

THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 46 ■ NUMBER 2 ■ AUTUMN 2005

ARTICLES

WEB *The Rise And Fall Of Lewis Jones' Nebraska Hotel On Independence Square.....3*

WEB *Harry Truman's Hat Tip At "The Top Hat" Changed My Life.....12*

WEB *Jackson County's Little Blue River Valley: Balancing Development And Preservation Of An Historic Rural Landscape.....19*

WEB *Two Recent Finds Surface About Jackson County's 1859 Jail27*

DEPARTMENTS

Editor's Epistle.....2

Mission Statement2

Book Notes.....28



The Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives are "steaming" forward full throttle into the 21st Century. Three big projects that are "on the rails" include: 1) the retrospective conversion of the 45-year-old card catalog into a keyword, searchable, electronic database; 2) processing Jackson County Circuit Court records that date to the 1830s; and, 3) reprinting books important to Jackson County's history . . .the 1877 *Illustrated Atlas*; the 1881 *History of Jackson County, Missouri*; and, Octave Chanute's 1870 *Kansas City Bridge* book about the construction of the Hannibal Bridge.



JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS

Benjamin F. Mann, President
Richard A. King, President-Elect
Brian Snyder, Treasurer
Eileen Weir, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Charles C. Bishop Jr.	Julie Nelson Meers
William B. Bundschu	Justin P. Orr, V.P. Sites
Richard A. Franklin	James P. Pryde
Vincent P. Gauthier, AICP	Clinton W. Shroat
George B. Lopez	Nicole Stevens
Edward T. Matheny, Jr.	Sharon Williams
Ralph A. Monaco, II	Shirley Wurth
Robert Moore	

ADMINISTRATION

129 West Lexington Avenue, Mezzanine
Independence, MO 64050

Steve Noll, Executive Director
(816) 461-1897, Ext. 305; snoll@jchs.org
Lindsey Gaston, Development Director
(816) 461-1897, Ext. 303; lgaston@jchs.org

ARCHIVES, RESEARCH LIBRARY, BOOKSHOP & HARRY S. TRUMAN COURTROOM & OFFICE

112 West Lexington Avenue, Ste 103
Independence, MO 64050

David W. Jackson, Archives and Education
Director; JOURNAL Editor
(816) 252-7454; djackson@jchs.org

1859 JAIL MUSEUM

We welcome subscriptions and editorial contributions to the JOURNAL, published semi-annually as a benefit to members of the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society, a nonprofit organization committed to preserving and promoting the county's rich heritage. Individual issues, when available, are \$5.00 each. Members and friends of the Society may subscribe to a free e-mail newsletter and learn more about the Society's products, services and programs at www.jchs.org.

All photographs are from the Society's collections unless otherwise noted. The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

© 2005 Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society

ISSN 0888-4978

AN EDITOR'S EPISTLE BY DAVID W. JACKSON

Welcome again to the Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL.

We are fortunate to continue receiving submissions to our scholarly publication, and invite you to submit an article for possible inclusion in a future issue. If you have researched or written something that has some relationship to Jackson County's history, we know readers will learn from and enjoy your contribution, now and into the future.

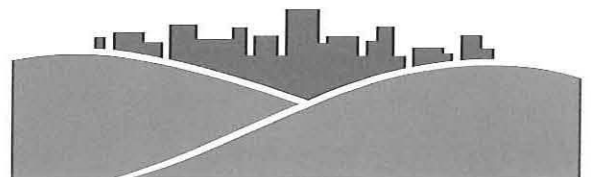
Our publication, as you can see, has a 45+ year history. We've been improving the look, feel, and quality of our content over the last five years that I have served as editor, including adding sourcing as endnotes and bibliographic material whenever possible. We've also rectified our volume numbering that had been "off" for a number of years. And, with our Spring 2005 issue we initiated an ISSN number so that our serial publication is now officially registered with the Library of Congress.

I'm happy to report that every issue is met with glowing reviews from our members and friends. This certainly encourages us as we embark on each new issue. Another thing that would please us is if you might pass your JOURNAL along to a friend or family member so they, too, might gain an appreciation for local history. If you cherish your copy as we suspect you might, refer folks to us to acquire their own. Often, we have an over run and make extra copies available for sale while quantities last. Naturally, we'd appreciate their support of our mission having them as faithful Society members.

The diversity in scholarship represented in this issue is remarkable. Urban renewal is a theme that runs through both Christine Rinck's *Rise and Fall of Lewis Jones' Nebraska Hotel on Independence Square* and Joelouis Mattox's *Harry Truman's Hat Tip at "The Top Hat" Changed My Life*, although each has gems of unique local history for your discovery. The latter also provides an intimate look at how the Civil Rights Movement gained traction through "integration" in Independence.

Jumping back from Civil Rights to the Civil War, Paul Kirkman stages *Jackson County's Little Blue River Valley: Balancing Development and Preservation of an Historic Rural Landscape* as an example of how each of us has an immediate opportunity to preserve remnants of our past for the benefit of future generations. Will the Little Blue Valley between 40 and 350 Highways be preserved in its near pristine condition, or will we allow deviation from Truman's "Results of County Planning?"

This quality publication comes at a cost to our non-profit organization. To offset production and mailing costs of this issue, we are honored to recognize the Truman Heartland Community Foundation for their financial contribution of \$2,500. We're already planning our Spring 2006 issue and need another sponsor to come forward (individual or corporate, we welcome all). So please, step up to the plate, or help us rally our next JOURNAL sponsor(s). Call Lindsey Gaston at (816) 461-1897, Ext. 303, to discuss.



Truman Heartland COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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.*

THE RISE AND FALL OF LEWIS JONES' NEBRASKA HOTEL ON INDEPENDENCE SQUARE

BY CHRISTINE RINCK

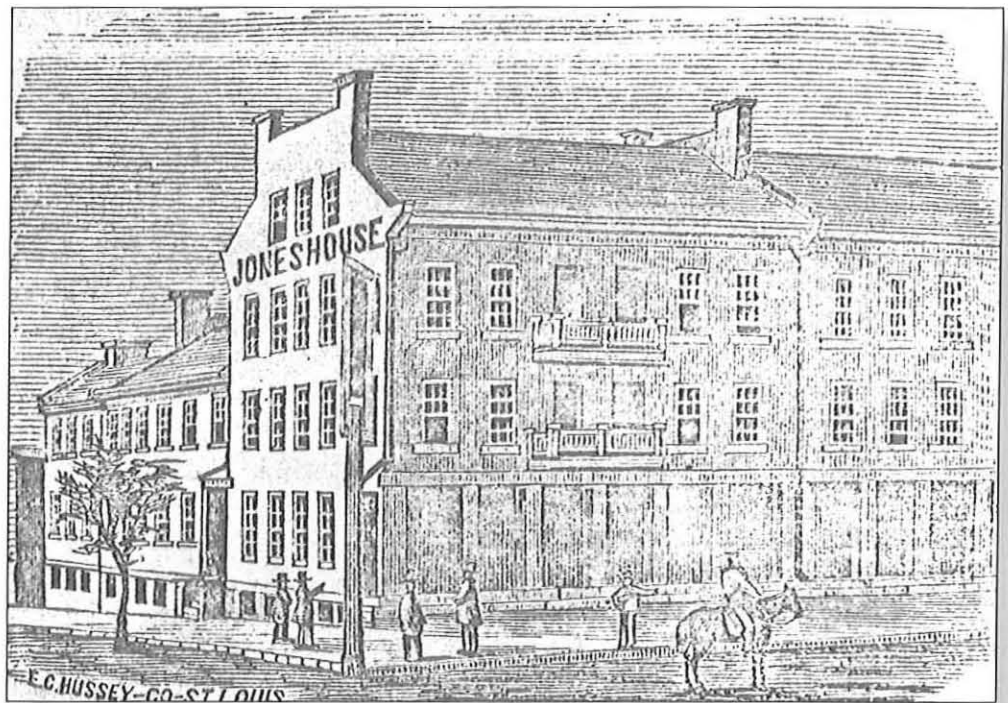
The land comprising Independence, Missouri, remained Indian Territory until 1825, when General William Clark, superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, negotiated a treaty with the tribes of Great and Little Osage and Kansas.¹ Shortly thereafter frontier settler, Jacob Gregg, conducted a census of the territory.² The Missouri State Legislature accepted a petition from residents and created Jackson County on December 15, 1826.³ Two years later the appointed commissioners selected a county seat surrounding the populous, rather than nearest the center of the county as they had been directed.⁴ Thus, Independence began serving as the county seat with a 160-acre tract three miles south of the Missouri River.⁵

The next year Jackson County advertised a land sale in Independence.⁶ The terms of sale included one-fourth down with installments at three intervals from the date of sale: twelve, eighteen and twenty-four months. The advertisement also announced that Independence was rich in resources:

"Rich land, suitable stone and timber for building, contiguous to excellent never failing spring water, and is believed to be in the most healthy part of the state."⁷

On the auspicious morning of July 9, Jackson County government provided seven gallons of free whiskey to lure buyers to the sale.⁸ The auctioneer sold at public sale 140 lots in what is today known as the subdivision called Independence Old Town, with all but two lots being auctioned between \$20 and \$43.⁹ Lots nearest the Independence Square brought more money; those further from the epicenter sold for less. Soon, many frontier businesses would be situated around the Square, including an assortment of roadside inns and hotels.

This article examines the history of the hotels built on one Independence Old Town lot on Independence Square, and the two proprietors responsible for their construction, Joseph Roy and Lewis Jones. These early Independence pioneers, outstanding citizens, represented many of the men who came to Independence to establish business and seek their fortunes. Their establishments might seem risqué today given their connections to gambling and prostitution. However, these businessmen and their hotels propelled the



As pictured in the Missouri State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1860.

growth of Independence, stabilized its position as a hub for commerce, and increased its legitimization as a center for trade as civilizations pushed west.

Joseph Roy, the brother of Louis and Jean Baptiste Roy, early fur trappers and traders who were linked with Francois Chouteau, purchased Lot 13, Independence Old Town, with a \$40.50 bid.¹⁰ The land was located on what is today the northeast intersection of West Maple Avenue and North Liberty Streets. Roy came from St. Charles, Missouri, to buy land in Independence. As specified in the state's terms of sale, Roy put \$10.12 down and signed that he would pay the remainder in three installments. This property cost more money than all other lots combined, other than two that were on the south side of the Square . . . on the East Lexington Avenue overland route.¹¹

Joseph understood business well and knew that selling whiskey on the frontier was a key to his success. He established a two-story, log building on the Square where he operated a dram shop (akin to a modern-day liquor store). It became quite successful during the trail days. He purchased several alcohol licenses during the period of operating the tavern.¹² Roy served roustabouts, trail-riders, and others leaving Independence for the westward trails. Many stayed at his place overnight, often sleeping two to three to a bed. Roy's tavern has been termed a "den of iniquity."¹³ It was even alluded to as a "brothel."¹⁴ Roy had brushes with the law because of the gambling and betting that took place there.¹⁵

He also had a grocery store on the site, for which he paid a license of \$12.00 a year.¹⁶ Roy also completed buying Lot 13 on which the hotel stood, plus lots 140 and 141.¹⁷

Missouri Court Records indicated that Joseph Roy conducted one task for the county. In the early 1830s, he was asked to: "view and mark out a rod [road] from the Town of Independence to the Ford of Rock Creek, commencing at the West end of Rock Street in said Town and running in a South Western direction so as to intersect the old road leading from said Town at the aforesaid ford on Rock Creek."

In 1836, Joseph Roy sold his property to Wilson Roberts. Roy went to live near Fishing River in Ray County, Missouri, with his wife and 13 daughters where he became involved in fur trading. The fine home they built perished during the flood of 1841.¹⁸

Wilson Roberts and his wife Carta ran the grocery store and tavern for about a decade before the hotel burned in 1846.¹⁹

Lewis Jones purchased the western half of Lot 13 from Wilson Roberts on June 21, 1847, for \$1,000.²⁰ Believing it to be a good long-term investment he built the Nebraska Hotel.²¹ His timing could not have been better. Independence in the late 1840s was a major outfitting town for people heading across the plains. Prospective merchants traveling on the Santa Fe Trail, homesteaders taking the Oregon Trail, or gold prospectors following the California Trail, all passed through Independence where they purchased their supplies and outfitted their rigs for the trek west. As described by Franzwa, the town reverberated with "incessant hammering and banging from a dozen blacksmiths' sheds, where the heavy wagons were being repaired, and the horse and oxen shod. The streets were thronged with men, horses, and mules... A multitude of healthy children's faces were peeping out from under the covers of the wagons."²²

A Mormon visitor who stayed at Jones' Nebraska Hotel described the beauty and bustling business of Independence:

"The town is pleasantly situated, the scenery around, judging from our ride from the river, possessing beauty, with few, if any features of boldness. It was originally selected as the seat of Mormon power and a beautiful site for their temple is pointed out, now occupied by a pretty cottage, with tastefully arranged grounds. It is a frontier town, where emigrant parties fit out for the plains; huge covered wagons are standing in different places, some new and others dismantled; immense ox teams pass by, and mules are common. Opposite our room they are branding the mules for our caravan, a business attended with rough usage and

unnecessary cruelty."²³

During the next twelve months, Jones built a "grand" hotel, the Nebraska Hotel, allegedly spending over \$40,000 for the building and its furnishings.²⁴ No one knows who built the hotel, but E. A. Hickman was a workman on the addition added in 1853.²⁵ The dimensions of the hotel were approximately 42 feet wide by 150 feet deep, with a steep slope. Like many Missouri buildings of the period, the Nebraska Hotel was erected in the Federal Style with L-shaped fronting Rock Street (today called Maple Avenue). On Maple Avenue, the hotel was two and a half stories, with six bays wide. The north, or rear, added a two-story wing, which

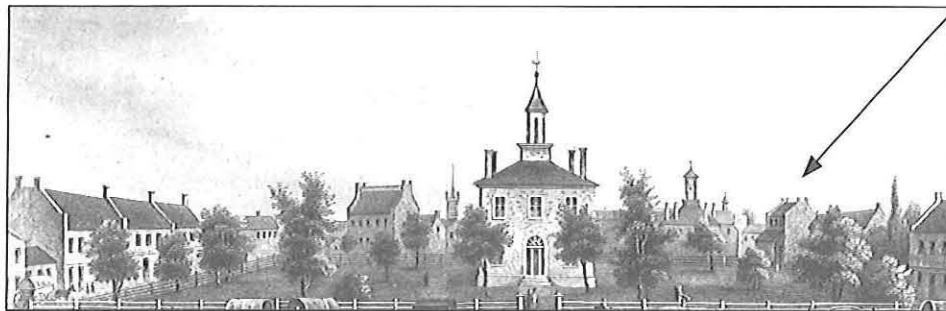
made it look like a two story hotel.²⁶ The rectangular limestone blocks, which measured 2 ½ feet by one foot by one foot, remained until the hotel was demolished on August 4, 1980.

Brick

fragments helped

consolidate the mortar used to hold the blocks together. African-American slave laborers usually made bricks for construction during this time period. The floor joists, made of pit-sawn white oak placed sixteen inches on center, ran from east to west. A number of steps led up to the entrance on Liberty, with steep steps inside to the second floor and its balcony.²⁷ A large basement also served the hotel.²⁸ The windows probably had radiating brick voussoirs, such as those remaining on the hotel before it was torn down.²⁹ The roof had a dentiled cornice with parapet gables. Two chimneys could be seen from the parapet gable and another two from the north wall of the major wing.

After the hotel was built, Jones decided to construct a large sign advertising the establishment.³⁰ He hired an African-American slave, Sam Shepherd, who was owned by James Shepherd.³¹ Sam was known as an expert "adzman" and his skill at hewing logs perfectly was widespread. Shepherd often contracted Sam out for various jobs. Sam had cut the logs for the first Jackson County courthouse for James Lewis in 1826³² and helped Edwin A. Hickman run the saw and gristmill, which was located near what later became Fairmount Park.³³ Jones asked Shepherd to find the tallest and straightest white oak tree. He wanted a thirty-foot tall tree with no blemishes. Supposedly, Mr. Jones's instructions were "Now I want the log hewed to a six-sided post and I don't want the marks of an ax left on it." Sam's reward for his work included a hat, pair of shoes and a few drinks from the bar while he cut the log.³⁴ Jones had two paintings placed on the sign with the name of the Nebraska Hotel: a large buffalo on one side and an Indian on the other. Until after the Civil



Independence Square, ca. 1850-1852, looking west from Main Street. Pointer identifies Jones' Nebraska Hotel on Rock Street (present-day Maple Avenue). PHL4862 (cropped)

War, the Nebraska Hotel sign hung from the second floor announcing to all the name of the hotel.³⁵

The Nebraska Hotel was not the only hotel in Independence during this time. Smallwood Noland's "Noland Hotel" down the street could hold 400 guests, many sleeping two to a bed.³⁶ Another nearby hotel, built by Dr. Leo Tyman from Kentucky, "Tyman Hotel," located on the northeast corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue, was where he also practiced medicine. Most of the "fine hotels," boarding houses and taverns were filled to capacity during this period. Still many travelers had to remain in their "uncovered wagons and uncovered outhouses." A letter described an equally prosperous Independence and the opportunity it afforded hotel owners: "Business increases, and the merchant, mechanic, farmer, and artisan are reaping rich rewards or all must eat, drink, and sleep, and so proud are they that (unusual for landlords generally) ugliness and indifference reign supreme, and welcome the newcomer. Independence, by all means, should have at least two additional hotels, and to the enterprising, this affords a fine opening."³⁷

Mrs. B. G. Ferris, in her dairy, published in a book titled *The Mormons at Home*, described her trip to Utah and her short stay at the Nebraska House, which she saw as "externally of great pretensions, but the host had a 'hard time to carry it on.'"³⁸ She noted high life, with a "Babel of sounds" occurring beneath the stairs. The "ladies of the house . . . flitted about in their white muslins, looking disengaged and unconcerned as visitors."³⁹

The dining room received her highest disapproval. The headwaiter was seen as having a temper because of his table assistants. He was said to have thrown "down his napkin and dignity together and starts in full pursuit when they fail to take off the covers exactly at the signal. His wrath, however, is more laughably spent on two young blacks, whose duty it is to keep in motion some queer machinery over the table, to prevent our devouring more flies than the cook has served up. The result is, that we are favored with a regular chassez to the right and left. The young sables, however, make up in agility what they lack in

strength, and manage to escape by diving under the table on one side, to reappear on the other."⁴⁰

Pigs and chickens struggled to enter kitchen where the "blackies" worked, according to Ferris.⁴¹ But, notwithstanding these "drill exercises, there is such unmistakable kindness, and so liberal a supply of substantial and luxuries, that we enjoy it very well."⁴²

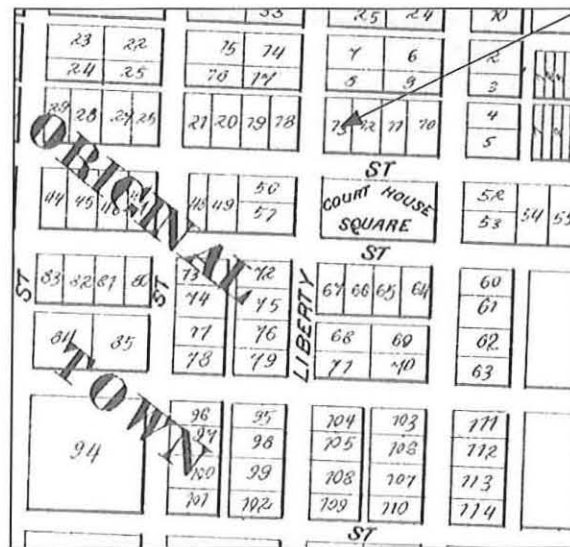
The hotel was cited as "one of the finest and largest hostelry west of St. Louis."⁴³ The first wedding in Jackson County was said to have occurred at the Nebraska Hotel between the daughter of Lewis Jones and Hirum Silver.⁴⁴ Being a Justice of the Peace, Jones officiated at the solemn ceremony.⁴⁵

While no menus exist from the Nebraska Hotel, those of the Noland Hotel provide an idea of dining room elegance during this period.⁴⁶ Illustrative of menu entrées included macedoine of wild fowl, vol au vent; buffalo tongue, sauce piquant; scalloped oysters, sauce marin; pig's head, glace moutard. Fourteen varieties of sweet pieces (such as coconut, lemon cheesecake) and sixteen different cakes and confectioneries (such as fruit cake, victories, egg kisses) offered the diner a taste of exquisite fare. An additional seven kinds of ice creams graced this frontier town's hotel dining room. Diners would imbibe on domestic or imported wine for about \$1.00 a glass.

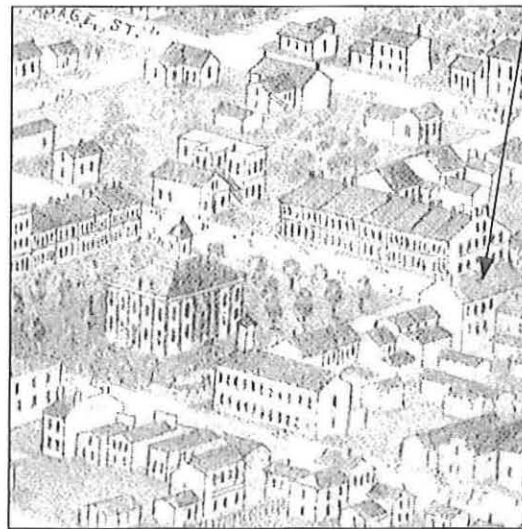
Many frontier notables stayed at the Nebraska Hotel during Jones' tenure as owner, including Kit Carson, an early frontiersman.⁴⁷ He went on to be a leading frontiersman and came back to Independence in the 1840s.⁴⁸ Another hotel patron, Ezra Meeker, crossed the Oregon Trail with his wife and infant child in 1852.⁴⁹

Lewis Jones, the builder of the Nebraska Hotel, was also one of the founders of Independence. He was born on August 24, 1799, the ninth child of Jabez Jones and Nancy (Bean) Beck.⁵⁰ His family

moved from North Carolina first to Barren County, Kentucky and then to Cooper County, Missouri territory. He married Elizabeth McKenney in Howard County on January 16, 1820. She was eleven years his elder and had three children from a former marriage. In Pisgah, Missouri, they had one



Jackson County Courthouse Square from Ruger's 1868 *Bird's Eye View of Independence, Missouri*, from a reprint by the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society. Looking southwest, pointer identifies Jones' Nebraska Hotel. Noland Hotel was at the opposite end of the block (the large building in the foreground with the tower).



daughter, Mary Jane, who was born on December 2, 1822.⁵¹ They may have had other children.

Shortly thereafter, Lewis left to make his own way in Independence. The poll records listed Jones on its records for the general election held in 1828.⁵² At the initial land sale in Independence in 1827, Jones purchased three lots. Lot 142 cost \$42.20 one of the most expensive of the sale.⁵³ The two other lots (72 and 895) cost \$22.00 each. In 1827 he began business at Liberty Street and West Lexington Avenue as a blacksmith. His father, Jabez, joined Lewis in Independence. Jones held the position of blacksmith for Shawnee Indians in Indian Territory at the Delaware-Shawnee Agency.⁵⁴ Jones was not the only smithy in Independence. Other blacksmith shops helped supply wagon trains.⁵⁵ Jones is also said to have expanded his business to include carpentry and construction by the 1840s or earlier.⁵⁶

Pearl Wilcox related a story about Lewis Jones' blacksmith shop.⁵⁷ It was located near heavy timber and hazel brush, in an area frequented by wildlife, especially wolves and bears. One night a bear brought her cubs into the shop and left one there. Two young townfolk, Del McKinney and Green Jones, decided that the cub should be captured. Unfortunately for the boys, the cub had other ideas. After the struggle, the boys had little clothing and the bear left unharmed.

Once the judicial system in Jackson County, Missouri, was set up, it was divided into three townships: Kaw (Independence on the west), Blue (in the center), and Fort Osage (on the east).⁵⁸ One of the first actions by the judges of the new County Court was to appoint Lewis Jones as a Justice of the Peace to assist them.⁵⁹ He was also named Commissioner for the County seat⁶⁰ and a member of the "Company of Patrols."⁶¹ He served as an Election Judge for Blue Township several times.⁶² In 1828, Jones ran as representative from Boone Township in Jackson County.⁶³ He did not receive any votes, which meant he did not even vote for himself.⁶⁴ In 1831 he became the Trustee of the Town of

Independence, when it was incorporated.⁶⁵

Jones participated in a number of County Court actions during his tenure as Justice of the Peace. He asked the Court to appoint someone to survey the road from the County Seat to the boundary line of the state (which was also the western

border of the United States at that time). Five men were appointed, Richard P. Chiles, John Young, John Whistman, Robert Johnson and James Welch. In addition James Lewis was asked to be the overseer of the road leading from the Waggon Ford of Little Blue River to Prines ferry.⁶⁶ In another similar case, Jones allotted funds for his father, Jabez, to survey the road from Rock Creek to the middle of the Big Blue River's main channel.⁶⁷

Lewis Jones also heard criminal cases. One such case was that of Paul Pocket who was accused on assault and battery.⁶⁸ The constable had the responsibility of collecting a fine imposed on Mr. Pocket. Unfortunately, Pocket broke unavoidably from the constable and his "property and body" were never found. Jones exonerated the constable from paying the fine to the court.

Jones received \$1.50 payment for the advertisement of properties for sale in Independence.⁶⁹ He also charged the county \$1.06 in the case of a tailor.⁷⁰ In another sale,

Jones was ordered to sell remaining Independence lots by July 10, 1829, for \$8.00 each.⁷¹ Later, the Jackson County Court minutes described that Jones collected \$10.00 from Timothy Niggs for the purchase of a lot.⁷² He also collected \$5.00 for issuing 48 Certificates for deeds to lots for the "undertakers of the public buildings in the Town of Independence."⁷³ On other occasions, the Court paid Lewis Jones \$7.00, \$8.00, and \$35.00 respectively based on his account logs.⁷⁴

In one case, Jones supplicated to the court for a pauper and his wife, Frederick Durris.⁷⁵ The Court appropriated \$20.00 to Jones who was appointed as "superintendent for this disposition." A civil case that he adjudicated, that of Harman Gregg, involved the overpayment of \$1.25 for state taxes.⁷⁶ Jones judged in Gregg's favor and he received his \$1.25 back.

Corner of Maple Avenue and Liberty Street, Independence, Missouri. By the time this postcard was issued, Jones' Nebraska Hotel was known as the Hotel Metropolitan. PHL157



The Watkins Hotel. Gary Plowman Studio III Collection of P. H. Grinter Negatives, Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives. PHL1994

He also served as the Justice of the Peace on March 23, 1828 for the marriage of James Townson and Hannah Smith.⁷⁷

Jones played several roles in the trails' history. He made many trading trips to Santa Fe as part of the Traders Company of which he was one of the thirty-three freighters. The merchants made the Santa Fe run and traded furs when they returned to Independence.⁷⁸ During the first trip in 1829 Jones and the group petitioned Major Bennett Riley for a military escort to Santa Fe. Legend has it that they were attacked and almost lost their lives.⁷⁹

In the 1840s, Jones decided again not only to make wagons for overland emigrants, but also to forge his own way across the Santa Fe Trail.⁸⁰ This happened shortly after the Doniphan Expedition had opened the territory to United States citizens for settlement. While little is known about the details of his travels, the *Liberty Tribune* reported that Lewis and several other traders had left Chihuahua on March 3 and Santa Fe on March 30.⁸¹ Another description placed this trip in May stating that Lewis Jones left with a company of fourteen men and eight wagons.⁸² In a letter he wrote his brother, Joseph Jones, he remarked about ten well armed tribes of Pawnees that attacked them and took three cows.

Another fact about Lewis' life that only appears in the family history material is the fact that he got "steamed up" about the Seminole War in 1837. As such, he volunteered to serve in Company H of Colonel Richard Gentry's regiment.⁸³ According to Senator Thomas Hart Benton, because the Seminole War took too many resources, Missouri mountain

men, who knew Indian style tracking and warfare, should join in the fray. Over 600 men followed his plea and joined Colonel Gentry. Lt. Colonel Riley of the Second Infantry won the battle of Chocachatti, a very important engagement in the Seminole War.⁸⁴

Jones joined a business venture in Independence to build a railroad.⁸⁵ The group raised \$50,000 and sold shares for \$100, each to begin the "Independence and Missouri River Railroad Company, Inc." in 1849. William R. Singleton, engineer, began laying tracks in the spring of 1848, even before the company was incorporated. One reason Jones helped initiate this effort was probably that it fostered more patrons for his hotel.⁸⁶ The incorporation papers allowed the tracks to be built from Independence to the Missouri River at Robert Rickman's



Two views of Jones' building, known as the Earle Hotel by the early 1960s. PHS6014 & PHL5557.



Landing at present-day Wayne City. The company also could build a warehouse in town to store "Santa Fe and other goods, which may be transported on the railroad, which shall be so constructed as to facilitate the loading of wagons, for the purpose of encouraging trade and for such facilities, they are hereby authorized to rent at rate not exceeding one hundred cents per ton and twenty-five cents per package for all light articles."⁸⁷

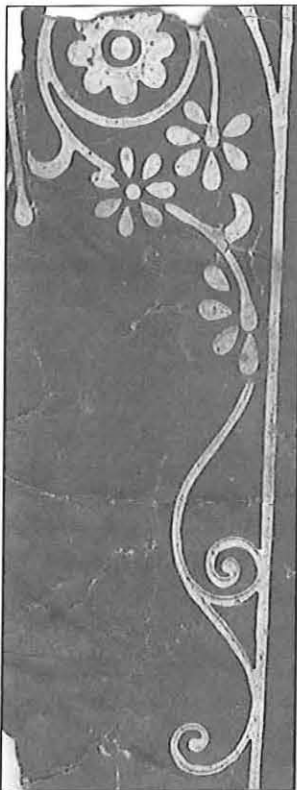
The warehouse was located at Rock Street (current 212 West Maple) and continued to exist, even after the railroad had ceased operations.⁸⁸ The train itself was mule or oxen-drawn over wooden tracks.⁸⁹ This train, termed the "Independence Special" went only four miles, often falling off the track. The tracks went to the river from the warehouse, turning at Delaware and Maple and then going around the McCauley Addition. They crossed North River, the same route later used by the Kansas City Southern. Then the tracks went fairly north through McCormick Addition and past the main office of Standard Oil Company. The tracks ended northeast in Sugar Creek at the Missouri River terminus. The train, however, returned a route that was easier for the mules, down to the old Independence Waterworks intake pumping station. A turntable, a device for turning railroad cars around, was found in front of the warehouse.

The River did not help the railroad effort. From an earlier flood, the river threw up sandbar and boats could not land without touching bottom. By 1852, the railroad company went bankrupt. The railroad station at the river became a distillery and the Independence warehouse a distillery. The rails became fuel for local residents.⁹⁰

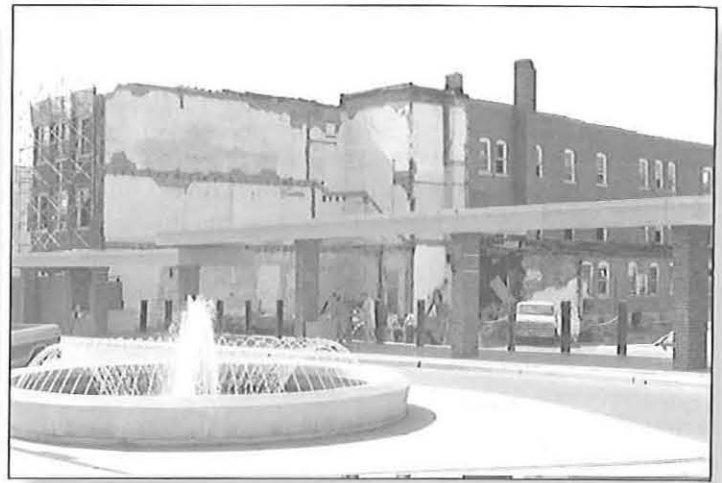
Lewis Jones decided in 1849 to leave Missouri and try to strike gold in California.⁹¹

Berry, in *Beginnings of the West* describes the expedition: "Lewis Jones...headed a company which probably left the Missouri border about May 18, 1849.

A Jackson County history states that "Lewis Jones,



Wallpaper saved from the hotel before the building was demolished.



Two views of the demolition of Jones' Hotel, August 1980. Urban Renewal of the late 1960s and early 1970s included the installation of covered sidewalks and fountains (at the cost of valuable parking spaces) along Maple Avenue. PHS11495P & PHS11495J

John Bartleson, L. W. Boggs, Major Hickman, and others fitted out an expedition (in 1849) to California (and later returned to Independence).” S. (from Independence on May 14) noted: “There is also quite a large company from this county, yet to start. (It) will go out under the guidance of Lewis Jones, Esq., an old hand upon the plains.” On May 21 Jones’ train was beyond the Wakarusa crossing, on June 5, at Wyeth’s creek on the Little Blue, the McCoy party ... “passed Jones’ company.”⁹²

It did not appear, however, that Jones wanted to move west. He seemed to always intend to stay in Independence. He kept his large home in North Independence.⁹³ The Census of 1850 showed that Jones and his wife owned assets of about \$9,000, mostly invested in real estate. They also had eleven slaves. While they only had about four slaves by 1860, they owned \$21,000 worth of real estate. One reason for the decrease in the number of slaves may have been the high rate of slave runaways to Kansas by 1860.

Jones sold the Nebraska House to John Modie in March 1848 for \$16,800.⁹⁴ Modie put down \$9,300 cash and was to pay the remainder in four notes, \$500 due May 1, 1849; the second \$2,000 in eighteen months; and the third for \$2,000 24 months later. The remainder \$3,000 could be paid within thirty months of the third payment. Modie had married into a prominent

Independence family, that of Samuel Weston. Soon after buying the hotel, he was elected to the City Council.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, Modie could not only pay his bills due to poor money management, but he had forged some of the notes that secured the loan and was caught.⁹⁶

The hotel passed to the trust of Samuel Lucas, Clerk of the County Court, since Modie could not pay for his debts. The Court sold the Nebraska on September 15, 1851, to William McCoy, a leader in Independence.⁹⁷ The sale brought only \$1,010. Lewis Jones, in California, was informed



Lewis Jones' house, also known as the Scarritt House or the Garrison House, where the author lives today at 104 West Elizabeth in Independence, Missouri. Photo courtesy of the author.

about the availability of the hotel and he came back specifically to repurchase it. McCoy delayed the filing of the Assignee's Deed to allow for this purchase.⁹⁸ Jones bought a lot next-door on the east side of the Nebraska Hotel.⁹⁹ He also used the adjacent Fuchs Building for hotel operations.¹⁰⁰

After re-purchasing the hotel, Jones decided to enlarge it. An advertisement in *The Occidental Messenger* from June 21, 1854, stated: “the Nebraska House has recently

been enlarged, and much improved by alterations made in the building, and is now the most commodious tavern building west of St. Louis.”¹⁰¹

A large third floor was added to the hotel, which served as a ballroom and for meetings of local groups. It has been said that it was the lodge room of the Masons and Odd

Fellows, and maybe "one of the first meeting places of the Masons in the city."¹⁰² The second floor included a Chinese laundry for use by hotel patrons.¹⁰³ On the first floor, the renovated Nebraska had a tavern in the southwest corner room and a "well-known gambling den."¹⁰⁴ While not specifying the Nebraska Hotel, the *Missouri Republican* in 1849 talked about the gambling dens in Independence.

"This place affords every facility for gambling and the unsuspecting, before they are aware of it, are drawn into the meshes laid to entrap them, and are soon relieved of their funds."¹⁰⁵

A schooner barn, stable, and/or storeroom were built behind the hotel on land Jones purchased after 1849.¹⁰⁶ The post office placed a station within the hotel itself.¹⁰⁷

During the Civil War, the hotel lost much of its business, as did many other establishments in Independence. The Second Battle of Independence, which occurred on October 22, 1864. Although the Confederates won the initial excursion, Price became afraid and crossed the Big Blue to avoid further defeat¹⁰⁸. To treat the wounded Confederate soldiers left behind, the city removed furniture from the hotel and made the Nebraska Hotel rooms into a hospital.¹⁰⁹

Although not verified, the Fremont County Public Library in Canon City, Colorado, had evidence that Jones and his family moved there during the Civil War.¹¹⁰ They were received in the church on September 1869. Jones was appointed as an elder of the church by 1870. His presence was noted at meeting held from 1871 through 1874. He was released of his duties as elder in 1874 due to his "extreme old age." He left money in his will to the Mount Horeb Congregation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Canon City (\$300.00). Jones may have moved to Colorado because of his acquaintance with William Gilpin, who had lived in Independence and later became Territorial Governor of Colorado.

Before Jones died, he deeded the hotel to his four children (three by Elizabeth and one from another union).¹¹¹ His funeral was conducted from the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with the funeral of another pioneer, Russell Hicks, in what was touted then as "one of the greatest funerals ever seen in the town."¹¹² The funeral procession listed the order of the procession on the announcement: Knight's Templar first, then Uniform Patriarchs, Hearses with remains of deceased; Relatives and friends of deceased in carriages; Pioneer citizens on horseback; Citizens in carriages; Citizens on horseback; and finally, Citizens on foot.¹¹³

Shortly after Jones died, his Nebraska Hotel was sold. The brisk trade of the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon trails had ended. Gone were the prospectors, the traders, and the settlers, especially after the building of the railroad. The hotel patrons now consisted mainly of lawyers and men who sought to do business at the County Seat.

The Nebraska Hotel became the Hotel Metropolitan in the early 1900s and much of the original hotel was demolished.¹¹⁴ In the 1940s it was a boarding house and

in the 1960s and 1970s it served a seedier population. The last hotel to have its name on the moniker of this landmark building was the Earle Hotel.

In 1978 the city wanted to use it for urban renewal. Mrs. DeWitt, who owned the hotel and the Vaile Mansion, did not want to invest the \$300,000 that was required to repair the hotel to city standards. The city thought they could revitalize the Independence Square with a dime store. Several factions in the city tried to get the hotel on the Federal Register. Although the state supported the nomination, the city did not and in the end, the federal authorities refused to give it a historic designation. In August of 1980, the hotel was finally demolished - the last remnants of hotels on the frontier town of Independence.¹¹⁵

The city was never able to find someone to build a dime store.

Lot 13 Old Independence has remained a private parking lot since.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO COMPLEMENT THIS ARTICLE MAY BE FOUND ONLINE AT JCHS.ORG.

Christine Rinck and her husband Bill live in Independence, Missouri, in the Lewis Jones home (also known as the Scarritt House, and later the Garrison House).

- ¹ Union Historical Company. *History of Jackson County, Missouri*. Reprint of 1881 edition. (Cape Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966), 101-102.
- ² Union Historical Company, 101. Gregg was paid \$10.00 for his work gathering information about households in Jackson County, Missouri. It took ten days to complete the entire door-to-door census enumeration.
- ³ *An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Jackson County, Missouri*. Reprint of 1877 edition. (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, 1976), 14.
- ⁴ McLaughlin, Marilyn Ruth Crosswhite. *Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, 1827-1844, With Emphasis on Independence as Staging Area for Westward Commercial Movement*. Thesis. Masters of Art, University of Washington, 1971, 5 [Copy available at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives]. The commissioners were Julius Emmons of Lafayette County and John Bartleson of Clay County. Other explanations exist for the choice of Independence. Both men lived most of their lives in timbered land with adequate water and were unfamiliar with the prairie, with its lack of water. This is where the center of Jackson County should have lain. (Article by John McCoy at the Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society's Archives.)
- ⁵ Wilcox, Pearl. *Jackson County Pioneers*. (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, 1991), 127. Officially, the land ran "southwest quarter of section 2, township 49, range 32 and included 160 acres." Today the street boundaries would be Truman and Noland; southeast intersection of Pacific and Pleasant streets; northwest intersection of Pleasant and Truman.
- ⁶ *Missouri Intelligencer*, 27 June 1827, cited in Eugene T. Wells, "The Growth of Independence, Missouri, 1827-1850." *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, 16 (1959), 34. McLaughlin, 8-9. Mr. Newton conducted a survey of the land and after five days charged the city \$3.75. He figures he lost money having to pay for stakes (\$1.00), four quires of paper (\$1.50), two sheets of pasteboard (25 cents) and \$1.00 per day advertising the sale.

- ⁷ Ibid, 8.
- ⁸ Ibid, 9.
- ⁹ Ibid, 9. Two smaller lots sold for \$10 to \$12. Eakin, Joanne C., and O. B. Eakin, ed. *Jackson County Missouri Court Minute Book I, 1827-1832*. (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Genealogical Society, 1989), 59. All lots did not sell, however until another sale in 1828 when the lots were auctioned for \$8 each.
- ¹⁰ Union Historical Company, 645.
- ¹¹ Fowler, Eric. *Kansas City Star*, 4 March 1974.
- ¹² Eakin and Eakin, 97, 177. This license cost of \$10.00 a year.
- ¹³ Fowler, Eric. "Old Hotel Deserves to Stay," *Independence Examiner*, 4 March 1976.
- ¹⁴ Fowler, Pauline Ziegfried "Polly." Manuscript Collection at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.
- ¹⁵ Fowler, *Star*, 4 March 1974.
- ¹⁶ Eakin and Eakin, 90.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 75-76.
- ¹⁸ Fowler, *Examiner*, 4 March 1976.
- ¹⁹ Eakin and Eakin, 94, 104
- ²⁰ Fowler, Eric. *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Application*, 1. [A copy of the nomination application is available at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.]
- ²¹ Fowler, *Examiner*, 4 March 1976.
- ²² Parkman, Francis, 1846, as cited in Gregory Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (St. Louis, Mo.: Patrice Press, Inc, 1972), 83.
- ²³ Ferris, B. G. *The Mormons at Home With Some Incidents of Travel from Missouri to California, 1852-3*. (New York, Ny.: Dix & Edwards, 1856), 8.
- ²⁴ Wilcox, 286-287.
- ²⁵ Fowler. *National Register*, 9. E. A. Hickman's son stated in 1928 that his father "sawed the timbers used in the construction of the Fuchs building, and the frames were fastened together with wooden pins.
- ²⁶ John McCoy statement in *Independence Examiner*, February 26, 1962, 4E; Ruger, A. *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, 1868*. Reprint. (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society).
- ²⁷ *Independence Examiner*, February 6, 1919, 1, stated "The hotel was a two story brick structure which was built high off the ground with a number of steps leading up to the entrance."
- ²⁸ *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post*, 25 September 1927, Pearl Wilcox Papers, Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society Archives.
- ²⁹ Fowler, *National Register*, 1.
- ³⁰ Wilcox, 287.
- ³¹ Wilcox, 123. During the Civil War period, Shepherd left Independence on "French leave" and went to Lawrence, Kansas to live. He lived to the ripe old age of 105 years. Wilcox, 136.
- ³² Ibid, 134.
- ³³ Ibid, 154. Fairmount Park was located on the north side of present-day 24 Highway between Ralston and Harris Streets.
- ³⁴ Ibid, 287.
- ³⁵ Ibid, 287. Eventually, it became fence posts on Preston Roberts' farm.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 282. It was later called the Merchant Hotel. The hotel burned on January 29, 1844. McLoughlin, 143. This hotel was also called the Washington Hotel during the period of the Santa Fe Trail. The hotel was rebuilt after it burned and continued past the Civil War, when the building was reopened as Clinton's Drug Store. Clinton's Drug Store was where Harry Truman worked at his first job for \$3.00/week opening the store at 6:30, cleaning the floor, taking out the trash, polishing jugs/bottles, and working as a fountain boy.
- ³⁷ Fowler, *National Register*, 8. Wyman, Walker D., comp. *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 24 (1), March 1945, 30. Published in the *St. Louis Republican*, April 7, 1849, from syndicated story from St. Joseph, Missouri.
- ³⁸ Ferris, 6.
- ³⁹ Ibid, 7.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 7.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 7.
- ⁴² Ibid, 8.
- ⁴³ *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post*, 25 September 1927; Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society Archives, Pearl Wilcox Papers.
- ⁴⁴ Wilcox, 286. If the marriage took place it was not recorded in Jackson County. From Jackson County marriage records, it appears the first marriage recorded was between Francis Pryne and Elizabeth Daily February 15, 1827.
- ⁴⁵ *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post*, 25 September 1927.
- ⁴⁶ Noland House Dining Room Menu, April 2, 1853. Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society Archives. Also see Kathleen Tuohey's article in the Spring 1998 *Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society JOURNAL*, 6-7.
- ⁴⁷ Wilcox, 208, 286. Carson joined the expedition to Santa Fe as a "cavvy boy" with trailriders, Andrew Broadus, James Collins, Elisah Stanley and William Wolfskill, in 1826, working as a cook, errand boy, and harness repairer. His Indian wife died shortly after giving birth to a daughter in the late 1830s. He put his daughter in a Missouri boarding school and may have been visiting her on some of his visits.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, 208. <http://www.desertusa.com/mag99/jan/papr/kitarson.html> (viewed October 30, 2003). In Missouri, Carson met John C. Fremont who had been commissioned to map the trail to California. Fremont hired Carson as his guide and later made him famous through his writings about the expedition.
- ⁴⁹ Wilcox, 286. <http://www.wasco-history.r9esd.k12.or.us/comm/td/tdtours/mecker.html> (viewed October 30, 2003). He wrote many books about the trail in later years and even marked it fifty years later. Members of General Alexander Doniphan's army also stayed at the Nebraska Hotel. His Missouri volunteers participated in Stephen W. Kearny's force in the Santa Fe expedition. Doniphan was ordered to move against the Navajo Indians in Santa Fe and then the Mexicans in Chihuahua, Mexico. After his major victory in Chihuahua, Doniphan returned to Independence for a city barbecue in honor of the troops.
- ⁵⁰ Genealogy of Jabez Jones at <http://www.conjure.com/GENE/> (viewed October 30, 2003). Information from Lewis Jones' tombstone in Woodlawn Cemetery, Independence, Missouri.
- ⁵¹ Genealogy at <http://www.conjure.com/GENE/>.
- ⁵² Union Historical Company, 106.
- ⁵³ Ibid, 635.
- ⁵⁴ Fowler, *National Register*. Berry, Louise. *The Beginning of the West*, (Topeka, Ks.: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 221, 245, 317. This occurred in 1832 and 1833.
- ⁵⁵ Wilcox, 170. These were located near the Square: Robert S. Stone on South Liberty; Shaw's at South Liberty and Walnut; and Hocker's on Lynn near the new log Jackson County Courthouse. Weston's shop was located one block south of the Square. *History of Jackson County*, 646. Some of the other ones included that of Samuel Weston, Robert S. Stone, Thomas Shaw, and Nicholas Hocker.
- ⁵⁶ Union Historical Company, 635, 644, 646.
- ⁵⁷ Wilcox, 170.
- ⁵⁸ Union Historical Company, 126, *Historical Atlas*, 14. William J. Baugh was Justice of the peace for Fort Osage and Jesse Lewis and Joel Walker for Blue Township. Wilcox, 131.
- ⁵⁹ Union Historical Company, 127. Eakin and Eakin, 8. He was appointed in 1827. The first appointed judges were Abraham McClelland, Richard Fristoe, and Henry Burris. He continued to serve until at least 1832.
- ⁶⁰ Eakin and Eakin, 31.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, 41.
- ⁶² Ibid, 56. He and Levi Shepherd took the place of Solomon Flourney

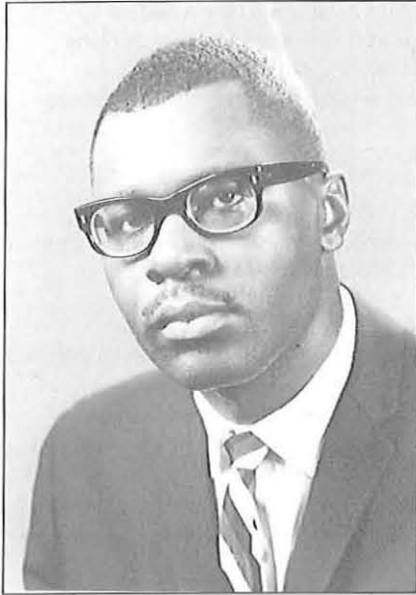
- and Aaron Overton. He was also an Election Judge in 1830 and 1831, 103.
- ⁶³ Boone Township was carved out of the original three political designations of Jackson County. The name was lost when Boone Township was later subdivided itself into smaller townships. "The boundaries of these townships have undergone many and material changes, till at the present time they contain only a portion of what they contained in 1827." At the time of its designation in May 1830, Boone Township began on the "east at the County line between townships number forty seven and forty eight thence running due west until it intersects the line of Blue Township thence south to the main channel of Grand River thence down Grand River to the County line thence north to the beginning," Eakin and Eakin, 90-91. Union Historical Company, 125-127.
- ⁶⁴ Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society Archives, Pauline "Polly" Fowler Papers.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid, 91.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid, 16.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid, 66.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, 39.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid, 57.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, 60. This money was to come from the sale of the properties.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, 59.
- ⁷² Ibid, 67. Jones took 25 cents for his commission on this sale.
- ⁷³ Ibid, 67.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid, 87, 101 and 123.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid, 63.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid, p.113.
- ⁷⁷ Union Historical Company, 186.
- ⁷⁸ McLoughlin, 37.
- ⁷⁹ <http://www.riley.army.mil/OurPost/History.asp> (viewed October 30, 2003). Riley not only led the first military escort, but a Fort Riley was established in 1853 to guard against Indian attacks on the trail. McLoughlin, 46-47. A Congressional bill in March 1829 was signed by President Andrew Jackson for four Ft. Leavenworth companies under Major Riley to accompany traders at least to the American-Mexican boundary.
- ⁸⁰ Union Historical Company, 646.
- ⁸¹ Berry, 574.
- ⁸² Ibid, 998.
- ⁸³ <http://www.conjure.com/GENE/JONES=HUNT/djones.html> (viewed October 30, 2003).
- ⁸⁴ <http://www.beckwourth.org/Biography/everglades.html> (viewed October 30, 2003).
- ⁸⁵ Wilcox, 279. His partners included Independence leaders Samuel H. Woodson, Sr., John Parker, George W. Buchanan, Samuel D. Lucas, William B. Hays, and John Murray. For a full-length article on this topic, see "A Short Ride on the First Railroad West of the Mississippi," *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL* 45(3), Spring 2004, 6-8.
- ⁸⁶ Campbell, Matt. "Wayne City Landing Tales: Its Place among Historic Sites" *Kansas City Star*, 10 August 1983, 6a.
- ⁸⁷ *Laws of Missouri*, 1849 edition, cited in Wilcox, 279.
- ⁸⁸ Wilcox, 281.
- ⁸⁹ Campbell, 6a.
- ⁹⁰ Campbell, 6a.
- ⁹¹ Fowler, *National Register*, 8.
- ⁹² Berry, 836.
- ⁹³ Wilcox, 286. Pauline Siegfried Fowler, "Independence Young Matrons Buy Pre-Civil War Brick Residence," *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL*, XII (3), Fall 1970, 6, 8, 10. The house later became the home of Nathan Scarritt. The street by this house was named for his wife, Elizabeth and that behind his house after him, Jones Street. He held this property until 1858 when he sold the property along with 93.25 acres he had annexed for \$18,000 to Eugene Erwin.
- ⁹⁴ Fowler, *Examiner*, March 4, 1976. John Modie's father had owned a saddle shop in Independence with Simpson. Modie's business was advertised in the *Western Expositor* July 18, 1846, Volume 3 (40). He stated he had on hand 15 and 20 tons of assorted iron and wagon boxes. His establishment stood on Main Street, across the street from the Locust Grove Hotel.
- ⁹⁵ Wilcox, 276.
- ⁹⁶ Fowler, *National Register*, 8. These were supposedly notes signed by his business partner and represented \$5,038.86.
- ⁹⁷ Wilcox, 165-166. He came from Chillicothe, Ohio and set up business on Liberty Street, the McCoy and Lee Store. He later was first mayor of Independence. He also founded one of the first banking institutions in Independence, Independence Savings Institution, 467.
- ⁹⁸ Fowler, *National Register*, 8.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ Fowler, *Examiner*, 4 March 1976.
- ¹⁰¹ *The Occidental Messenger*, Independence, Missouri, 21 June 1854.
- ¹⁰² *Kansas City (Mo.) Times*, 25 September 1974.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Examiner*, 6 February 1919, 1.
- ¹⁰⁵ *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 35, as cited in Fowler *National Register*, 9.
- ¹⁰⁶ Fowler, *National Register*, 7. This indicated by the difference in the Warranty Deeds for the purchase of the new lot on January 21, 1852, Book S, page 145, when the lot had no building thereon and the Writ of Attachment dated September 25, 1876, Book 113, page 365 where the storehouse is described.
- ¹⁰⁷ Wilcox, 286.
- ¹⁰⁸ <http://americancivilwar.com/statepic/mo/mo025.html> (viewed October 30, 2003).
- ¹⁰⁹ Wilcox, 286. Independence residents took Federal soldier that were wounded to a Bank on the square.
- ¹¹⁰ Letter from Riley Simrall to Donald Ehrlich, 1975, Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society Archives, Box 50F11.
- ¹¹¹ Fowler, *National Register*, 8.
- ¹¹² Hickman, W. Z. *History of Jackson County, Missouri*. (Topeka, Ks.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 237-239. Hicks was a prominent citizen, being a lawyer and judge. He became penniless after the Civil War, having lost his slaves and cattle. Hicks also was known in Kansas City for his participation in the sale of the Prudhomme land and his eccentricities. For example, he dyed his hair from time to time and often appeared in court in hair of varied color, from orange to red and black to white.
- ¹¹³ Funerals for Lewis Jones and Russell Hicks were conducted from the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in the City of Independence on Sunday, April 23, 1876, at 2:00 p.m. Pearl Wilcox Obituary Collection, "Hicks, Judge Russell," Jackson County (Mo) Historical Society Archives.
- ¹¹⁴ One side of the hotel remained, as did the foundation and basement.
- ¹¹⁵ "Bit of history gives way to wreckers," *Kansas City (Mo.) Times*, 4 August 1980, B1.

HARRY TRUMAN'S HAT TIP AT "THE TOP HAT" CHANGED MY LIFE

BY JOELOUIS MATTOX

Caruthersville, Missouri, and Independence, Missouri, have an interesting connection to each other . . . and to me: U.S. President Harry S Truman.

It could be said that Truman loved visiting Caruthersville



Joelouis Mattox in 1966 when he worked for the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority in Independence, Missouri. Photo courtesy the author.

more than any other place. According to the *Kansas City Star*, the 33rd U.S. President visited the "Little White House" in Key West, Florida, 11 times.¹ Guest what? According to another source, President Truman visited Caruthersville 13 times.² His last visit to Caruthersville was in 1953, and that was when our paths first crossed.

Between 1950 and 1966, I lived in Caruthersville and then Independence. Caruthersville is a small town on the Mississippi

River and county seat of Pemiscot County in the famous Missouri Bootheel. At that time, nearly all public facilities and accommodations had signs on them that read "White" or "Colored." There were no blacks in city government.

As a child, I wanted to become a Catholic and attend their school because the only white church and school that welcomed blacks through the front doors were Catholics.

During the 1950s, cotton was king in the Bootheel. For poor families, cotton chopping (hocking) in the spring and cotton picking in the fall was more important than attendance in school, especially for kids attending "colored schools." In the spring many youngsters missed school to chop cotton. It was very hard work, but I actually have fond memories going to the fields. Much of my knowledge of black history and how to survive in "the white man's world" in the South came from stories told by elders--living historians--with whom I chopped cotton.

I was good at learning about life, but not good at picking cotton! As a youngster, I suffered from asthma and the wetness of dew and smell from burning tires in the field aggravated the ailment. Because of these things, I was never able to weigh-up more than

100 pounds of cotton and take home \$5.00 a day. Since

I could make more money and liked working indoors, I did better as a bus boy and a short order cook at the "Top Hat Café" on Main Street, the finest restaurant in Caruthersville.

On October 1, 1953, Harry Truman came to town and everyone hailed him as, "Mr. President" and "The Man from Independence." I was 16 years old and not sure where Independence was located. That morning, President Truman, out of the White House for just nine months, had breakfast at the Top Hat Café. As he was leaving the restaurant Truman tipped his hat and shared kind words with the staff. Truman suggested I finish high school and attend Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri.

TRUMAN'S "TIP" BECOMES REALITY

I did graduate from Washington High School--the "colored school" in

Caruthersville--but I had my own notion that my opportunity to become somebody was in the U.S. Air Force, or to get a good paying job up north in Chicago, Illinois, or Detroit, Michigan. The Air Force did not work out.

They had enough people who wore glasses.

Truman's inspiration eventually led me to enroll in Lincoln University in 1957. He surely planted the seed, but I must give credit to my high school History teacher who urged me to overcome my hesitancy and apply to the notable black college. At Lincoln, I majored in History and Government and did fairly well academically. I was an officer of the student council, fraternity leader, and twice I made *Who's Who Among Students in Colleges and Universities*.

I had a dream to become a high school History teacher. It did not come true. I was drafted into the U.S. Army, Signal Corps after college in 1962. While I was in Germany, my mother moved from Caruthersville to Jefferson City, then to Kansas City, Missouri. She resided in the T.B. Watkins public housing development near 12th Street and Vine.

HOW I CAME TO TRUMAN'S INDEPENDENCE

After my Army discharge in 1966, I joined my mother in Kansas City and sought employment.

The Urban League of Greater Kansas City referred me



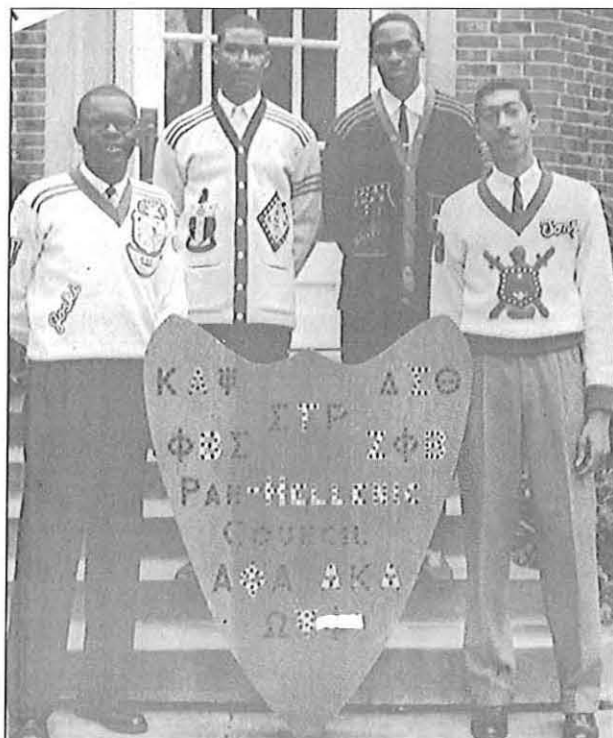
Harry Truman's early life, like that of the author, were grounded on the farm. Truman riding a cultivator on the Grandview farm about 1910, courtesy Harry S Truman Presidential Museum and Library. PHL106

to a job and I accepted a position with the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority of Independence, Missouri (LCRA). A residency requirement dictated that I live in Independence, but securing a place to live in Independence was a hurdle, as I encountered veiled racial discrimination. There were only selected neighborhoods at that time where African-Americans lived in Independence. I am not aware of any written legislation dictating this, and there were no obvious signs (like the ones I had known as a youngster in Caruthersville). There was an "understood" and "accepted" way-of-life that there were invisible geographic boundaries that the races observed.³

I contacted a former college mate, Herb Branson (who lived in Independence, and happened to be Caucasian). He invited me to live with him. Herb worked in the public relations department at the Vendo Company that manufactured vending machines for the Coca-Cola Company. I moved from my mother's apartment in the "projects" (an all-black neighborhood in Kansas City) to a white neighborhood and a nice house at 1418 West Waldo Street in Independence. I went from attending St. Stephen Baptist Church in Kansas City to worshipping at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, the Second Baptist Church, and the Stone Church (now Community of Christ) in Independence. I did not live with Herb for very long as his mother came to live with him and I had to move again.

My own relocation found me living in a beautiful house on North Noland Road across the street from William Chrisman High School, and lived with Mr. and Mrs. Jessie Powell. The Powell's were one of the most respected African-American families in Independence. Mrs. Hortense Powell held many offices in the A.M.E. church, and, if my memory serves me correctly, I believe she was a member of the LCRA Board. Personally, Mrs. Powell collected and sold antiques. Mr. Powell was the general contractor for the then new St. Paul A.M.E. Church located at Memorial Drive and Lexington Avenue. [This church has a rich history with some distinguished congregants. In his book, *The Truman Neighborhood from Elegant Mansions to The Neck*, local historian Bill Curtis writes that the first African-American to serve in the U.S. Senate, Hiram Rhodes Revels, who represented the State of Mississippi, 1870-1871, was the founder and first pastor of St. Paul A.M.E. Church

in Independence, Missouri. Mr. Powell's brother, Virgil S. Powell, author of a book titled, *Notable Black Americans*, was one of the first writers to point out that the second African-American to serve in the U.S. Senate, Blanche K. Bruce, who represented the State of Mississippi, 1875-1881, grew up near Hannibal, Missouri.]



Truman's inspiration eventually led me to enroll in Lincoln University in 1957. Mattox standing on far left. Photo courtesy the author.

INDEPENDENCE, URBAN RENEWAL AND "THE NECK"

I worked as Relocation Specialist for the LCRA for about two and half years between 1966 and 1968, although the work of acquisition of properties took place from 1962 through 1969.⁴

On May 10, 1965, an LCRA relocation office had opened in the Northwest Parkway Renewal Area, one of two renewal areas covering a 520-acre section of Independence designated and funded by the federal government for improvement and redevelopment.⁵ The Northwest Parkway Renewal Area was located on the south side of 24 Highway, and was visible from the newly constructed Harry S Truman Presidential

Museum and Library on the north side of the highway.

My duties included relocating some 125 families who lived in the Northwest Parkway Renewal Area that included, in part, a predominantly African-American neighborhood known traditionally as "The Neck."⁶ In many regards, "The Neck"

was very blighted. The quality of much of the housing in the area designated for renewal did not meet HUD standards because they were not safe and sanitary. They were very substandard and dilapidated according to HUD rules and regulations.

One of the main reasons the area may have been approved as an urban renewal area before I arrived in the community was because it was blighted and very unattractive, especially as an area across from the Truman Library, which was fast



The Truman Library. PHX6529

becoming a national landmark and tourist destination. Even at this time visitors and tourists began to flock from around the world to Independence to see Truman's Library. They also desired to see him taking his famous walks, and to see Mr. and Mrs. Truman's home on North Delaware.

A number of families and individuals in "The Neck," 10 to 15 percent of whom were Caucasian, could trace their descendants back to Independence's frontier days. Most residents were ordinary working class families, many of whom served as maids, cooks and gardeners for well-to-do families in adjacent white neighborhoods like the one along Delaware Street. Some were retired, others quite elderly. Jon Taylor provides a succinct overview of the demographics of the population and cultural landscape of "The Neck" in his doctoral thesis cited above.

Relocation work in Independence was a rewarding experience for me, personally and professionally. Granted, while the end result was the best for some; for others it was not. People's lives were affected and they endured pain and suffering, which I acknowledge. There are some who see me as having "betrayed the black community" for the work I did. Or, that I was a "tool for the white man." Some might equate me to "Uncle Tom." They have the right to their opinion, but I hope they may understand that there was a job to do and I felt I did it with sensitivity and understanding. For my own conscience looking back I've asked myself, "Would I employ myself in this type of work again?" My answer is that while my perspective has expanded over the years, I would still seek to improve the quality of life for individuals, neighbors and neighborhoods. I felt then as I do now that my work in community development and historic preservation has meaning.⁷

I invite former residents of "The Neck" to contact the Jackson County Historical Society's Archives to offer their perspectives and get them recorded. I would encourage them not to delay because time is passing fast and many of the relocated people are getting older and have stories to tell. Share them today because the history of "The Neck" must live.

My principal objective of relocation of families and individuals in the Northwest Parkway Renewal Area project

was to assist them in finding and relocating in housing that was decent, safe, and sanitary; that was within their means; and, that was in reasonably convenient locations.⁸ I feel that I accomplished this goal.⁹ I worked with another relocation specialist, Mr. Homer Longsdorf, who focused on business relocation in the area. Together, we strove to carry out relocation with a minimum of hardship understanding that each family had their individual viewpoints and issues, some of which were more complex than others.

To affect smooth, successful, and satisfactory relocation results, we scheduled an initial interview with each family that was to be displaced, and who desired relocation assistance. Keep in mind that we only had contact and involvement



McCoy Park today from the rooftop of Heritage House. Bess Truman Parkway meanders through McCoy Park today and leads to the Truman Library (in the background to the right). Photo courtesy David W. Jackson, with thanks to Heritage House.

with those who responded to our invitation for assistance. We did not work with individuals and families who were uninterested in taking advantage of the relocation assistance process, and who made their own, independent arrangements for relocation from the renewal area. Notes kept at the time reveal a case-work list of nearly 30 "non-white families and individuals who have moved from the project area and now have white neighbors in Independence."¹⁰ To the best of my recollection, I had interaction with fewer than a dozen white families and individuals who desired relocation assistance.

From that initial meeting we could determine the family composition, income, and relocation desires, with reference to whether they wanted to buy or build a new house; buy a middle-aged house; rent; or, move into public housing; and where in the city the family wanted to relocate and the style and construction of the home they desired. We could also assess if there were special circumstances, such as physical disabilities, transportation needs, or other personal issues

that might need to be addressed.

We then worked to provide a descriptive referral list of homes our office had available. The list was fairly detailed and described each home's type of construction; number of stories and rooms; type of heating; number of bedrooms and bathrooms; whether the house had a garage or basement; type of neighborhood; zoning classification; size of the lot; neighborhood conveniences (schools, stores and transportation); approximate annual taxes; and, of course, the price of the house and financing.

I purchased my first car, a 1954 Oldsmobile coupe, to transport people in my caseload to prospective houses that were for sale or rent, to social services agencies, to banks, to title companies and other places. Most of my clients asked me to ride with them to look for new homes. We looked in Independence, but also in other cities such as Liberty and Kansas City, Missouri.

Always present in mass relocation was a lack of rental property for minority families who were not eligible for public housing. Then, too, were segregation and discrimination issues aforementioned. For instance, African-American clients warned me not to visit Sugar Creek, a community adjacent to Independence, after dark because of my race.

A "TRUE STORY OF FEELINGS"

I found that dining with residents of "The Neck" was the best way to get to know them so that I could best serve them. And, surprisingly, I was often invited to join in on family time. People who would speak out negatively against me—curse me—and denounce the LCRA in public meetings one day, would turn right around and invite me to dinner the next. And do you know what? Most of those same people told me in private that they were *glad* I was there to help them. I really enjoyed listening to these folks tell stories about themselves and their parents and grandparents growing up in Independence. I enjoyed helping them.

To educate the community and clarify misconceptions, we organized a presentation at Bryant School about the relocation plan and the relocation payment program for residents in the urban renewal project area. Families were entitled to financial assistance: \$200 for moving expenses and up to \$500 for relocation adjustments, if they qualified. We also educated families about private, veterans' and federal



Residents of The Neck were ordinary working class families, many of whom served as maids, cooks and gardeners for well-to-do families in adjacent white neighborhoods. PHS8492 & PHS2729



programs that might be available to them, and we assisted them in applying for such programs through our relocation office.

One specific instance that afforded me with another connection to former President Truman was when I wrote a letter to him requesting income verification for his African-American employee, who sought eligibility for a relocation payment. We sent our standard form letter informing the lady that she may be eligible for a relocation payment dependent upon her income verification. Though I never met her in person she moved to more suitable housing elsewhere.¹¹

I helped one resident from "The Neck" fulfill her dream to own and live in a house on

"Mr. Truman's Street." Georgia Nutter eventually relocated just a couple of blocks from "The Neck" to 809 North Delaware.

And, after countless hours of negotiations at a relocation solution, I was able to escort another resident of "The Neck," to the bank to cash a check and watch him smile holding three \$1,000 bills . . . something he had wanted to do all his life. Mr. Jessie S. Thomas relocated to 423 East Elm, and was one of several non-white individuals and families who had moved from the project area and now had white neighbors in Independence.¹²

A lesson learned in this, my first career job, was that *money is not everything*. One Caucasian resident who was a client of mine, Mrs. Ethel Martin if I recall correctly, was very sentimental about her home on North Spring Street very close to 24 Highway. She and her husband had built their home and he had planted a very special tree in their back yard. Her life was centered on the memories of their relationship and their home. She desired and made an appeal

that she be the last resident removed from the renewal area. We were able to accommodate her request. The bulldozers came up to and around her home, until, finally, it was time for her to relocate.

The renewal project affected everyone, myself included, and it was not without its challenges.

"A RELOCATION SPECIALIST IS TRUSTWORTHY"

During the 1960s, urban renewal was called, "Negro Removal," and people who worked in the program were suspect of being insensitive and uncaring. There were protests. There were objections and opposition. Condemnation proceedings slowed the process of relocation. Requests for rezoning were proposed, contested and denied. Throughout the process, I prided myself by assuring my clientele that "A relocation specialist is trustworthy."

A number of citizens and organizations, both black and white, became concerned about the rights and welfare of residents of "The Neck." Among them were: Mrs. Hazel Graham, long-time official with the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society, who knew a number of Neck residents; Father Patrick Hutton, pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church, who came to urban renewal board meetings and who had officiated at the wedding of President Truman's daughter Margaret; and, City Councilman Dr. Harry Jonas, who later became the second Dean of the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine.

Positive news coverage in the *Independence Examiner* about the plight of local black citizens attempting to integrate white neighborhoods in the city also helped me considerably in my work with urban renewal activities.

I worked with federal and city officials and civic leaders to bring public housing to Independence.¹³ In this regard, I seemed to be following in Mr. Truman's footsteps again. In 1937, Harry S. Truman, Junior U.S. Senator from Missouri, voted to enact legislation that created the federal public housing program. More than a decade later, in 1949, Truman, as President of the United States, signed legislation that created slum clearance authorities, later known as urban renewal agencies.

After nine months, my co-worker and I reported that we had aided in: a) the successful relocation of 52 families and individuals into standard homes; b) securing old age assistance for two individuals over 70 years of age; c)

helping one elderly project resident gain admittance to the Jackson County Home for the Aged because he was unable to care for himself and had no one to care for him;¹⁴ d) given two families and one elderly individual enough furniture to

furnish several rooms in their new homes; and e) had disbursed more than \$2,000 in relocation adjustment payments to families and elderly individuals to make life more comfortable in their new locations.

In the end, and after countless hours consulting with families and driving thousands of miles seeking possible housing for area residents, the Northwest Parkway Renewal Area project concluded successfully. It was eventually decided that the redevelopment area would, indeed, be designated as a parkway (today named Bess Truman Parkway) that today bisects an 18-acre McCoy Park south of 24 Highway.¹⁵

Through this experience I enjoyed some personal growth experiences and milestones while working and living in Independence. I was the first African-American to become a member of the Independence, Missouri, Jaycees, and served on the Board of Directors with Richard Gross, who later became the second CEO of the Missouri Housing Development Commission. As an Independence Jaycee, I was the first African-American to be served at the Cracker Neck Country Club in Independence.

Through this process, I also had the distinguished opportunity to meet the Regional Director of the NAACP and other civil rights and community leaders from Kansas City, Missouri, who came to Independence on behalf of the residents of "The Neck." One of them was Kansas City Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Brooks, then president of the Kansas City Chapter, Congress On Racial Equality (C.O.R.E.). I had the opportunity to work with William "Bill" Moore, director of the urban renewal agency and traveling with him to the Area HUD Office in Fort Worth, Texas. [The train trip was my first ride in a Pullman car. Bill later became City Manager of Independence and later founded and served as the first CEO of the Missouri Housing Development Commission.]

A CAREER IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Employment with the urban renewal agency in Independence began my 33-year career in community development, housing management and historic preservation. Since

NETTLETON WEST-From 800 N Main west to N Woodland
117 Nettleton Apartments
1 Powers Jewell H IN1-1788
2 Lance Lena M Mrs
3 Simpson Minnie
4 Fullbright Susan B Mrs IN1-5200
N Liberty Intersects
(Not open bet N Liberty and N Spring)
N Spring Intersects
414 Turner Robt J CL2-0258
415 Marshall Percy C CL4-7820
418 Moreland Ona Mrs IN1-6402
419 Vacant
420 Robinson Saml Jr IN1-0913
500 Irvin Oscar J IN1-4396
501 Jacobs Albert CL4-1248
503 Tillman Helen M CL2-5449
506 McGill Herschel I
507 Vacant
509 Rucker Nora L Mrs CL2-4950
510 Taylor Ernest Jr rear Vacant
512 Copridge Clarence B
514 Graham Marie Mrs CL2-5434
517 Vacant
519 Harness Arnold S
521 Vacant
N McCoy Intersects
KCSRY (no crossing)
N Delaware Intersects
N Union Intersects
N Cottage Intersects
1005 Back James L IN1-6282
1011 Johnstone Alan C IN1-5155
N River blvd Intersects
N Grand Intersects
1102 Vacant
N Willis Intersects
1200 Norwicke Ronald C mfr agt
1202 Wade Rolla B Jr CL2-3414
N Cryslar Intersects
1312 Gleaves Minnie B Mrs IN1-1055
N Fuller Intersects
Woodland Intersects (not open)

"The Neck" encompassed several city blocks. The street name criss-cross of Independence city directories studied between 1965 and 1969 show the evolution of the renewal area as Nettleton, St. Charles, Mill, and McCoy, Pleasant and Spring Streets in this location were vacated.



Lucille Bluford, long-time editor and publisher of The Kansas City Call. Courtesy the archives of the Kansas City Star.



Harry Truman, as junior U.S. Senator from Missouri voted to enact legislation that created the federal public housing program. PHL2820

The Northwest Parkway project and "The Neck," I have held top-management positions with the urban renewal agency of Kansas City, Missouri; the public housing authorities of Kansas City, Missouri, and Muskegon Heights, Michigan; served as director of the first Housing Allowance Program in the country that became HUD's Section 8 Housing Program; earned the REALTOR, Certified Property Manager (CPM), Certified Housing Counselor (CHC) and Public Housing Manager (PHM) designations; held the position of instructor of property management at the University of Chicago and Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri; and been retained as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

Other rewarding experiences include my position as president of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., National Housing Foundation, and member of a group of "housing experts" that studied housing production and management in Europe, and a delegate to a United Nations' international conference on housing. I am honored to have been a member of the Board of Directors of the Real Estate Board of Kansas City, member of the Board of Directors of Project Equality, Inc., and member of the Missouri Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Just as important are

my involvement in the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri, Election Judge for the Kansas City Board of Commissioners, life member of the NAACP, and member of two branch executive committees of the N.A.A.C.P.: Muskegon, Michigan and Kansas City, Missouri. (The forerunner to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was the President's Committee on Civil Rights. President Truman appointed the Committee on December 5, 1946).

PROMOTING AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

Over the years, my love of history and admiration for Harry S Truman's laudable work to gain equality for African-Americans has led me to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding African-Americans and their connection to local history, including their relation to "The Man from Independence."

After learning that African-Americans were members of the early Mormon Church, I published an article titled "Blacks and Mormons."¹⁶ In late 1983 and early 1984, upon the advice of Lucile Bluford, late Publisher and Editor of the *Kansas City Call* newspaper, I did research at the Harry S Truman Presidential Museum and Library and discovered a wealth of information about two Missourians: Chester A. Franklin (Founder of the *Kansas City Call*); the great agricultural scientist George Washington Carver; black Republicans of Jackson County; and, the beginning of public housing in Kansas City, Missouri.

Reading the personal papers of Mr. Truman, I learned of his concern for all Americans getting "A Fair Deal" and being treated equality. The onion-skin and carbon copy letters to individuals and organizations reveal the reasons why black and white historians call Truman "The Civil Rights President."

Ms. Bluford was impressed with the story I wrote about Chester Franklin and Harry Truman. It made the front page and was published in the 65th Anniversary edition of the *Kansas City Call* on June 28, 1984. I was then inspired to write:

"Black Colleges Need Professors Like George Washington Carver;"¹⁷

"Harry Truman and the NAACP;"¹⁸

"The Law to Oppose the Spread of Communism Among Negroes;"¹⁹

"Truman and Caruthersville;"²⁰

"Blacks and Tom Pendergast;"²¹

"Truman's Peace Speech Remembered;"²²

"The White House on Baltimore Avenue;"²³

"George Washington Carver, National Hero;"²⁴ and,

"Carver Day was set aside for blacks only."²⁵

Independence is proud of its hometown hero Harry S Truman. His visit to my hometown of Caruthersville and his advice to me as a youngster just happened to be a moment that set the direction of my life. Thank you, Mr. Truman.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO COMPLEMENT THIS ARTICLE MAY BE FOUND ONLINE AT JCHS.ORG.

Joelouis Mattox is a freelance writer. He is currently working on several projects, one of which is to study the history of African-American schools in Kansas City, Missouri. His previous article, "Taking Steps to Record Steptoe, Westport's Vanishing African-American Neighborhood," appeared in the Autumn 2004 issue of the *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL*. Mr. Mattox lives in Kansas City, Missouri.

¹ Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 23 January 2005.

² *Democrat Argus*, 27 September 1984.

³ Independence was not unlike other cities or small towns of the time; racism and segregation were still pervasive as the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum and traction. It was kind of an "unsaid rule" that "blacks" were not welcome in "white neighborhoods;" at least that's the way it had been up to that point. This was the beginning of real-life integration. The author recalls at least three Independence neighborhoods that at that time where African-Americans were living: 1) "The Neck" described more fully throughout this article, 2) the area surrounding the African-American Methodist and Baptist churches in Independence, 3) the area around William Chrisman High School on North Noland (where I lived at that time with the Powells), and 4) an area along Hocker Street near Young School, an African-American school.

⁴ Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority of Independence board minutes details the specifics of land acquisition, relocation, and demolition. These are preserved in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives.

⁵ Taylor, Jon E. *When A Presidential Neighborhood Enters History: Community Change, Competing Histories, and Creative Tension in Independence, Missouri*. Dissertation. (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri, May 2004), 125-138. The other renewal area in Independence surrounded Independence's historic Courthouse Square, called the Jackson Square renewal area.

⁶ In fact, the LCRA Report for the Year Ending December 31, 1968, reported the total number of white and minority families relocated from the project area was 179. Although no one as yet has discovered the root of how "The Neck" was named, Caucasian residents who, for obvious reasons, wish to remain anonymous, have said they remembered as children the area being called, "The Nigger Neck." Alversia Brown Pettigrew has written the book, *Memories of A Neck Child*, describing her and her family's experiences of living and growing up in "The Neck." The book begins with a lengthy, lively poem, and the remainder of the book dissects the poem with very interesting personal memories and anecdotes. Mrs. Pettigrew is the only former resident of "The Neck" who has yet documented a personal narrative. She relates that "this name was given . . . by the white folks as a definite 'put-down.' You know, 'neck of the woods' and that type of thing . . ." Pettigrew says, "The Neck" was bordered on the north by U.S. Highway 24; on the south by West College; on the east by North Spring; and, on the west by North McCoy. Within these border streets were West Nettleton, West Mill, and West St. Charles." Mill Creek (which presently runs through McCoy Park) was at that time, as described by Mrs. Pettigrew, "an old branch stream, with overlying large trees, which provided a shaded and cool spot."

Other former residents, as well as officials involved, should be located and interviewed for posterity. To that end, Mrs. Pettigrew organized the first annual Neck reunion this summer. Perhaps at the second annual reunion in 2006, efforts may be made to gather recollections from attendees.

⁷ Even in light of what is happening today in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, I hope that an African-American with a strong desire for community is hired to participate in the relocation and redevelopment of people who have been affected. If I were 40 years younger with the experience I gained in Independence, I would be down there helping. It's going to take a strong person to say this: "I'm going to cry with you. I'm going to stand up with you. I'm going to help you. But, I must tell you there is no going back to what was. We are going forward to a new day to a promised land for people who want to improve themselves."

⁸ Mattox, Joe L. "Small City Relocation Program." *The Journal of Housing and Community Development*. (March 1966), No. 3, 157-158.

⁹ I know that my work was respected and others could tell that I knew what I was doing and I was good at it. Three agencies wanted my expertise once my work in Independence concluded, and my career gained momentum after that point.

¹⁰ This list is on deposit in my collection at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives.

¹¹ The Trumans had several employees. Although this woman's name escapes me, she was not Truman's long-time housekeeper, Vietta Garr.

¹² I have donated papers relative to a selection of my LCRA caseload to the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives for preservation and future access. Additional papers that may be of interest and pertinence have been donated to the Missouri Valley Special Collections department of the Kansas City Public Library's Central Branch.

¹³ One of the things that slowed our progress in the renewal area was the building of Housing Authority units that were eventually constructed on Truman Road and North Hocker (in a neighborhood that had previously been settled by blacks). Unions at the time were insistent on steel construction and did not want plastic used in federal housing projects. These negotiations held up the housing units that were needed to relocate some of the families from "The Neck."

¹⁴ Mr. Manford Spicer, Jr., according to files I've deposited with the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.

¹⁵ McCoy Park was named William McCoy who served as the first Mayor of Independence, Missouri, in 1849.

¹⁶ *Kansas City (Mo.) Globe*, 24 June 1976.

¹⁷ *Kansas City (Mo.) Call*, 3 January 1984.

¹⁸ *Kansas City (Mo.) Call*, 26 July 1984.

¹⁹ *Kansas City (Mo.) Globe*, 12 September 1984.

²⁰ *Democrat Argus*, 27 September 1984.

²¹ *Kansas City (Mo.) Globe*, 17 October 1984.

²² *The Pemsco Journal*, 5 November 1984.

²³ *Kansas City (Mo.) Globe*, 14 December 1984. I wrote this in the Presidential Suite at the then Muehlebach Hotel where President Truman was once a regular guest.

²⁴ *Kansas City (Mo.) Globe*, 26 February 1986.

²⁵ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 14 January 1990. While in high school I had the opportunity to visit the George Washington Carver National Monument near Diamond, Missouri. Years later I learned the legislation that created the monument in 1943 was sponsored by Senator Harry Truman. On December 29, 1945, eight months after taking over the Oval Office in the White House, President Truman signed Public Law 290 that made January 5, 1946, a national holiday that honored George Washington Carver.

JACKSON COUNTY'S LITTLE BLUE RIVER VALLEY: BALANCING DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF AN HISTORIC RURAL LANDSCAPE BY PAUL KIRKMAN

"Much as the family bible and old photo albums record family histories, America's rural countryside provides a living record of our collective past."¹

Historic preservation is more than "saving old buildings." The protection of pristine rural landscapes and cultural heritage sites is as imperative to saving significant historic structures. Development of resources is no less important.

The equilibrium of these two seeming disparate activities is the goal. Historic preservationists—those who desire to ensure future generations have access to physical evidence of our past—and civic leaders and city planners—who are responsible for community development—must find a workable path that balances seeming competing interests. This shared responsibility includes assisting preservation and planning commissions in identifying the locations, historical significance, and community value of historic sites and landscapes.

Without input from local historians in the development process, areas slated for development might contain any number of historic buildings, archaeological sites, or historic landscapes in danger of being lost forever.

This article highlights the unique history of Jackson County's Little Blue River Valley; provides some background on past patterns in development and planning; and, presents a more precise example of the challenges and opportunities facing Kansas City as it continues to uphold its master plan for development of a critical area along the Little Blue River.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BLUE COUNTRY

"The Little Blue Valley is the drainage basin of the Little Blue River, and covers over one-third of Jackson County."² The Little Blue River is a tributary of the Missouri River and passes through communities large and small from Grandview to Sibley. Many Indian paths (or traces) cross the River, and date back hundreds, if not thousands of years. The Lewis and Clark Voyage of Discovery passed the delta of the Little Blue River in 1804. Within two years, General William Clark and



Rural Jackson County as it was in the early 1930s. Will we save any views like this for future generations to enjoy?
Dick Millard, Sr., Photographic Collection, Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives. PHX9407

80 men from the St. Charles militia were guided back across the Little Blue by Nathan Boone (taking roughly the path of U.S. 40 Highway, then cutting north)³ to begin work on a fort that would first be called Fort Clark, then Fort Osage.

Under U.S. President Thomas Jefferson, a treaty was signed in November 1808, with the chiefs of the Big Osage and Little Osage tribes, ceding land to the U.S. government in exchange for protection, an annuity, access to Fort Osage facilities, etc.⁴ In the years that followed, many trappers and hunters would pass through this area known as "the blue country." Daniel Boone even visited Fort Osage in April 1816⁵. In addition to Fort Osage, small communities were beginning to dot the landscape along the old Indian traces and near the rivers. On December 15, 1826, Jackson County was formed.⁶

Churches were started almost as soon as a community had a double-digit population. Early churches included: Salem Baptist (1826- 1 mile southeast of present day "New" Salem Baptist); Six Mile Baptist (1825); and, Little Blue Church (1847, also known as Lobb, and Shaker Rag).⁷ As these congregations grew and more settlers arrived, others followed. Lee's Summit, Woods Chapel, and Blue Springs churches were all outgrowths of Little Blue Church.⁸ Mormons following prophet Joseph Smith also crossed the Little Blue

River to settle in Independence in the early 1830's.⁹

Pioneer graveyards and family burial grounds dot the landscape as well. One of the earliest, Lobb Cemetery, was named after Aquilla Lobb, one of the founding members of the Little Blue church.¹⁰ A neighbor's child who died in an



Blue Mills Milling Company PHL4011

accident was the first burial. Blue Springs Cemetery was started in 1845 (also with the burial of an infant), and a Revolutionary War veteran was buried there in 1848.¹¹ Sibley Cemetery has a number of graves that date to the cholera epidemic of 1835.¹² And, the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society has identified a number of smaller

plots of land, often an acre or less, that were once private family burial grounds. Therein lie the pioneers of Jackson County whose life stories are still being uncovered by genealogists and local historians.

Grist mills along the Little Blue River were another important endeavor. Blue Mill was built at what is now the north end of Lentz Road (1837). Benjamin Majors' Mill (1825) was built where Spring Branch Road crosses the Little Blue River. And, James Savage's Mill was built where R.D. Mize Road crosses the Little Blue River.¹³ Though there were a number of small mills, the Blue Mill Milling Company was the largest and most extensive operation in the area. Fifteen to 20 men worked year round at the mill for twelve cents an hour. The mill sold three grades of flour, cornmeal, and oats, and also sold barrels, board lumber, furniture, canoes and carded wool.¹⁴

More communities developed as trade along the Santa Fe Trail increased. The first 160 miles of the Santa Fe Trail were surveyed by Fort Osage's factor, George Sibley.¹⁵ At that time, the Santa Fe Trail ran between Blue Mill at the mouth of the Little Blue River just south of the Fort along the Indian trace that marked the border of Osage lands. Blue Mill, like Fort Osage, are on the Santa Fe Trail and have been arduously researched for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Westward expansion and steady settlement continued into the 1840s and 1850s. Large fortunes amassed as large farms, or plantations, were established along the Little Blue River. A significant percentage of Jackson County settlers owned and used African-American slave labor. Jabez Smith had a plantation where he literally "raised" slaves just west of the

Little Blue River on the Old Atherton Road (old Blue Mills Road passed right through the plantation where slaves lived in cabins bordering the Road).¹⁶ This plantation is purported to have been the largest slave settlement in the state of Missouri. More than 200 slaves died there in the 1850s as a result of a cholera epidemic.¹⁷

Roderick D. Mize (father of Judge R.D. Mize) owned a ferryboat in 1850 called the Little Blue and ran a store near Blue Mills¹⁸. William B. Howard owned a large farm near Lee's Summit and was instrumental in getting the railroad to come through there. Smallwood Noland moved to the area from Kentucky, with a number of slaves, settling land South and West of Raytown road¹⁹. Colonel Henry Washington Younger owned a plantation of several thousand acres including land near Lee's Summit and the Little Blue River.²⁰ William Moore, a revolutionary war veteran, was one of the first settlers along the Little Blue River²¹. The log cabin he and his son built in 1828 is still standing along Ess Road and he is buried in a plot behind the Walnut Hill Mansion at 14909 Little Blue road (built by K.C. lumberman Hans Dierks, and later a retreat of James Pendergast)²². A number of these early pioneer's names have become place-names that are familiar to Independence, Blue Springs and Lee's Summit residents.

LITTLE BLUE'S UNCIVIL BATTLES

Volumes have been written about the battles and hardships faced by those living in and around the Little Blue River Valley during the years leading up to, during, and even after the Civil War. "Border warfare" characterized guerilla-raiding parties and skirmishes during the pre-war years were supplanted by battles and worse atrocities during the war, finally followed by years of shaky peace, bitterness, rivalry, and violence.

Families along the Little Blue faced raiding parties from Kansas, who liberated more than slaves. They stole livestock, silverware, and anything else not nailed down. And, the torch often finished what was left. During the Civil War, looting and attacks only worsened, often with official sanction, or at least complacency. Harry S Truman nicknamed his mother "old rebel" for her attitude about "Yankees," an attitude developed when Jim Lane and a band of Kansas Red Legs took over her father's farm and forced her to cook for them while they burned the family barn, and stole and slaughtered their livestock.²³ Experiences such as these fueled the animosity and swelled the rebel ranks. (An Uncle of Truman's road with William Clarke Quantrill.)

Kansas "red legs" killed the Lee that Lee's Summit was named.²⁴ Cole Younger's father was also murdered by the guerillas from Kansas.²⁵ Younger was a wealthy farmer who owned a great deal of land in Jackson County (including the land that became Jackson County's Poor Farm . . . the site of today's Truman Medical Center—Lakewood).²⁶ After his father's murder, Cole Younger sought revenge and joined Quantrill, too. In retaliation for this, Younger's mother

was forced by Kansas red legs to torch the family home in the dead of winter. Younger's cousin, Armenia Gilvey, was imprisoned and died in the collapse of the Kansas City prison where she and several rebel female relatives were being held.

This event is what triggered Quantrill to burn the town of Lawrence, Kansas. Armenia and two other young girls were buried at Little Blue in the Davis Cemetery (commonly called the Smith Cemetery).²⁷ Both the Davis and Smith families owned land in the vicinity, hence the confusion in naming convention. The location of this cemetery is in present-day Raytown, Missouri. The exact position in the parcel has not been pinpointed, but official records document it well enough to support an archaeological investigation. The owner of this tract might allow for this due diligence before further development of the tract ensues.

Quantrill's raid on Lawrence and the Union's response through the infamous "Order No. 11" both had their roots in this bitter partisan warfare.

Several battles and skirmishes took place along the Little Blue throughout the Civil War years from Blue Mills to the north down to White Oak Creek at the southern end of the valley.²⁸ One skirmish that took place was the Battle on Grinter's Farm. Little information about this has yet been uncovered.²⁹ P. N. Grinter owned the land just north of the then Jackson County Poor Farm (at the northwest corner of present-day Lee's Summit Road and Little Blue Road; just north of Truman Medical Center), and troops marched and fought on his land as the battle raged through the Valley. Remnants of a Civil War-era stone bridge are rumored to be near this intersection. An archaeological investigation is in order to identify this and other significant remnants of Jackson County's 175-year heritage as it pertains to this area.

Many who had been at the Battle of Lone Jack were from the area. Colonel Upton Hays had been in the area recruiting for the Confederacy, and after Lone Jack, added volunteers from Raytown, Missouri, Brooking Township, and various farms along the Little Blue River Valley.³⁰

In the fall of 1864, while the War seemed to be grinding down in the east,

former Missouri governor and confederate General Sterling Price began what would be the longest foray into enemy country of the entire war. Price's Raid was a desperate attempt to split off Missouri from Union control. Failing short of taking St. Louis or Jefferson City, Missouri, Price still managed to recruit many Missourians to his cause and won a number of skirmishes and battles as he marched across the state re-setting his sights for Kansas City, Missouri . . . and perhaps Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Union forces were hastily brought together to try and slow the advance of Price's thousands. Civilians were in a panic. Guerrilla's like Quantrill and Bloody Bill Anderson had joined forces with Price,³¹ some Kansas volunteer forces refused to go into Missouri. A force of 2,000 under Major General Blunt tried and failed to stop Price at Lexington,

Missouri. On October 20, Blunt made camp on the Little Blue River. He was ordered back to Independence, Missouri, leaving Colonel Thomas Moonlight in charge of a smaller force there. When he returned on October 21, Moonlight had engaged Price's forces, retreated, and burned the bridge across the Little Blue River. Blunt sent in his forces and in a battle that lasted five hours involving thousands of men,



Large monument in Woodlawn Cemetery commemorating those who died at the Battle on Grinter's Farm at the northwest corner of present-day Lee's Summit Road and Gregory/Woods Chapel Road (north of Truman Medical Center-Lakewood). PHS3188



Ess Road Log Cabin of William Moore, one of Jackson County's Revolutionary War patriots. PHS5894

Union troops were forced to retreat west to Independence.³² The battle continued the next day through the heart of Independence, down south to Byram's Ford and ultimately to Westport.³³

The Battle of the Little Blue was really the beginning of the end for Price's army in Missouri. "That was," as Tim Cox, President of the Civil War Round Table of Western Missouri said, "the last tactical maneuver by the Confederacy to gain control of Missouri and portions of the Trans Mississippi Territory." General Rosecrans's strategy slowed Price's progress. It was hoped that Major General Pleasanton's cavalry division could catch up and engage, and preparations at Byram's Ford could be instituted in order to trap Price.³⁴ (The plan failed to some degree, because Shelby's cavalry flanked and forced Blunt's Union troops to retreat to Westport, and Marmaduke held Pleasanton just west of Independence, allowing partial escape.)

The Battle of the Little Blue as part of Price's raid, involved thousands from Missouri and Kansas, and yet the number of casualties wasn't even calculated for the annals of history. There was no time to count, or even to find the fallen. Fallen soldiers, weapons, gear, and perhaps plunder from Price's wagons may yet lie where they fell along the entire Valley.

This area of the Little Blue River Valley remains untouched, undeveloped, and should be preserved in a large part for historic significance, not to mention its extreme, pristine splendor. As Vicki Nave, a member of the Independence Heritage Commission that promotes and educates people on the historical heritage of Independence, said, "Once it's gone, it's gone, you can't bring it back. It's hard to point to a piece of asphalt and say, 'This is where 20,000 men tried to kill each other.'"³⁵

RURAL JACKSON COUNTY NATIONALLY ACCLAIMED

After the Civil War the floodgates to westward expansion opened, as the steady flow of immigrants along the many trails through this area became a torrent. A multitude of farms established and thrived on the fertile grasslands of the Little Blue Valley.

The railroad brought a means to connect east and west, and with it, communities like Blue Springs, Lee's Summit, and Buckner, Missouri, all thrived. The increasing presence of railroads, banks, and other business ventures signified rapid growth.

Independence, Missouri, established itself in the 1820s as an outfitting Missouri River town. Kansas City was destined to become a major center of commerce and industry after the

construction of the Hannibal Bridge over the Missouri River. The older communities along the Little Blue River, however, developed at a somewhat slower pace.

Vast dairy and livestock farms developed there to feed

growing communities that would begin to slowly shift from away from their agrarian roots to become more industrial or commercial in nature. W.B. Frey's Lakeside Farm Dairy (surrounding the town of Little Blue, Missouri) was the world's biggest Hereford farm. The Milton Thompson farm near Lee's Summit, Missouri, consisted of 7,600 acres. Cedar Croft Jersey Farm, Longview Four Gates, Barr Farm, Hook Dairy, and many others lifted the area to world-renowned status in the first part of the 20th Century.³⁶ Stephenson's Apple orchards still produce today!

In 1914, lumber baron Robert A. Long completed construction of what quickly became known as, "The World's Most

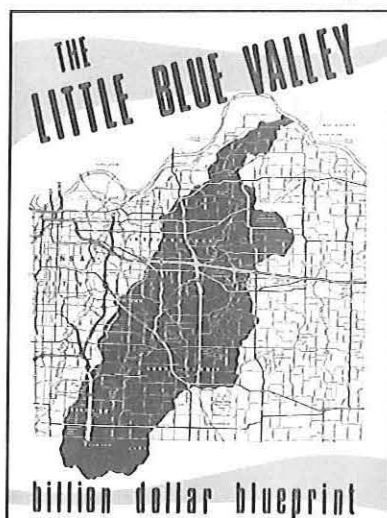
Beautiful Farm" (also the most modern, or "up-to-date"). Longview Farm, today incorporated into Lee's Summit, Missouri, had its own telephone system, water system, and power plant.³⁷

In 1920, Unity Farm (which has grown into the present-day incorporated municipality Unity Village, Missouri) started operations as a "country club" on less than 60 acres.³⁸ Steadily, the operations of the faith-based community, Unity School of Christianity, expanded to include vast apple and peach orchards, farm and dairy operations. The accidental discovery of 15 gas and oil wells led to the construction of the farm's own refinery and storage tanks to provide for residents' needs.³⁹ Today, Unity Village protects more than 1,000 acres of rural landscape. In addition to serving as the world headquarters of the Unity movement and as a spiritual retreat, the majority of acreage is a reserve for nature and wildlife. A drive along Colbern Road between Missouri 350 and Douglas Road today still evokes for motorists a glimpse of Jackson County's scenic rural beauty. It is hoped that views from Lee's Summit Road and Noland Road may be preserved

in a similar fashion as the Little Blue Valley is developed.

In 1926, Elmer Adams Dairy Farm of purebred Holstein's near Blue Springs, Missouri, produced 1,000 quarts of milk a day.⁴⁰

Jersey cows on W. L. Yost's Cedar Croft Farm (8 miles south of Independence along the west side of present-day Lee's Summit Road at Little Blue Road) produced 150 gallons of milk per day. Yost's home fell into disrepair and the property became greatly overgrown since farming operations ceased more than 60 years ago. Today the beautiful home is being restored, but the surrounding property is in jeopardy of



Henry Washington Younger, father of Coleman "Cole" Younger, who was murdered by Kansas "redlegs." PHS3043

being compromised by unchecked development.

Many other Blue River Valley farms raised prize winning beef cattle, chickens, eggs, honey, etc.⁴¹ These farms built upon the natural beauty of the "blue country," developing power, food, prizewinning livestock, and manicured scenic landscapes for visitors and community members to benefit.

If future generations are to have any notion of the "empire" that was Jackson County's livestock and agribusiness through the Great Depression, the last remaining vestiges of the virtually undisturbed scenic landscape is what must be preserved today by the people who live on or own land in the Little Blue Valley.

PLANNING . . . WITH RESULTS

The booms and busts of the 20th Century have left the Little Blue Valley with a mixed legacy. Under a 1926 planning commission of the Jackson County Court (Jackson County Legislature's predecessor), headed by Presiding Judge Harry S Truman, large tracts of pristine Jackson County land was set aside for future parklands. The commission's report titled, *Results of County Planning*, is a work-of-art compiling useful information, and showcasing Jackson County scenery as it was in the late 1920s through the stunning photography of Dick Millard Sr.⁴² *Results of County Planning* served as a snapshot of Jackson County's endeavors at that time, and what community development planners envisioned for the future use of the public's natural resources. Many farms, scenic roads, and important historic sites throughout Jackson County were highlighted in *Results of County Planning*, produced by the planning commission under Truman.⁴³ One result of *Results of County Planning*, was what became the Little Blue Trace Park. Other developments that had their genesis in *Results of County Planning* were Longview Lake, Lake Jacomo (an acronym for "Jackson County Missouri"), and Blue Springs Lake. It could be said that the historic sites of Fort Osage and Missouri Town 1855 were also an outgrowth of the *Results of County Planning* spirit. These cultural and recreational resources have evolved as city, county, state and federal governments committed time and financial resources to the planning and development of the parks and lakes along the Little Blue River Valley.

Perhaps the views from *Results of County Planning* may

still be preserved?

In 1973, a *Little Blue Valley Billion Dollar Blueprint* was prepared and presented as a further commitment of the County to the ideas of development and preservation in the Valley.⁴⁴ As Bishop Russell W. Pearson, chairman of the Little Blue Valley Coordinating Committee, relayed in a cover

letter, "The practical application of 'Ekistics' challenges us in meeting the needs of present and future residents in the Little Blue Valley."⁴⁵

PRESERVATION OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Even though Jackson County has made great strides in historic preservation, many cultural, archaeological, and aesthetic resources are in jeopardy of being lost, having been overlooked or neglected.

Did you know the Battle of Westport fought in Jackson County, Missouri, is recognized as the "Gettysburg of the West" because of the ferocity of the conflict that took place right here on our turf? The first day of that three-day clash took place

along the Little Blue River--the Battle of the Little Blue--described above. You'd never know it today, even though two historical markers identify the site at the river crossing. With the Civil War, Quantrill, Order No. 11, and Jesse James and his fellow outlaws being such "hot topics" even today, what potential for a tourist destination . . . to preserve the battlefield of the "Gettysburg of the West!"

If you drive along Blue Mills Road north of 24 Highway and look south you will see a breathtaking view of an untouched valley. That expanse of wooded hillsides and

tranquil valley was the exact site of intense bloodshed in the 1860s. Little has YET been done to preserve or interpret the site as a cultural or historical resource. In fact, the Little Blue Battlefield is listed by The Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation as one of "Missouri Preservations Top Ten Most Endangered Properties."⁴⁶ Today, the battle site along the Little Blue River is endangered by residential,

commercial and highway development. The extension of the Little Blue Parkway north of 24 Highway, and the encroachment of housing developments all have the potential of overrunning this cultural "goldmine" before it has had a chance to shine.



Lakeside Dairy, owned by W. B. Frey around 1929, comprised of 700 acres surrounding the town of Little Blue. It was touted as one of the picturesque dairy industries of Jackson County when published in the book, *Jackson County: Its Opportunities and Resources*.



Cedar Croft, the 640 acre farm of Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Yost, was the showplace of one of the world's best known Hereford breeds. As pictured in *Opportunities and Resources*.



The community or hamlet of Little Blue along Noland Road at Little Blue Road, as pictured in *Results of County Planning*. Dick Millard, Sr., Photographic Collection, Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives. PHX9394

The mill that Blue Mills Road is named for are no more (though some remnants remain), and no effort has been made to preserve, excavate or mark this site, even though Union soldiers were buried at the base of the building there.⁴⁷

Fortunately, Jackson County government has preserved and is expanding Jackson County's earliest historic artifact, Fort Osage.

One cannot discount when tallying the resources of the Little Blue Valley the number of historic homes, farms, businesses, cemeteries, churches, and battlegrounds. Those, coupled with stunning beautiful vistas afforded on drives through the area, make this a gem that just needs polishing.

Opportunities to attract tourist dollars to the area abound should we manage to protect the Little Blue Valley from unchecked urban development. The preservation of local, cultural history and the maintenance of aesthetic beauty for its own sake are paramount when planning for future development in the Little Blue Valley.

I challenge preservationists, community development leaders, contractors, and developers to be creative, and have the mindfulness and foresight championed by Harry S. Truman when he launched *Results of County Planning* 75 years ago.

STICKING TO A MASTER PLAN

Another segment of the Little Blue Valley that remains virtually untouched and may, if mindful steps are taken today,

become a nationally recognized rural natural landscape, is the area of the Valley generally bounded by 40 Highway and Independence city limits on the north, Lee's Summit Road on the east, 350 Highway and Unity Village city limits on the south, and Raytown city limits on the west.

Much of this area is virtually undisturbed and still very much has the potential to maintain its rural feel and scenic vistas if proper steps are taken to maintain the integrity of one



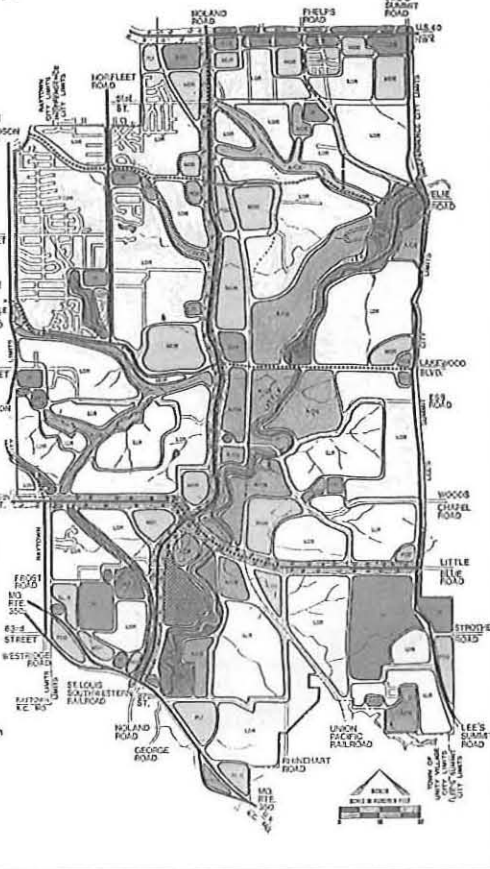
Portions of Lee's Summit, Little Blue and Noland Roads in the area under study were once part of the Jefferson Highway, the "Palm to Pine Vacation Route of America." Dick Millard, Sr., Photographic Collection, Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives. PHX9419

PROPOSED LAND USE**FIGURE 17****Land Use Categories
and General Conditions****PROPOSED
LAND USE**

- Large Lot Residential
(1 Unit/2 Acres or more)
- Low Density Residential
(2 to 8 Units/Acre)
- Moderate Density Residential
(9 to 15 Units/Acre)
- Planned Office District
- Neighborhood Commercial Services
- Community Commercial Services
- Planned Light Industrial
- Public Institutional
- Public Parklands
- Agricultural/Open Space
- Special Development Analysis Area

BASE MAP LEGEND

- Proposed Major Street
(On Existing ROW)
- Proposed Major Street
(On Proposed ROW)
- Proposed Boulevard and Parkway
- Proposed Collector Street
- Proposed Bicycle/Pedestrian Path
- Existing Railroad
- River
- Tributary Streams
- Lakes and Ponds



of Jackson County's last remaining scenic vistas.

A drive down Noland Road south of 40 Highway presents a winding road through wooded hillsides. This road was the old Harrisonville Road that was also called the Blue Tank Road, after the blue water tank on the rail line going through the hamlet of Little Blue, Missouri.⁴⁸ Noland Road connects with another scenic and historic wagon path, Little Blue Road. To the west, Little Blue Road winds through a natural setting into Raytown and connects to Woodson Road. To the east, Little Blue Road progresses through the little pioneer town of Little Blue, Missouri, and past current-day Truman Medical Center (formerly Jackson County's Poor Farm, see the Spring 2004 *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL*) and into Lakewood in Lee's Summit, Missouri. These scenic and historic roadways were once part of the celebrated Jefferson Highway, the turn of the Century "Palm to Pine Vacation Route of America." (See the Spring 2003 *JOURNAL*.)

Much of this rural area may yet be preserved for future generations to enjoy if actions are taken today to protect property from unchecked development. Allowing for significant large lot development and zoning portions of this area for agriculture or open space would be a good step in that direction.

The Little Blue Valley: Area Plan 13, produced by the City Planning and Development Department, Planning and Urban

Design Division of the City of Kansas City, was adopted by the City in August 1991. This plan divides the area described above for development with proposed land use maps, road building plans, etc.⁴⁹

Among sites listed by the Landmarks Commission staff as "potentially significant" in this area: Knob Town, Town of Little Blue, Cedar Croft, The School House at U.S. Highway 40, Truman Medical Center-Lakewood, Four Gates Farm (which is a 40-acre estate designed by Mary Rockwell Hook, one of Kansas City's foremost early female architects), and various roads, trails, and farmsteads throughout the area.

Identifying which "roads, trails, and farmsteads" are significant is a process that members of local organizations dedicated to historic preservation should assist with; to date, this has not yet been initiated.

Additional research and collaboration will definitely uncover more "potentially significant" elements. One such resource is the aforementioned stately home overlooking the hamlet of Little Blue that was once the country home to Jackson County's famed Pendergast family. It was originally constructed for lumber baron Hans Dierks of the Dierks Lumber Company. Wouldn't it be a shame if the area this home overlooks were subdivided with unimaginative, modern "garage homes?"

The pressure is on. Private development interests have already led to the Little Blue Valley Area Master Plan being amended five times between 1994 and 2002. "Due to certain changes," areas that were once designated as "moderate density residential uses," have been changed to "community commercial services areas." Areas that initially were reserved for "planned office district" have become "neighborhood commercial services." "Low-density residential and large-lot residential" have given way to "low-density residential." And, "low-density residential and agricultural/open space" has been degraded to "planned light industrial."⁵⁰

This seeming trend favors smaller, closely built dwellings that are compact rather than maintaining open space or larger lot development that has less impact on the land—a vision set forth in the original Master Plan. Those desiring to preserve the character, history, and scenic beauty of the rural area in question must communicate their desires to appropriate officials so that the plan may serve to protect this cultural landscape.

Community awareness and involvement at the grassroots level—especially from those who desire to preserve the valley as an historic cultural landscape—is essential, and their input in the future amendments to this "master plan" should be sought . . . and strongly considered. It is not the sole responsibility of developers to decide appropriate land use. However, if theirs are the only voices heard by planning commissions, what result should you expect?

Early detection and diligent attention to threatened areas is essential for community involvement to be meaningful, as planning may be well along before the general public becomes aware of planned changes.

A drive through the area slated for development along with a copy of this article can give one a better idea of what is being considered and proffered here. I hope you may gain a real sense of what is at stake and take this opportunity to do something to protect this important Jackson County resource.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO COMPLEMENT THIS ARTICLE MAY BE FOUND ONLINE AT JCHS.ORG.

Paul Kirkman is a recent graduate of Columbia College (which has a satellite campus in Independence). He lives in Independence with his wife, Shawn, and daughter Shannon. Kirkman has a B.A. in History and has just completed an archival internship for the Jackson County Historical Society. Paul has achieved success as a professional entertainer over the past 25 years, but is now seeking new opportunities to employ his education, life-long interest in history, as well as his unique work experience.

- ¹ Copps, David H. *Views from the Road: A Community Guide for Assessing Rural Historic Landscapes: A Project of the Trust for Public Land and the National Trust for Historic Preservation*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995), 3.
- ² Pearson, Bishop Russell W., chair. *The Little Blue Valley Billion Dollar Blueprint*. (Little Blue Valley Coordinating Committee, 1973), as found in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives. Little Blue Trace is a Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department park that runs the length of the Little Blue River. Though it only encompasses land immediately along the Little Blue River, the park consists of 1,856 acres. As the Metro Green project gains momentum in Jackson County, the viability of the Little Blue River Valley as a natural resource will become more evident.
- ³ Wilcox, Pearl. *Jackson County Pioneers*. (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, 1991), 21.
- ⁴ Wilcox, 23.
- ⁵ Wilcox, 23.
- ⁶ Wilcox, 37.
- ⁷ Tyler, Dalton L. *The Little Blue Church*, 1928, as found in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.
- ⁸ Tyler, *History of Lobb Cumberland Church*, 1928, as found in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives, Box 109.01F4, 4.
- ⁹ Phillips, Charles. *Missouri: Mother of the American West*. (Northridge, Ca.: Windsor Publications, 1988), 38.
- ¹⁰ Wilcox, 68.
- ¹¹ Wilcox, 71.
- ¹² Eakin, Joanne Chiles. *Pioneering in Jackson County Before the Civil War Years*. (Independence, Mo.: Two Trails Publishing, 2004), 5.
- ¹³ Wilcox, 155.
- ¹⁴ Eakin, 26-27.
- ¹⁵ Santa Fe Trail research site; <http://www.St.Johnks.net/santafetrail/maps/sft.missouri.html> (viewed November 4, 2005).
- ¹⁶ Eakin, 29-30.
- ¹⁷ Judge Henry A. Bundschu later owned a portion of this land once comprising Smith's plantation. For such a significant element to African-American history, this area should be protected for future study, preservation and interpretation. Future visitors desiring to learn about Jackson County's role in slavery would be little served if Jabez Smith's plantation were one day the middle of a highway, parking lot or shopping center.
- ¹⁸ Wilcox, 324.
- ¹⁹ Wilcox, 282.
- ²⁰ Jackson, David W. "Jackson County's Poor Farm Transformed Into a Rich Healthcare Center." *Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL*, 45:1 (Spring 2004), 8.
- ²¹ Wilcox 63-64.
- ²² Wilcox, 64.
- ²³ Wilcox, 311-313.
- ²⁴ Bartels, Carolyn. *Civil War Stories of Missouri*. (Independence, Mo.: Two Trails Publishing, 1993), 131-132.
- ²⁵ Wilcox, 347.
- ²⁶ Jackson, 8.
- ²⁷ Bartels, 133.
- ²⁸ Wilson, D. Ray. *Missouri Historical Tour Guide*. Third Edition. (Carpentersville, Il.: Crossroads Communications, 1995), 25-28.
- ²⁹ If you can help the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society better document this event, please contact their archives facility.
- ³⁰ Bonnewitz, Roberta L. *Raytown Remembers*. (Clinton, Mo.: The Printery, 1976), 40.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Civil War Battles by campaign. <http://www.Cr.hps.serv/hps/abpp/battles/bycampgn.htm> (Viewed December 18, 2005).
- ³³ Bonnewitz, 40.
- ³⁴ Civil War Battles and Campaigns. <http://www.Civilwar.bluegrass.net/battles-campaigns/1864/640828-1202.html> (Viewed December 18, 2005).
- ³⁵ <http://www.civilwarnews.com/news.cfm> (Viewed on December 18, 2005).
- ³⁶ Ballou, M. C. *Jackson County Missouri: It's Opportunities and Resources*. (Rural Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, 1926).
- ³⁷ Jones, Linda Newcom. *The Longview We Remember*. (Storm Ridge Press, 1990).
- ³⁸ Ballou, 115.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 37. Also, see the Summer 1994 issue of the *Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society JOURNAL*.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 37, 47.
- ⁴² Many of Dick Millard's views of Jackson County as presented in *Results of County Planning* are preserved in the photographic collections of the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society. Because some of the scenes have minimal description, the Historical Society's archives continues to study this stunning report and add more complete identification and background information for each of the images compiled in *Results of County Planning*.
- ⁴³ Truman, Harry S., and the Jackson County Court. *Results of County Planning*. (Kansas City, Mo.: Holland Engraving Co., 1932).
- ⁴⁴ Pearson, June 25, 1973.
- ⁴⁵ "Ekistics," as described by Pearson, was "a new field in community studies [that] combines various disciplines such as: community planning, health services, economics, sociology, and engineering."
- ⁴⁶ <http://www.civilwarnews.com/news.cfm> (Viewed on December 18, 2005).
- ⁴⁷ Eakin, 27.
- ⁴⁸ Berkemeier, George C. *Noland Road That Was* (Independence, Mo., 1995), 102.
- ⁴⁹ City Planning and Development Department, Planning and Urban Design Division. *Little Blue Valley Area Plan 13*. (Kansas City, Mo.: City of Kansas City, 1 August 1991), available at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.
- ⁵⁰ *Little Blue Valley Area Plan 13*, resolutions amending the original Little Blue Valley Area Plan signed by Kansas City Mayor Emmanuel Cleaver II on 1 August 1991: 941671 signed 29 December 1994; 001540 signed 18 January 2001; 011491 dated 15 November 2001; 020313 dated 19 July 2002; and, 020919 dated 22 August 2002.

TWO RECENT FINDS SURFACE ABOUT JACKSON COUNTY'S 1859 JAIL

The Jackson County Historical Society recently acquired two items that add to the growing documentation of Jackson County's earliest surviving jail facility known today as the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum, acquired and restored by the Society in 1959.

JAIL STONEMASON IDENTIFIED

We'd like to thank long-time Society member (and current Historical Society Board of Director) Bill Bundschu, who, in the course of conducting research on his new book about the Bundschu family store on the Courthouse Square, located the following article about the construction of the limestone cell blocks of the 1859 Jail.

In a July 20, 1906, *Jackson Examiner* newspaper article, we find that John Cassell, a stonemason who came to Jackson County in 1858, helped construct the Jackson County Jail the following year:

"The man who laid the stone walls for the Independence jail in 1859 was sitting with Jailer Martin and Marshal Hulse in front of the jail Monday morning. He is a small man with a black beard and black hair and very stooped shoulders. His name is John Cassell and he lives in Kansas City and is still working at his trade, stone mason.

"Mr. Cassell said he remembered well all about the jail. It was considered a strong and modern jail at the time. There were six stone cells on the first floor and six on the second floor, 12 in all. Each cell was closed with an iron door and the locks on each door were about eight inches square and over an inch thick. The keys were big brass arrangements and the 12 keys made a heavy package.

"The floor of the cells was stone slabs and the ceiling of the same material. The walls are of solid, cut stone two feet thick. Then, the steel cell was not dreamed of. The old jail was simply a rectangular pile of heavy stone with narrow, barred windows and divided into cells, built to keep prisoners inside.

"There was no effort at sanitation in ventilation or drainage and no closets of any kind, and these specifications describe the jail at present. [The jail would be used for nearly 30 more years before being "decommissioned."]

"The stone was quarried on the Noland farm on Rock Creek and hauled to the jail in wagons. [Tradition has it that African-American slave labor was used in the construction of the jail, although this article does not confirm the story.] A teamster would bring in two loads a day from the quarries over the old Westport Road along where the electric line

now runs. [The exact location of the quarry has not been identified, but you can still see and drive along sections of the old Westport Road from Rock Creek towards Independence Square. The electric line was likely along what became known as Winner Road, connecting to Lexington Avenue (which at one time, there was a stretch called Electric Avenue).]

"Platt and Moore of Kansas City were the contractors.

"When completed the jail was considered a fine one. It

was the only one in the county as Kansas City did not amount to much in those days.

"The brick house in front of the jail was built at the same time and was the residence of the sheriff and jailer.

"Mr. Cassell came to Jackson County in 1858 and except for eight years spent in the West, has lived in the County ever since. He is still quite active, hardly shows a gray hair, and is able to do a day's work at his trade."



JAIL KEY ACQUIRED FROM AUCTION

We'd also like to thank Jackson County Historical Society member, Paul Saeli, for alerting our administration this summer of an item being auctioned on the Internet at <http://www.ebay.com>, purportedly used at the Jackson County Jail in Independence.

It is regretful that the seller did not contact the Historical Society prior to listing it to discuss a possible donation. Their knowledge of the Society's connection was apparent, as they had usurped without permission a photo from the Society's website (<http://www.jchs.org>) to advertise historical factoids.

Still, the Society was able to successfully bid and acquire the item for a reasonable price so that it could be "returned home" and used in interpretive displays at the site into the future.

According to the seller, the iron key was used by a jailor in the late 1800s at the Jackson County Jail in Independence, Missouri (today the 1859 Jail, Marshal's Home and Museum). The seller had acquired the key at an estate sale of a granddaughter of this unnamed lawman.

If you ever come across a document, photograph or artifact that you believe may have connections to Jackson County's heritage, won't you contact us and consider donating it to the Society's collections for the public good?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO
COMPLEMENT THIS ARTICLE MAY BE FOUND
ONLINE AT JCHS.ORG.

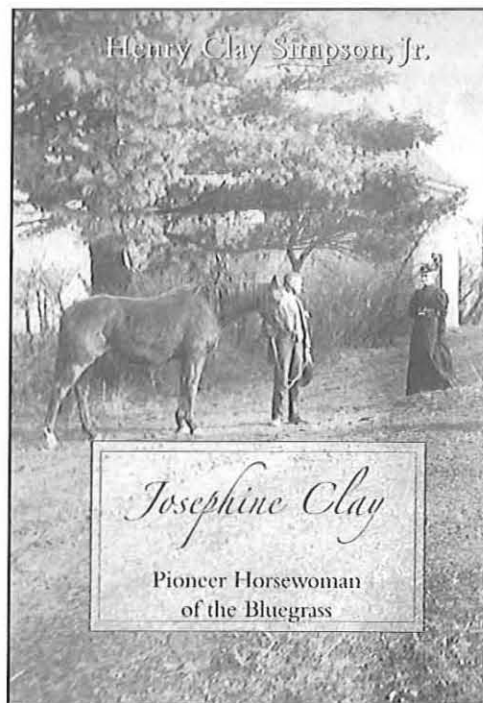


BOOK NOTES

Josephine Clay: Pioneer Horsewoman of the Bluegrass by Henry Clay Simpson, Jr. (Louisville, Ky.: Harmony House Publishers, 2005) is a biography documenting the story of Josephine (Russell) Erwin-Clay's life. But who was she, and why is her story important to Jackson County?

This book details family connections of early Jackson County pioneers . . . specifically the Clay, Russell, and Erwin families. Josephine's father was Colonel William H. Russell, who, in May 1846 equipped himself with a wagon and several oxen and joined a large party of emigrant in Independence. At that time it was the largest wagon train to travel to California territory—63 wagons, 119 men, 59 women, 110 children, over 700 cattle, and 150 horses.

Josephine's struggles through the Civil War and her two marriages, first to Col. Eugene Erwin, and after his untimely death, to John Morrison Clay (the youngest son and grandson of Henry Clay [you must read the



book to figure this one out.)), only set the stage for what would become her foothold in the thoroughbred industry, where she would become owner, manager and writer!

It's fitting that a woman who lived an *independent* life beyond the constraints of the Victorian era would have strong ties to *Independence*, Missouri. But we don't want to spoil the fun you will have reading this book.

Well-researched and illustrated with artifacts and original documents pertinent to this remarkable woman's life, this book is sure to capture the imagination of any reader.

Consider buying this book! Or, view a non-circulating copy of the first and expanded second editions that have graciously been donated by the author to the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Research Library.

The author has also agreed to visit our area from afar and make a presentation on Josephine Clay for our Roger "T." Sermon, Jr. History Series on Wednesday, April 12, 2006.



THE JACKSON COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bank of America Bldg., Mezzanine Level
129 West Lexington
Independence, MO 64050

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Independence, MO
Permit No. 212