealed in the cornerstone. Within three years, however, "Patterson Hall" was chiseled from the cornerstone at the beginning of 1911. On January 3 the Kansas City Journal reported the following order: "Resolved, by the court, that the county poor farm and hospital buildings known as 'Patterson Hall' shall hereafter be known and designated as "The Jackson County Home." This building became—and is still operated today—as a long-term care facility for indigent elderly. By the 1930s, newspaper articles referred to the institution as "The Jackson County Home for the Aged" and sometimes "The Jackson County Home for the Aged and Infirm." 18

In 1928 Harry S Truman, as presiding judge of the Jackson County Court, campaigned for a county hospital. The successful passage of a bond issue that year led to the construction of a \$360,473, 88-bed public hospital opening October 24, 1930. Architects Frederick C. Gunn and Frederick Wallace designed three north-facing wings that were added beside the Jackson County Home. The east and west wings were three stories high and the center was four stories (the fourth floor constructed for hospital purposes, as discussed below; a mid-1970s addition connected the two buildings). The cornerstone of the 1930 hospital bears Truman's name, along with two other County Judges, Robert Barr, and Thomas B. Bash. Truman is said to have been had such a keen interest in the hospital that he frequented the worksite (A few years later as 33rd President of the United States, Truman's interest in a national health insurance program anchored him as one of the first national leaders to make health care funding a priority).

By September 1937, in the midst of the Great Depression, the Rural Jackson County Emergency Hospital, providing 24-hour emergency service, occupied the first, third and fourth floors of the center wing of the Jackson County Home. The hospital's 21 medical and surgical beds and 4 maternity beds were occupied by county residents who were without funds and by emergency cases from automobile accidents on rural highways.<sup>19</sup>

In the years that followed conditions deteriorated, however. In 1965 the County Court retained the services of William R. Williams as Administrator. The Jackson County Home was placed under his administration in 1967, and became an integral part of the hospital complex. Later that year, the Jackson County Court appointed a non-partisan, five-member hospital board to oversee the activities of the



Section map from the 1877 Illustrated Atlas of Jackson County, Missouri, showing the Poor Farm property and its relationship to the community in the Little Blue valley.

Jackson County Public Hospital, all of whom were subsequently elected in the general election of November 5, 1968. At that time, the Jackson County Hospital was the only institution in the area—and one of the few in the entire countryoffering four distinct levels of patient care: a 176bed extended resident care for Medicare and Medicaid patients (formerly The Jackson County Home for the Aged), 130 beds in chronic care, 60 beds with hospital

and ancillary facilities for the acutely ill, and 10 beds in the resident care division offering domiciliary care.

The Jackson County Home was officially closed in September 1971 and 87 patients were transferred to Mission East Nursing Home at 911 East Linwood in Kansas City, when the county took over operation of that facility. By October of the following year, the hospital had expanded to 569 beds, counting 223 at the long-term "nursing home" section of the hospital. There were 212 patients in 1997.

In 1976 the board of trustees relinquished control of the hospital to the Kansas City General Hospital and Medical Center Corporation, a nonprofit corporation that managed General Hospital in downtown Kansas City, the Jackson County Hospital, Mission East Nursing Home, the county health department and medical services at the county jail.

By resolution on November 29, 1976, the Jackson County legislature officially changed the name of Jackson County

Hospital and County Home to Truman Medical Center-East. The property is still owned by Jackson County, but operated and managed under contract by Truman Medical Center, Inc.

The Center's mission to provide exceptional health-care

has stimulated a series of expansions in services and facilities in order to continue meeting—and often exceeding—acceptable standards, practices and codes. In 1982 a family clinic was dedicated in Bess Truman's name. The Bess Truman Family Practice Clinic was adjoined on the east side of the hospital her husband had lobbied for at the beginning of the Great Depression.

Between 1995 and 1997, an 11phase, \$24 million construction and remodeling project saw the addition of a multipurpose education center added on the west side of the complex, and a three-story expansion of the long-term care center attached to the east of the 1908 building.

As part of Truman Medical Center's 2001 strategic vision and image, its two hospitals adopted new names: TMC Hospital Hill (located near Crown Center in Kansas City), and TMC Lakewood (the site of the former Poor Farm) at Lee's Summit Road and Gregory Boulevard adjacent to the Lakewood and Summit Woods subdivisions. Work began in 2003 at Lakewood to completely redesign, enlarge and reconstruct the 1982 family clinic to better accommodate a host of vital services (ambulatory, emergency, in-patient surgical units, and medical offices). The \$38 million dollar, 175,000-square-foot hospital expansion includes and newly re-designed distinctive entryway.<sup>20</sup>

#### SOME STATISTICS THROUGH TIME

The superintendent of Jackson County's poor farm was appointed for a renewable two-year term by the Jackson County Court, and paid a salary (\$960/year in 1852<sup>21</sup>; \$1,040/year in 1907<sup>22</sup>). The extent of other staff fluctuated over time. Staff was generally inadequate to handle the number of inmates. Before the 1960s staff lacked formal, professional healthcare or medical training. Generally, the superintendent's wife served as "matron" and noted for being responsible for cooking, housekeeping and other duties.

In the years prior to the addition of an official hospital at the site, a physician from a local community provided medical attention to inmates at the farm for a salary (\$50/year in 1852<sup>23</sup>; \$500 in 1880<sup>24</sup>; \$900 in 1907<sup>25</sup>). Service at the Poor Farm supplemented the physician's own private practice. For

instance, Dr. A. A. Hobbs of Raytown, Missouri, was physician for the farm between at least 1907 and 1908. He was reported to visit the farm twice a week "and oftener if called."<sup>26</sup>

Each year between January and March, the Poor Farm

superintendent submitted a statistical report to the County Court. (Annual reports can be extracted from the County Court minutes, which has not yet been systematically conducted.) The reports tallied various details about inmates (the term most commonly used; at other times "patient," "ward," or "paupers" were used), institution expenditures and farm production.

By 1870 there were 30 inmates at Jackson County's Poor Farm. That number grew to 45 in 1880. There were 149 inmates listed in the 1900 U. S. census for Jackson County. In the decades that followed, the number of inmates at the Jackson

County Home grew exponentially: 174 in 1910; 446 in 1920; and, 804 in 1930.

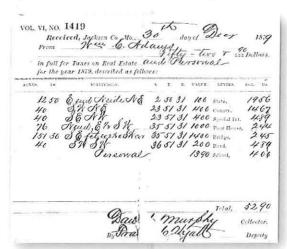
Overcrowded conditions were reported in the first quarter of 1925 when 600 persons were being supported at the farm. The facility had only been designed to accommodate 450.<sup>27</sup> After expanding in 1930, the county furnished care for 805 County Home inmates and another 165 inmates at the "Negro County Farm."<sup>28</sup>

In 1901, one-fifth of the population at the farm was African-American. Among Caucasians was a large population of foreign born representing many different nationalities.<sup>29</sup> By the mid- to late-1920s the "Jackson County Home for Aged and Infirm Negroes" segregated inmates to a facility on the east side of present-day Lee's Summit Road.

The ratio between men and women was 2 to 1 in 1901.<sup>30</sup> In 1907, there were 143 men and 37 females.<sup>31</sup> There were 525 men and 75 women reported in 1925.<sup>32</sup>

#### SHIFTS IN DAILY LIFE AT THE FARM

Persons having been found incapable of supporting themselves were sent to the County's poor farm for an indefinite period of time by order of the County Court. They were discharged only when another home was found or it was determined that they could otherwise support themselves.<sup>33</sup> This scenario is not unique to the 1800s or 1900s. Even today, millions of Americans living longer lives outlive their savings and investments, and are forced to go on Medicaid. According to a 1995 Independence Independence Examiner article, "All but a handful of the Truman [Medical Center]



Jackson County, Missouri, 1879 tax receipt showing a portion of William C. Adams' assessment supporting the "Poor House." Courtesy Frank and Janann Adams.

residents are on Medicaid. Some were middle-class people whose assets were wiped out by their lingering medical needs."

Daily life at the Poor Farm depended on many factors: the appointed administrative staff; county politics—particularly the composition of the county court; local economy and appropriations to the farm; and, the prevailing sentiment of the public who were responsible for voting changes and improvements to the institution.

The capabilities and faculties of individual inmates inherently contributed to their quality of life. Most inmates likely suffered some degree of senility, blindness, and

deafness. Then, too, were those mildly or seriously afflicted with any variety of mental and physical disabilities. Many of the inmates, however, were "eminently respectable," and every effort was made—at least in 1901—to keep inmates in separate wards.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1960s more than half of the 218 residents of the Jackson County Home were either mentally retarded or suffered from chronic mental illness. Many inmates spent years in the county home. According to U.S. Census returns for Jackson County (offering a snapshot at the institution every ten years), more than 80 inmates lived there a minimum of 10 years; 8 for 20 years; 3 for 30 years; 1 for 40 years. Nancy Spencer (or Pence) was first listed at the Poor Farm in 1880. Fifty years later, the woman who was often referred to as "Crazy Nan" or "Big Nan" was still living on the county dole.

Those without hope of improvement died at the Poor Farm. Records have not been located documenting the names of those who died at Jackson County's Poor Farm, or the ultimate disposition of the bodies. Occasionally, a reference in an obituary or death certificate may be found for someone who died at the Poor Farm. For instance, a researcher looking for archaeological papers George Hull Squier, a noted Michigan archaeologist, discovered that Squire died in anonymity at the Jackson County Home (his body was removed to Michigan according to an obituary). And, a 1921 obituary for one of James Tharp's ancestors, Peter Gille, reports his burial at the "southwest sanitarium," which was, in fact, the Jackson County Home at Little Blue.

Mr. Jullian Jackson, son Ernest Jackson who was superintendent from 1923-1924 and 1934-1939, recalled that through the mid-1930s there were on-site burials. Bodies that were not retrieved by a family member were buried "plainly but decently" at the County's expense in a pauper's graveyard located in the far southwest corner of the site (approximately one and a half miles south of the current-day facility). Individual burials were originally marked with wooden markers. No traces of the wooden markers of Mr. Jackson's childhood memories were visible by at least 1982. According to TMC Lakewood administrative officials, the cemetery is densely overgrown with brush and trees and is not accessible to the public.

Jackson County's Poor Farm, as other county poor farms in Missouri, was intended to be as nearly self-supporting as possible through the labor of the paupers. With a minimal



The Jackson County Home for the Aged, looking west from Lee's Summit Road, as printed in *Results of County Planning*. Photo by Dick Millard, Sr. (PHX9397)

percentage of able-bodied inmates, Dr. Charles Ellwood summed the situation by stating that "the idea that the institution may be rendered self-supporting through the labor of its inmates is fallacious . . . . If the amount of land is large the superintendent has to spend nearly all his time in managing the farm to the neglect of the inmates." Eventually, farming activities were discontinued by the facility and the land was leased to local farmers.

Mrs. Mae Perdue, a matron in charge of female inmates who shared an apartment on the second floor with her husband from 1936 to 1940, recalled her only assistants were the inmates themselves. Her day started at 6 a.m. and usually ended at bedtime. Iron gates were locked at night to separate the inmates from her and her husband's living quarters. The inmates were responsible for their own laundry and ironing and cleaning of their rooms. Mrs. Purdue recalled the male inmates were allowed to move more freely about the home, whereas, the women were confined to their wards. During the

four years Mrs. Purdue was at the home, the inmates received the same meal seven days a week. Breakfast consisted of hot oatmeal; lunch was a bowl of stew; and, dinner a sandwich. Mrs. Perdue recalled the delicious pies made in the kitchen, but she was quick to add that they were for the staff of the home and farm hands.<sup>39</sup>

Mr. Jackson recalled that entertainment was often presented in the auditorium. A bell would ring three times announcing the entertainment from the evening. Various church groups came on a weekly basis, but Jackson remembered the Folly Theater always played to a packed house.<sup>41</sup>

Church services have always been available.42 In 1925 they were held in a large auditorium of the in the main building at the home.43 By 1969 a beautiful all-faith chapel had been built for residents. In the mid-1920s, quarters were generally neat and comfortable. Staff shortages and overcrowding of inmates during the 1930s diminished the level of care for residents. Compounding these issues were that the staff of the County Home consisted entirely of political appointees. As mentioned above, the living and working situation at the Jackson County Home had grossly deteriorated by 1965 when William R. (Bill) Williams came on as administrator. He found that "human excrement covered the walls.... We scrubbed

the walls and even the ceilings for a year and a half, just to be sure we got it all off before we painted. It was summer time. There were no screen doors, and everyone was squashing June bugs. Lounging in the halls were men in dirty overalls, spitting tobacco juice. There was a rubber rug runner put down in the center of this hallway to help keep you from falling down in the slop. It was that bad." He also reported that, "hospital residents were being fed the following menu: potato soup, bread (plain), a handful of raisins, weak coffee, and a cup of water. After the inmates finished eating they were put into another room and separated, the men on one side and the women on the other. No one was allowed to talk." Mrs. Virginia Haynes, director of social services who had been acquainted with the hospital since 1926, said, "conditions...at that time were intolerable."

In January 1966 an advisory committee was appointed by the Court to investigate the facility. The committee described "a prison atmosphere, the prevalence of strong urine odors, filthy bathrooms and unappetizing food served in an unpleasant environment. The institution would be condemned the committee said, if subjected to the minimum standards of the city boarding home ordinances or Missouri State Health regulations for nursing homes." They noticed

such things as wire doors, locked rooms and dining tables bound to the floors. They observed that the sexes were segregated and personal clothing was discouraged. Residents sat with nothing to do, no activities, no links with the outside world. Hygiene was poor and personnel standards were very



The Jackson County Hospital constructed between 1907 and 1908. View is to the southwest from Little Blue Road, as printed in Results of County Planning. Photo by Dick Millard, Sr. (PHX9397)

low. Dr. Charles Wheeler called the institution "a medieval depository for indigent mentally ill." 46

Williams began cleaning up, refurbishing and staffing the hospital as they worked to overturn its facilities, services, and public image. In two short years the hospital met all the rigid standards of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals and was accredited for the first time in 1967.

# TRUMAN MEDICAL CENTER LAKEWOOD INTO THE FUTURE

The last 30 years have seen marked improvements in facility, faculty, and patient care. Today, Truman Medical Center Lakewood's dedicated staff operates a rich, state-of-the-art health care facility at the former site of Jackson County's Poor Farm. Reminders of the farm are the historic structures that have been preserved and integrated into the modern facility.

One last noteworthy asset of this historic Jackson County site is the virgin stand of forest overlooking the Little Blue Valley, which has thus far escaped development. A long-term master plan for the Little Blue Trace is suppose to protect this valuable natural resource ... perhaps one of Jackson County's last undisturbed scenic vistas.

# WHERE ARE POOR FARM-RELATED RECORDS?

Jackson County record managers have no knowledge of the existence of original or microfilmed Poor Farm records, particularly inmate files and superintendent reports.<sup>47</sup> At this time there are two avenues of research for genealogically related information.

First, James Tharp's abstract and index to the names of Jackson County Poor Farm inmates from U.S. census population schedules from 1860 through 1930 comprise the most readily available list of inmates who were living at the Poor Farm when the census enumerator visited the facility every ten years.

Second, Jackson County Court minutes (dating from 1827 through the 1960s) are also available for viewing on microfilm. The County Court was analogous to today's county legislature. Within the daily proceedings may be found paupers' applications to the County Court for admittance to the Poor Farm. With an approximate year the handwritten index can be searched for surnames and subjects. A typical entry is brief and includes abbreviations, such as "P.H." for Poor House. Once a name, book and page number are obtained from the index the complete entry may be located in the typed transcripts of the Court's minutes.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

to complement this JOURNAL article is available at www.jchs.org.

David W. Jackson is director of education and archives for the Jackson County Historical Society. He continues to search for record of death/burial for his great great grandmother, Frances Evelyn (Woods) Rogers Wininger/Winegar Boze, who was reportedly sent by train from her home in Lexington to the State Mental Hospital in St. Joseph between 1920 and 1924. Failing to find substantive record at St. Joseph, a certified death certificate, or hometown burial, David's next step is to see if she may have ended up at the Lafayette or Ray County Almshouses.

Jackson and James A. Tharp, reference librarian for the Mid-Continent Public Library's Genealogy Branch, have compiled copies of documents including more than 125 newspaper articles about this subject; an abstract of known Poor Farm superintendents and physicians; plus, Tharp's abstract and index to the names of Jackson County Poor Farm inmates from U.S. Census Population Schedules, 1860-1930.

- 1 Cross, William T. and Charlotte B. Forrester. County Almshouses and Jails of Missouri. (Missouri State Nurses' Association, 1912), 3.
- 2 Laws of the State of Missouri.
- 3 Boan, Fern. A History of Poor Relief Legislation and Administration in Missouri. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1903), 29.
- 4 Jackson County, Missouri, County Court Minutes, Book 9, Page 69.
- 5 The prisoners stayed at the farm while work was going on, an area of one building converted for confinement. Kansas City (Mo.) Times. "Where 175 Unfortunates, Unable to Make a Living for Themselves, are Cared for at Public Expense." 7 Jul. 1901.
- 6 Jackson County, Missouri, County Court Minutes, Book 9, Page 71; 78.
- 7 Ibid., 326; 346.
- 8 Ibid., 346; 352; 392. On August 10, the County Court ordered Nelson Faulkner be paid \$160 for his work "on the poorhouse or poorfarm."
- 9 Ibid., Book 11, Page 209.
- 10 1860 U.S. Census for Jackson County, Missouri, Roll M653-625.
- 11 There were 329 acres reported in the article, "A Visit to the Poor Farm," Kansas City (Mo.) Times, 29 Jul. 1890. Superintendent Hudspeth reported 320 acres in his 1892 report to the County Court. Kansas City (Mo.) Daily Journal, 22 Feb. 1893. There were 313 acres reported by Superintendent H. P. Truitt in 1904. Ellwood, Charles A., Ph.D. Bulletin on the Condition of the County Almshouses of Missouri, A. (Columbia, Mo.: Univ. of Mo., 1904), 6. The Jackson Examiner reported 300 acres on 9 Feb. 1906 and 313 acres on 8 and 11 Jun. 1906, but 320 acres on 9 Nov. 1906. Many older structures have modernized and expanded to comprise the Truman Medical Center, Lakewood campus.
- 12 Kansas City (Mo.) Times. "A Visit to the Poor Farm." 29 July 1890.
- 13 Independence (Mo.) Jackson Examiner. "Poor Farm an Issue." 15 Jun. 1906.
- 14 Ibid. "Poor Farm." 20 Nov. 1907.
- 15 Ibid. "Poor Farm." 23 Jun. 1908.
- 16 History of Jackson County, Missouri. (Kansas City, Mo.: Union Historical Co., 1881), 224-228.
- 17 Truman Medical Center-East UPDATE, January 1994.
- 18 Kansas City (Mo.) Journal. Untitled. 3 Jan. 1911.
- 19 Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post. Untitled. 1 Sep. 1937.
- 20 Truman Medical Center staff. "Truman Medical Center Lakewood Expanding for the Future Health & Fitness." 19 Mar. 2003, 13.
- 21 Jackson County, Missouri, Court Minutes, Book 9, Page 326.
- 22 Independence (Mo.) Examiner. "Poor Farm." 8 Dec. 1906.
- 23 Jackson County, Missouri, Court Minutes, Book 9, Page 326.
- 24 History of Jackson County, Missouri, 224-228.
- 25 Independence (Mo.) Examiner. "Poor Farm." 8 Dec. 1906.
- 26 Ibid. "Poor Farm." 28 June 1908.
- 27 Kansas City (Mo.) Star. Untitled. 1 Mar. 1925.
- 28 Ibid. Oct. 1931.
- 29 Kansas City (Mo.) Times. Where 175 Unfortunates, Unable to Make a Living for Themselves, are Cared for at Public Expense. 7 July 1901.
- 31 Independence (Mo.) Examiner. Untitled. 14 Jan. 1908.
- 32 Kansas City (Mo.) Star. Untitled. 1 Mar. 1925.
- 33 Kansas City (Mo.) Times. Where 175 Unfortunates, Unable to Make a Living for Themselves, are Cared for at Public Expense. 7 July 1901.
- 34 Ibid.
- 36 From an interview with Mr. Jullian Jackson, as printed in, "TMC/East History, 1852-1982." (no author provided), 2.
- 37 Ellwood, Charles A., Ph.D. Bulletin on the Condition of the County Almshouses of Missouri, A. (Columbia, Mo.: Univ. of Mo., 1904), 15.
- 39 From an interview with Mrs. Mae Perdue, as printed in, "TMC/East History, 1852-1982." (no author provided), 7.
- 41 "TMC/East History, 1852-1982," 5.
- 42 Ellwood, 6.
- 43 Kansas City (Mo.) Star. Untitled. 1 Mar. 1925.
- 45 Unattributed newspaper article titled Improvements at County Hospital, ca. 1975.
- 46 "TMC/East History, 1852-1982," 8.
- 47 Informal interviews conducted by David W. Jackson with administrators at the Jackson County Records Center, Geospace Center, Independence, Missouri, in January 2002; and, at Truman Medical Center Lakewood, Kansas City, Missouri, August 2003.

## TUMBLEDOWN OF GILLISS HOUSE

CONTRIBUTED BY JAMES A. THARP

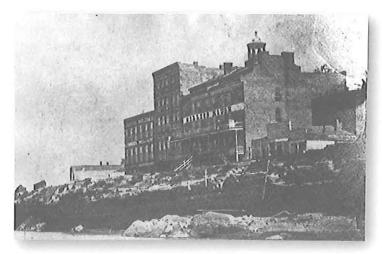
[Editor's Note: Kansas City lost the Gilliss House long ago, but other significant buildings are in jeopardy today. Take positive action so future Kansas Citians may see their history through its structural and cultural landscapes.

The two following items are slightly edited, re-printed newspaper articles about the Gilliss House (often spelled "Gillis"). The structure stood majestically beside the Missouri River at Westport Landing since the origin of the Town of Kansas and through the infancy of Kansas City. Keep in mind that thirty years of bustling Kansas City history transpired between the printings of these articles.

Former JOURNAL contributor James A. Tharp, who is reading early newspapers for his personal enjoyment, found these and we thought they were worth bringing to light once more, especially as Kansas City progresses on its plans to preserve the Town of Kansas site as an archaeological park.]

Kansas City (Mo.) Daily Western Journal of Commerce, August 26, 1860, p. 3, c. 1

On yesterday evening, through the politeness of Dr. Hopkins, we were shown through the entire establishment of the Gillis House (the late Claiborne House). We must confess that we did not think that such complete renovation could take place, as has been made in this house, from garret to cellar. The basement is going to be remodeled, so as to place the office and saloons below. The second floor or main floor will also undergo some changes that will make the suite of parlors more spacious. The third floor contains a complete suit[e] of the most commodious and splendidly furnished family and double bedrooms. The fourth story is wholly fitted up with the most beautiful and handsomely arranged single rooms. These are the perfect models of hotel rooms, both in size and style of getting up. The rooms are all beautifully carpeted and papered—the furniture is all new and elegant, particularly the beds. We think we have seldom if ever seen a hotel containing bedding more luxurious. Everything about the house bespeaks ease and comfort. The proprietors, Messrs. Hopkins & Starr, have certainly taken into their heads to keep the best hotel in the western country. They have spared neither pains nor expense, to insure to their guests all the luxuries and comforts; and if their table corresponds with their other efforts to please, of which we feel well assured, then they will at once place the Gillis House at the head of western hotels. They expect to open in a few days.



The Gilliss House, 1867. Built by Benoist Troost in 1849, it was known as the American Hotel in 1856. You also see in this view, the limestone levy between Delaware and Wyandotte Streets that played such a major role in Westport Landing's history. A section of this long-lost landmark has recently been found and geologists are studying whether the entire ledge may be excavated as the Town of Kansas archeological park evolves. (PHL4439)

Kansas City (Mo.) Times, March 23, 1890

Were the ghost of old John Brown to come to Kansas City it would have a difficult time in finding the Gilliss House, the famous hostelry in which, nearly forty years ago, the great abolitionist ate his meals and dreamed of his underground railroads. There is little left now of this noted hotel, and that little is suggestive of anything else than its original character.

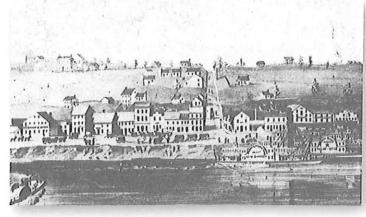
Down on the levee, perhaps a hundred yards distant from the banks of the Missouri River, about twice that distance to the left of Main Street, stands a dilapidated red brick structure that was once the finest building in Kansas City. It is now in the last stages of decay and indeed has already been more than half demolished by order of the authorities, by reason of its dangerous condition. A portion of the walls are still standing to the height of three stories; another portion is two stories in height, while the western end has entirely disappeared, a blind fence—hiding the old stable yard—replacing it.

Such of the first and second floors as are still tenable are occupied by the local agency of a St. Louis brewery for the storage of its beer. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tharp discovered an April 31, 1878, Kansas City (Mo.) Times article announcing "the establishment of an extensive can factory."] The basement in which in years gone by were the kitchen and

storerooms of the hotel, is now an inaccessible mud hole, the water in it standing knee deep, and over that to the floor above is filled with broken ends of timber and other debris. In the front of the basement is said to be the opening of a sewer emptying directly into the river. The hole is so dark, however, that the opening cannot be discerned.

Fancy always injects a bit of tragedy or a vein of horror into tumbled own houses, but in this instance there is no ground for it.

The Gill iss House was built before the gold fever of '49 broke out in California. The first portion of the house was build probab ly along about 1846-47. It was then only a two story brick building of very modest dimensions as became a then little known border town. It was, however, the only hotel of which the town boasted. William Gillis, who for a number of years was its landlord, built the house. It was then known as the Gilliss House, and being the only hostelry here, the fame of the cuisine and the good cheer of the bar traveled far



Town of Kansas, 1855. (PHL685)

Esculapius did better delving for gold than in compounding specifics for the "fever'n ager" stricken, and about 1852 came back a very rich man. It was then he married the sister of William Gillis and the Gilliss House quickly showed the

effect of Dr. Troost's newly acquired wealth. He became a partner with his brother-in-law, and the hotel property was greatly enlarged. Another story was added to it and its frontage extended until it became the finest building anywhere on the river west of St. Louis.

It was about this time that the Gilliss House reached the writh of its fame. Counts from Germany, lords from England and titled rich men from other parts of Europe made the Gilliss their headquarters. These old, country dignitaries, fired with the tales told them of the big game, the buffalo and the bear hunts, with a spice of danger and adventure added by reason of the unsettled condition of the Indians, flocked west to participate in the new sport. Men who had tired of the jungles and bungalows of India and the wilds and miasma of Africa were eager for the untried hazards of the western prairies. So they came in great numbers. Kansas City was their

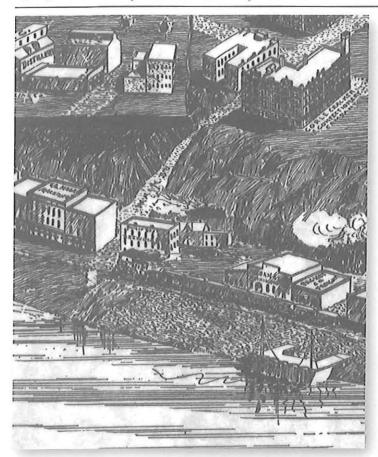
disembarking and reorganizing point after the trip up the river from St. Louis, and so for days at a time these blue-blooded sportsmen, with their endless retinue of servants, their paraphernalia of the hunt and their packs of dogs, held high carnival in the Gilliss House, and doubtless more than once the good American heart of Landlord Gillis was vexed at the merry goings-on of "My lord," though doubtless there was a commensurate tickling of his pocket.

Anyway Landlord Gillis and Dr. Troost made much



The Town of Kansas drawn after nature by Herrmann J. Meyer, ca. 1849-55. Gilliss House is the larger structure on the right. The small cabin on the hill above it resembles 'the old hut with but a single room and attic" mentioned in this news article. (PHIL5131)

up and dow the river. Kansas City in those days unlike the city of today was an important maritime point, for four and five steamer s a day stopped at its levee. Landlord Gillis was assisted at o dd times in the early days of his hotel career by his future be other-in-law, Dr. [Benoist] Troost. When the report of the fabulous discoveries of gold in California reached Kansas City, Dr. Troost, however, threw practice, the hotel and everything else to the winds, and was one of the first to mak his way to the new Eldorado. The disciple of



A section of Case and Norman's Stranger's Guide to Kansas City, 1887, showing the river landing where Gilliss House stood.

money, and with a prophetic foresight of the future greatness of Kansas City, invested it in lands that were then considered in the wilds, but are now in the heart of the city.

In 1854 Mr. Eldredge took the house off their hands on a lease. For a time thereafter the inn was known as Eldredge House. Another story was added and the hostelry otherwise enlarged and improved. It was during Eldredge's charge of the hotel that one of the most exciting and thrilling episodes of the famous "Border war" occurred in which the Gilliss House played an important part. It was no less than the flight from Kansas of Governor A. H. Reeder and who for twenty-four hours was hidden away in the Gilliss House from his hot-blooded enemies, who were clamoring for his life.

To better understand and appreciate the dangers of Governor Reeder's flight it is only necessary to tell the reader that it occurred right in the height of the "Border war" excitement. This border war, growing out of the admission of the Indian lands now embracing the states of Kansas and Nebraska into the union as territories, involved the question of slavery. A part of the residents of western Missouri and along the border were in favor of slavery and there was a minority of abolitionists who wanted the new territory to belong to the column of free states. Factional strife developed and many were the brawls resulting on the levee in front of

the Gilliss House and in all parts of that section where so lately had lived in peaceful quiet the Wyandotte, Ottawa, Shawnee, Pottawatomie and other remnants of powerful Indian tribes. Carpetbaggers from north and south hastened to the front and the Gilliss became their headquarters. Their harangues only inflamed the passions of their respective followers and made matters more complicated and difficult of settlement. Among the more noted of the northern leaders who took temporary guests of the old Gilliss, was no less a personage than the noted John Brown, whose ignoble exit from the field of action so soon afterward gave him immortality in the song: John Brown's body lies a moldering in the grave,

#### BUT HIS SOUL GOES MARCHING ON

During these times both factions patrolled the streets of the city with armed guards, and every man who was not known or gave either party the slightest cause for suspicion was promptly challenged, and unless he could give a good account of himself was quickly shown the shortest road out of town. Among the military organizations of the city at that time was one of hot-blooded young southerners exclusively. They were especially bitter against Governor Reeder, the appointed governor of the territory of Kansas, for his pronounced stand in opposition to slavery. As there were numerous threats made against the governor's life at this time, and more than one effort made to encompass his death, the territory soon became too hot for him and he was forced to a flight. Eldredge, Colonel Kersey Coates and Dr. [Johnston] Lykins, all prominent residents of Kansas City, and all northern sympathizers, were personal friends of the governor and resolved to aid in his escape.

In some manner the southern company got wind of Reeder's proposed flight and knew that he was in the neighborhood of Kansas City seeking a means to escape via the river to the east. They redoubled their exertions, doubled their guards and swore that the governor should never enter Kansas City, or if he did, not leave it alive. Their watchfulness prevented the allies of the governor from making active efforts to hasten his flight from Kansas for some days, but finally, one dark, cloudy night in midsummer, the attempt was resolved on. The military guards were worn out by their ceaseless vigils, and only one sentry was left on watch that night. He was Georgian, Alexander Lawton by name, a nephew of the famous Alexander Lawton.

Shortly after dark that night a man was seen to leave the Gilliss House, walk to the bank of the River, get into a small boat, and row away up the river. He was gone some hours. Toward midnight the solitary sentry was roused from a sleepy reverie by hearing the dip of oars. The skiff was returning and there were two forms in it. The boat touched at the landing, one of the figures stepped out and went to the Gilliss House on a dead run. It was Governor Reeder. He was admitted at

the basement door by Mr. Eldredge himself. The solitary occupant of the boat rowed swiftly back into the river, despite Sentry Lawton's summons to halt. It was too dark to fire, and the daring oarsman was speedily lost in the gloom.

Lawton's suspicions were aroused and he hastened to headquarters with the startling announcement that Governor Reeder had just come by river and was at that moment in the Gilliss House.

The officers, however, did not appreciate the importance of the sentry's communication and stormed at him for awakening them, easing their consciences, however, by saying that the midnight marauders were doubtless chicken thieves. Lawton, disgusted and chagrined, resumed his beat and about daylight was accosted by Colonel Coates. The sentry asked him who was the late arrival at the Gilliss House the night before and added that he believed it was Governor Reeder.

"If I was in command of that company," said Lawton, "I'd make an immediate search of the premises."

"Well, why don't you do it, then?" asked the colonel. "O, we will this afternoon," replied the guard.

Colonel Coates invited Lawton in to have a cup of coffee and breakfast, which invitation the tired sentry eagerly accepted. He went upstairs to wash himself and by inadvertence was ushered into a room directly beneath one that Governor Reeder at that moment was occupying. Indeed the fugitive's footsteps could be heard overhead, but Lawton,



Kersey Coates (PHL4053)

probably thinking it was some one just getting up, paid little attention to the sounds. At the breakfast table at which were Colonel Coates, Mr. Eldredge, Dr. and Mrs. Lykins—now Mrs. Bingham, living at the Hotel Brunswick—and some other ladies, the young southerner again reiterated his belief that Governor Reeder was in the house and wished that the searching party would hurry up.

Dr. Lykins and Mr. Eldredge exchanged significant glances and soon excused themselves from the table. They went up stairs and conducting Governor Reeder from his room, secreted him in the attic, fearful that the southerners might precipitate a search at any moment.

Up on the hill, quite a distance from the hotel, on what is now a part of Broadway, stood an old hut with but a single room and attic occupied by an aged Pennsylvania couple. Dr. Lykins hastened there and confided to them that Governor Reeder was in great danger at the Gilliss House and proposed that he take up quarters with them in the attic. Being northern sympathizers and not averse to the gold that Dr. Lykins offered them, they consented, and that afternoon, disguised as an old man, Governor Reeder went to this house,



Andrew H. Reeder disguised as a wood chopper. Reeder sent this photograph to Mrs. S. W. Coates, who wrote that it hung in the Coates House for many years. This photograph was also reportedly used by Chicago painter Cyrenius Hall for his painting that Mrs. Laura Coates Reed donated to the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. More information about this event appears in her book, "In Memoriam," beginning on page 102. (PHL189)

escaping from the rear entrance of the hotel just as the searching party marched in the front door.

The governor climbed up the high bluff back of the hotel, his retreat covered by Colonel Coates and Dr. Lykins. As the hillside was covered with a thick growth of hazel bush, he reached the old hut without discovery and there he remained hidden away in the old attic. Dr. Lykins visited him every day, and to give some color for his repeated calls at the lonely old house, the aged wife of the owner consented to play sick, and actually did stay in her bed during all the time that the governor was a lodger up stairs.

The governor finally made his escape one day, disguised as an Irish woodchopper, an ax slung over his should and a dirty clay pipe stuck between his teeth. Mr. Reeder picked his way to a wood landing just above the town and then, perched on a woodpile, awaited the arrival of a steamer in which he embarked, still keeping his disguise. He got off on the Illinois shore, just above St. Louis and thence made his way to Washington. Lawton was subsequently killed in the War of the Rebellion.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

to complement this JOURNAL article may be found at www.jchs.org.

# ANNUAL MEETING AWARDS PROMOTE SOCIETY'S MISSION

BY JIM GILES

For over a decade, the Jackson County Historical Society has taken the opportunity at its annual meetings to provide special recognition to organizations and individuals who, in their unique ways and through worthy projects, have exemplified the mission of the Jackson County Historical Society; that is, to preserve and understand our county's heritage through the study, appreciation and interpretation of local and regional history.

The recipients of these awards have been a diverse and distinguished group of people. Among them are authors, philanthropists, and community activists who are passionate about the history of Jackson County and it's significance to our daily lives.

In 2003, the Jackson County Historical Society continued this tradition by honoring a group of people whose hard work have made outstanding contributions to local history.

#### 2003 EDUCATION AWARD

[Presented to Historic Garment District Group (Harvey Fried, Ann Brownfield, and DST Realty, Inc., with special recognition to Oggi Modern Furnishings and Guy Merola]

Kansas City's self esteem often struggles in the shadow of larger cities. This is precisely why the work of the Historical Society is important to uncover and remind citizens about our important past.

We all know about our famous son, Harry S Truman. But did you know that Mickey Mouse was born in an



Harvey Fried and Ann Brownfield accepted the 2003 Education Award presented to the Historic Garment District Group.

unassuming building on 31st Street? Until our award recipients began their work many people were also in the dark

about another important contribution of our region. Kansas City was famous for making clothes.

Take a walk along Broadway in downtown Kansas City from about 6th – 11th streets and you will witness the sights and sounds of lofts, nightclubs, and the smell of Folger's coffee in the air. It wasn't always like this, however.

From around the turn of the century this area had utilized it's standing as a major rail hub to become a strong wholesale distribution point for dry goods. Companies such as Burnham-Hannah-Munger Dry Goods occupied the Poindexter building. Slowly though, the wholesale industry waned and gave rise to a manufacturing arena—the area that became known as the Garment District.

The area experienced its biggest boom after the end of World War II. Big product industries across the nation were struggling to meet the demands of people with newfound disposable income wanting cars, washing machines and large appliance items. Kansas City focused on textiles and clothing and 13% of the nation owned something made in Kansas City in 1945. The district employed 6,000 to 7,000 workers in 80 factories dotting the area that year. The mostly female workforce, who toiled in the large, un-air-conditioned buildings, produced virtually all types of clothing, but were best known for women's outer wear.

As the pace of current downtown revitalization quickens, however, the legacy, architecture and memories of the garment district have been greatly threatened. This was until the Historic Garment District Group "bolted" in to "pattern" a new interpretive museum. Harvey Fried from his office window at 808 Broadway realized that although the buildings might survive, the stories of the industry might not.

Harvey still vividly remembers the hustle on the street from his boyhood in the 1930s. First generation machine operators in white cotton dresses; svelte models clutching hat boxes scurrying to fittings; slick salesmen in dark suits toting samples; and burly men loading and unloading trucks all mixed together in a few blocks that created a whirl of constant activity. These memories were too important to lose.

Ann Brownfield had some of the same memories. As a clothing designer in the district she visited Paris and New York to see the latest fashions, brought them back home, then altered them to Midwestern tastes. It was people such as Harvey and Ann who knew the history, but wanted to make sure it didn't become "thread-barren" when the district began to decline in the 1970s.

One day Ann was down in the district and was horrified to see the going-out-of-business sale at Brand & Puritz.



Interior of Stern, Slegman, Prins Co., Kansas City, Missouri (PHL6967)

Patterns, material and buttons were being tossed out windows and into waiting dumpsters. The Historic Garment District Group was born. Harvey and Ann were joined by other committed civic leaders, including: DST Realty, Inc., who donated space for artifacts and photographs and today we have a visible reminder, and more importantly places for all people to learn about this important era.

Harvey Fried accepted his award with these remarks: "First let me say thanks very much to the Jackson County Historical Society who made a lot of information available to us from their files as we were organizing the museum. And, many thanks to Oggi Modern Furnishings and DST for without whom we wouldn't have been able to put the museum together. And, to Ann Brownfield who continues to operate the museum.

"On occasion people have asked me whatever happened ...why did the garment district disappear from Kansas City. I think there seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding about that. The feeling seems to be that foreign competition put us out of business in the garment district. But that isn't really the case. What happened is we lost our market. As the agricultural population in the Midwestern part of the United States shrunk up over the years and the towns got smaller and stores disappeared all over, the need and demand for

garments produced in the garment district just diminished to the point where there was no need for an industry here any longer.

"What happens there now, its not garment manufacturing, but we're delighted to be there and delighted to see what's there and our thanks to everybody, particularly the Jackson County Historical Society for helping make it happen."

Ann Brownfield added: "I didn't get to Kansas City until about 1960 and I came out of the St. Louis junior dress market. And so when I came into the coat and suit field it was a change and I had to learn to design the coats and suits that were acceptable in the Kansas City market. We were one of the first manufacturing industries that started the "piecework" type of sewing the garment together. [Pointing] You would sew the collar. [Pointing] You would sew the cuffs. And so on. Like the Ford Motor Co. putting the car together, everybody had his or her own specialty.

"Therefore, we were able to make a better garment at a more reasonable price. We made garments that would last for a long, long time. It was known that probably a woman might not buy a coat except for once about every ten years. We made it large enough if you were pregnant, and made it last to be handed down and so on. Also in the Kansas City

market, we were one of the few places that if the lining were out in your coat, you could send it back to the manufacturer and we would re-line it for free.

"The garment center was a fun place and it was a thrill to go into the factories every morning and hear 20 to 30 or even 50 machines going at one time. It was a very exciting time in Kansas City in the 40s, 50s and 60s.

"Anyone that wants to go through is welcome to call me (913.814.0334) Tours start at Mr. Merola's Oggi Modern Furnishings Store at 600 Central where there's a free place to park. We walk along 6th Street to 8th Street and I point out the different buildings and what went on in those buildings. We end up at the Poindexter Building to see the stationary museum that Harvey Fried, Glenn Brown and I put together. We have many things—although not everything—displayed and we change the exhibits now and then. You will see that all the garments are labeled as to who the donors were, who the makers were, and sometimes the designer and the fabrics. Then, there's the giant "needle" east of Broadway on 8th street that memorializes the workers and industry. Thank you."

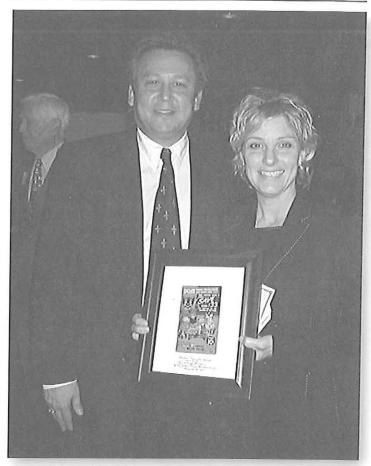
#### 2003 PRESERVATION AWARD

[Presented to Ken & Cindy McClain]

The Independence Square is arguably the epicenter of Jackson County history. In choosing the site for our future County seat, the founders in 1826 probably didn't foresee the potential for world changing events, but instead chose the shaded hilltop for its many natural springs that were within walking distance. The presence of the mighty Missouri a short distance and its access to trade and commerce certainly didn't hurt either.

Best known is the square's role in outfitting emigrants determined to open up the west for development. And that's why the city's moniker of "Queen City of the Trails" has stuck with us since the 1940s. A Western Guide Book and Emigrant Directory in 1849 showed Independence with virtually all of the major overland trails radiating from this area. The oldest, the Santa Fe Trail, predated the county's birth. One hundred fifty years later, however, wagons had worn great ruts in the path and connected the newest cities: Independence, Westport and Kansas City to the oldest city of Santa Fe.

Many years before the historic Square became a "jumping off" point for national commerce it achieved an infamous reputation of "pushing off" outsiders. In 1831 sixty followers of Joseph Smith's Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints relocated to Independence from New York lured by an abundance of land. Believing it their Zion, the congregants quickly settled and claimed the area to be theirs. Locals, however, were not keen to the church's proselytizing and rapidly growing numbers, and eyed the community with an air of suspicion that quickly grew to outright hostility. In



Ken and Cindy McClain accepted the 2003 Preservation Award.

1833, when the Mormon presence grew to almost 1,200 or about 1/3 of the county's population, tensions ran so high that homes and businesses such as the Evening and Morning Star newspaper were ransacked. Even one of the Mormon's Bishops, Edward Partridge, was tarred and feathered on the Square. Eventually the Church gave up, dispersed and scattered about to nearby counties. Later however, followers of Joseph Smith Jr. returned to found the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, now known as the Community of Christ.

The square would not be free of turmoil for long. As the nation gripped itself for impending civil war the area around the square was already in the midst of its own struggle. The same families and siblings that worked to tame the wilderness were now embroiled in a battle that unlike the rest of the nation was indeed about slavery. This war, however, was fought without large armies and formal officers. It was bloody skirmishes and guerilla tactics that left a trail of blood on the square.

Twice, during the Civil War, the Independence Square became a battleground between Federal and Confederate forces. Citizen allegiance to the guerillas and their cause was so strong, however, that eventually in August of 1863, General Thomas Ewing issued General Order No. 11, a vindictive action that ordered citizens within a section of three and? Ounties, 30 miles wide and 100 miles long to evacuate the properties and profess their allegiance to the union. Affecting almost 20,000 citizens, the Order resulted in homes, farms and possessions being torched. And in the end it only the trengthened the guerilla opposition. During this time the two large trengthened the second down the street were crowded with about 20 people each.

The Square survived the turmoil and went on to prosper. It welcomed folk hero Frank James during his brief stay in the Jail and provided Harry Truman with his first job at Clinton's and dater his first office as County Judge, during which time to eversaw the remodeling of the historic Courthouse.

In the early 1970s an urban renewal plan attempted unsuccessful 1y to revive activity; retailers had moved out to big boxes in the suburbs and quickly more and more buildings were shuttered and

forgotten. This decline came to a screeching halt in the late as been reversed thanks to the dedication, resources and division of Ken & Cindy McC Lain.

Unwilling to see their adopted hor ne-town fail to live up to its potential and still reeling from a comment from an out-of-town visitor who bemoaned I ruman's home being in a "sum", Ken & Cindy started with one building in 1998 and haven't stopped since.

Ophelia s Restaurant was first. After closing as a Katz Drugstore, it was covered with political signs in 1992 when Ken saw it while attending a rally for Bill Clinton. Now beautifully enovated it welcomes guests from all over the metropolita area for fine dining... and even lodging upstairs. After acquiring another square fixture, Courthouse Exchange restaurant, and renovating its interior and menu, the couple moved on to open Santa Fe Furnishings. And in 2001 the Society sold Clinton's Drug Store to the McClain's and they committed continue operating it in the spirit of its historical value. Café Verona, Gilbert & Whitney & Square Pizza have couple have allowed others to renovate and open businesses as

well.

Rebirth

historical re

mind is con

building a highly successful legal track record in the courtroom.

of the Independence Square and its amazing sources has not come quickly or easily. Ken's mind is con

tinually dreaming new ventures all the while legal track record in the courtroom.

management, creativity and graphic design and occasional line cooking WHILE AT THE SAME TIME attending softball games and doctor's appointments for her and Ken's six children.

Their commitment is truly a labor of love – a labor for their community – a labor for it's past & future – and a labor for their children and the children of our area's future.

Ken McClain remarked, "My wife is shy so she's commissioned me with the responsibility to address you and thank you for this honor. There are six reasons Cindy and I became involved with historical preservation here on the Independence Square. They are: Chelsea, Collin, Loren, Madeline, Claire, and Shelby, our six children.

"We were very proud of Independence's past but we were quite confident that if the past was to be preserved it had to have a future . . . a future that my children could be proud of . . . to have a hometown that they could be proud of. And

when we got here it was in a condition that anyone was very proud of it. I was embarrassed by the way the Square looked and committed myself at that time to try and find some answers. We acquired Ophelia's in about 1995 and began the process of planning a restaurant at this location.

"Once we got the restaurant open some visitors to Ophelia's, after having toured all the Truman sites, said they

loved the Truman Home, the Truman Library, Clinton's, etc., but, too bad the President's home is in the middle of a slum. That began the process of us acquiring and renovating the houses along Truman Road that have sparked the re-birth along that corridor to the Square and demonstrated that it could be a revitalized housing area as well as a commercial center.

"We have worked pretty steadily along since that time in trying to get these things done. It never seems to go along as fast as you want. But, as you look one of the great things about it is that when you truly believe in something it becomes infectious and it grows. Lots of the investment that Cindy and I have made here on the Square is growing and other people are joining in the endeavors at renovating buildings to first-quality standards. You can just look around and every month it seems we have a new development and new growth and rebirth occurring.

"We appreciate so much the work of the Historical Society in regard to the history of this place and commit



ourselves to the further endeavors to try and preserve it, and protect it, and project it into the future."

### 2003 DOCUMENTING HISTORY THROUGH THE WRITTEN WORD AWARD

[Presented to Edward T. Matheny, Jr.]

In this rapidly changing e-mail, cell phone, everything accessible on the Internet society, we find ourselves asking, "How are stories from daily life today being preserved for tomorrow?" A recent report issued by the National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that only 11% of high school seniors tested "at or above



Ed Matheny, Jr., accepted the Society's 2003 award for Documenting History Through the Written Word.

proficient" with the average senior being "below basic." And despite the dire state of history education it seems that at all levels of government, corporate and foundation giving have been decreasing steadily. "History" and its related humanities often then get relegated to the category of "nice but not necessary," or, "important but not a priority."

These statistics led one education historian to explain with concern, "Since the seniors are very close to voting age

or already have reached it, one can only feel alarm that they know so little about their nation's history and express so little capacity to reflect on its meaning."

Ed Matheny, Jr.'s accomplishments go a long way to change this predicament. He understands one of the central tenets of why history is important and uses it in the preamble to his books. It's the Swahili proverb: "nobody knows where he is going until he knows where he has been." Ed's history has been rooted virtually entirely in Jackson County, save for the first six-months of his life. And throughout that life he has dedicated his professional and civic skills to innumerable lucky recipients.

Chief among these recipients of talent was the law firm that he entered over 50 years ago that grew with his leadership into Blackwell Sanders Matheny Weary and Lombardi now known as Blackwell Sanders Peper Martin. Twenty of those years the firm carried his name on the letterhead and he witnessed the growth from 10 attorneys to over 300. His cases were varied, however, without question the most important one was the Kansas City Missouri School District Desegregation process.

He served as the president of St. Luke's Hospital from 1980-1996 and continues with them as Vice-Chairman. He serves on the Episcopal Diocese of Western Missouri; Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and affiliated trusts; is an H&R Bloch Foundation Director, Jacob & Ella Loose Foundation Trustee, and St. Luke's Hospital Foundation Trustee, member of the board of directors for the Jackson County Historical Society, and was named in 2000 by Governor Bob Holden to the Missouri Academy of Squires for his many contributions to our area.

During his undergraduate years Ed was lucky to have a fine American History lecturer at the University of Missouri where he received his undergraduate degree in History before going on to graduate cum laude from Harvard Law School. While there he experienced the passion for our nation's history through both the spoken and written word.

So in the midst of all of his contributions we honor his legacy of documenting history through the written word.

Like so many men of his generation the December 7, 1941, pulled his life in ways that they could never have dreamed. He entered the service and returned Kansas City in 1946 after three years, nine months and 29 days of service that included a highly successful tour of duty.

He then began writing his first book that was a compilation of letters between he and his mother during the war. The trials of starting a new career and family soon overcame him, however, and it was not until many years later that "The Pursuit of A Ruptured Duck" was published.

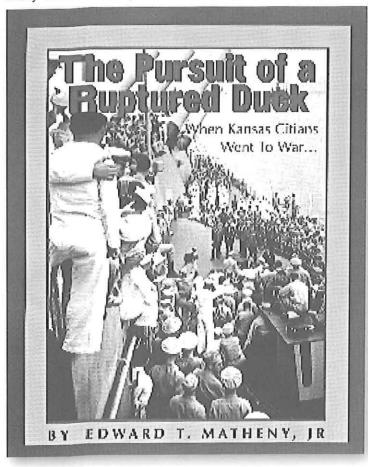
In the meantime, however, he told many other important stories. First there was A Long and Constant Courtship: The History of a Law Firm, published in 1997.

Next in 1997 The Presence of Care: The History of St.

Luke's Hospital of Kansas City.

The Pursuit of Excellence: The Story of Southwest High School followed, which documented his alma mater. Orders for this book have come in from all over the globe, including Japan and California as alumni and interested families want to capture the history of that great school.

And fin ally, the book that was begun almost 50 years ago, the story of his war service that evolved into the story of many of Kansas City's notables contributions to WWII. We



are losing 1500 veterans a day – think of the endless memories precious pieces of our nation's history...particularly those moments when our nation has been involved in armed conflicts that are being lost. And suddenly we remember that Swahili proverb – "nobody knows where he is going until he knows where he has been". For compiling and publishing Pursuit of a Ruptured Duck: When Kansas Citians Went to War, and for his outstanding efforts at recording history and preserving it for generations to come, we owe much to the efforts of Edward T. Matheny, Jr.

Mr. Matheny accepted his award with these remarks: "I have a debt that I owe a number of people for the fact that these books came to fruition. The St. Luke's Hospital book is based on the archives of the St. Luke's Hospital and I was prompted to write it at about the time the hospital turned 100 years of age. The President at the time, Bob West, and the CEO Rich Hastings (present at the Annual Meeting),

were enthusiastic about that project and encouraged me to go ahead and write the book, so I did. I might tell you that the first printing is out of print now, but in fact I am going to update the book.

"I'm indebted to Ralph Wrobley for approaching me to write the Blackwell Sanders history. Like so many histories, some things I found out about after the fact. For example, Shirley Keeler (present at the Annual Meeting) was honored about six years ago as being among 25 women who were pioneer women in the legal profession. I didn't know that tat the time I wrote the book, or that would have been in there. The book can be found in the Supreme Court Library, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals Library and has been well received.

"The History of Southwest High School is in its second edition and I have, indeed, been gratified that there have been people who have written from all over the world.

"Southwest High School book and The Ruptured Duck would not have seen the light of day without the help of Tom Leathers and Leathers Publishing. The first two books were really paid for by the firms. The other two were my own enterprise and in talking with Tom and it became evident that this was something that wouldn't be too expensive hobby for me to undertake. So I'm grateful to Tom and his faithful companion Barbara Flack. Ruptured Duck has a great many photographs from a great many Kansas Citians who furnished those and I was happy to get them. One of them was Ace Bean (present at the Annual Meeting along with his shipmate Bill Brownfield, present at the Annual Meeting with his wife Ann). Those pictures and the stories of those veterans were great and it was wonderful to present them.

"Thank you for the honor you do me. My experience at publishing these books has been a great experience for me."

We congratulate the 2003 awardees and look forward to recognizing positive ambassadors in 2004.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

to complement this JOURNAL article is available at www.jchs.org.

Jim Giles is executive director for the Jackson County Historical Society. Call 816.461.1897 to pledge your support. Bestenard of Severit Point, Kannas City, Mr.

HISTORIC POSTCARDS

FROM

OLD KANSAS CITY

î

MICHAEL G. BUSHNELL

## **BOOK NOTES**

The Jackson County Historical Society's Bookshop is also on the Internet via. our virtual bookshop at www. jchs.org. Members of the Society enjoy a 10% discount on book purchases.

Our newest title Historic Postcards of

Old Kansas City by
Michael G. Bushnell, is
a must have for anyone
interested in local
history. This 108-page
book features blackand-white
reproductions of more
than 50 historic
postcards from across
the Kansas City

metropolitan area. Facing each view is engaging commentary useful in understanding the site and its historic significance. What a great way to learn about Kansas City history! These historical images makes one wonder what these areas may look like in another 50 or 100 years!

Bushnell and his wife compiled these spotlights from a series run over the last

four years in their newspaper, The Northeast News. This is a book you can take with you on a Sunday drive to see views represented in historic postcard vignettes. Historic Postcards of Old Kansas City retails for \$16.95.

Our featured book has a connection to one of the Society's collection areas ... old postcards of Kansas City and Jackson County, Missouri, views.

For the many people who collect old postcards as a hobby, the Society extends and

open invitation for donations of Kansas City and Jackson County-related examples. Welcome donations ensure that the public will have a better opportunity to learn from and enjoy pictures from the past more readily. And, it's a great way to permanently attach your name or your family's name to a properly preserved collection. Call 816.252.7454.

#### LOW-C.A.R.B. GIVING

Seems everyone these days are counting carbohydrates to trim down. Here's a "lite" way you can help the Society's bottom-line "immeasurably:"

Cash: Consider an annual charitable taxdeductible gift over and above your membership.

Annuity: Help your tax situation while providing a great benefit to the Society.

Remainder Clause: Include the Historical Society in your estate planning.

Bequest: Large or small, every revenue stream is carefully conserved.

Other ways you can help: Volunteer with us. Invite family members and friends to join. If you have primary source materials that depict an aspect of Jackson County history that you would like to have properly preserved and made more accessible for the enjoyment and education of future generations, consider the Historical Society's long standing tradition of service.



# THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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