

The Clay County MOsaic

“Fitting the Pieces Together”

P R E S I D E N T ’ S M E S S A G E

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We would love to hear from you!

Is there a Clay County topic you've always wondered about?

Send us a question and we'll try to provide you an answer!

There will soon be another library in Clay County. The Mid-Continent Public Library opened a branch at the historic Woodneath farm (just West of Liberty on Flintlock Road) on Saturday, June 22nd. The original house still stands and they plan to restore it in the next few years as a story center. Looking further out, they hope to put walking and biking trails throughout the 30-odd acres surrounding the house and maybe even an amphitheatre. We look forward to seeing the new facility and the dozens of photographs that they will display (which came from the Archives) to give it historical perspective.

Ann Henning recently interviewed Mrs. Mirowsky, a nonagenarian who has quite a long history in Liberty. Originally from Chillicothe, she traveled to California to marry her sweetheart who was on leave during WWII. They eventually settled in Liberty and then bought Whiteside Jewelers on the North side

of the Square. We were pleasantly surprised to learn Ann had a co-interviewer, one Kevin Fisher, a former president of the Archives. Good to see you again, Kevin.



Speaking of long lost volunteers, we are happy to report that Shirley Fansher is back after a prolonged absence due to health problems. Welcome back, Shirley, we've missed you.

The Criminal Records project is still progressing. As you remember, we have partnered with the Circuit Clerk to have them scanned and abstracted. Once this process is complete, the original records will be a permanent part of our collection. We have abstracted the cases up to the 1860's and the Circuit Clerk is scanning them as fast as

we can prepare them. We have now started data entry into our indexing system and we have remote access from the Circuit Clerk to view the scanned images. Nice.

We are contemplating a new book based on the Criminal Records and coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. During the abstracting process of these records, we have realized that there are many interesting cases during this period involving well known (and some not so well known) Clay County citizens. We think this will reveal much about a part of life at that time that is little understood. Hopefully, you can look for it next year.

The “Divided Loyalties” book is now in its second printing. We've already sold all 100 of the original batch and more should have been delivered by the time you read this. Tony and Keith continue to give the book presentation to enthusiastic local groups. We would like to thank all

(Continued on page 3)

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General Information

Hours of Operation

Monday through Wednesday—9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 First Wednesday of Month—6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 Closed on National Holidays

Membership for Calendar Year

Individual & Family (one address) - \$15.00
 (Memberships paid after October 1 will apply to next calendar year.)

Benefits of Membership

Unlimited *On-Site* Research
 Subscription to *The Clay County MOsaic*, our quarterly newsletter

Research Policy & Fees

Non-members pay \$5.00 per day for on-site research.
 Member and non-member research requests by mail are accepted. Each request must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope and an initial research fee of \$10.00 per surname for one hour of research. Additional hours are \$10.00 per hour.

Copy Prices

Original records (such as probate material)	\$1/page
Other published material	15 cents per page
Microfilm printouts	25 cents per page
Computer print-outs	5 cents per page
Oversize copies	50 cents per page
Photographs	
Standard Quality	50 cents
Archival Quality -	\$5.00

Personal imaging will be charged at the above rates.

MOsaic by Internet

If you would like to receive your future newsletters via email, please forward your email address to: info@claycountyarchives.org

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E
(C O N T I N U E D)

(Continued from page 1)

of you who braved the snowstorm to attend the first book presentation in May. There were about 20 of you who enjoyed the information, the fellowship and the refreshments. We also would like to thank those who attended Mark Kelly's book signing of "Lost Voices on the Missouri" in April.

Some of the more obscure indexes that we have for sale are well out of print and all we have left are the original copies. With our new copier/printer/scanner, we're scanning these to the server and printing them on demand rather than copying them from paper each time we get a request. It saves a little wear and tear and puts the equipment to good use.

We've been a happy PayPal customer for some time and the "Donate" button on our website links to PayPal so patrons can donate (or even pay for services) from afar. But we really haven't been able to accept credit cards in the building. PayPal has a web-based service we could use but it costs \$30 per month. For the small volume of potential credit card transactions we would have, \$360 a year is steep. PayPal also has a free service that works on smartphones and iPads. We were hoping someone has a used iOS 5 WiFi iPad that they could donate for this purpose. Our patrons would appreciate it.

Among the accessions we've received recently is an open reel

audio tape but we have no equipment with which to play it. The tape label references Clay being a frontier county. If there is someone who has a reel-to-reel tape deck that we could borrow or have, it would also be appreciated.

We've had a few more volunteers join us in the last few months but it reminds us of how much more we could accomplish with some more hands. Please consider joining our merry band of historians uncovering mysteries of past lives.

~Stuart Elliott

C R A W L I N G T H R O U G H T H E C E M E T E R I E S
W I T H K E N

Our graveyard count remains at 347.

Another graveyard has been found to be under water at the Smithville Lake. That gives us four under water—Baldwin, Wright, Reed and Elliott (in Clinton County).

Other graveyards on Lake land are—Helton, Staff, Davenport, Aker, Wade-Bailey, Hamon, Duncan-Maubary, Indian (various grave sites combined and buried at Litton Center).

We are still trying to locate several burial sties of those connected to the Civil War. You might wonder why it's so hard to locate these graveyards? One source merely says between Liberty and Smithville. That's why!

~Ken Neth



CHARISMA UPDATE

CHARISMA met most recently at the Excelsior Springs Museum and the Ray County Museum. Our goal is to make people aware of the number of sites available, so if you've not been to both museums, they are well worth a visit!

Members of CHARISMA all enjoy meeting at different locations, touring the different sites, and seeing how other entities present their information and artifacts. As a result, we are each better able to tell others about the sites we have visited and encourage tourism.

Building partnerships is another benefit of CHARISMA. For the Atkins-Johnson Farm and Museum, partnerships formed within CHARISMA have been especially beneficial. Several sites have been willing to help a new site by sharing their expertise and artifacts. In

March the Jesse James Farm, Kearney Historic Museum, and Watkins Woolen Mill provided panelists to discuss the operation of gift shops as part of volunteer training. In April the Clay County Historical Society & Museum loaned artifacts for the opening exhibit. In June your own Clay County Archives & Historical Library sent Tony Meyers and Keith Nelson to the annual meeting to talk about the book, *Divided Loyalties*.

As CHARISMA continues to meet and share, partnerships will grow, and we all will benefit.

To be added to our email list for meeting information, please contact Carol Rudi (carudi@kc.rr.com) or Gerri Spencer (gerriantiques@aol.com).

ARCHIVES ON DISPLAY

The Clay County Archives has prepared a mobile display that shares the mission of the Archives through an assortment of pictures and documents from its files. The display was developed by the Archives under the direction of Donna Root. The display was set-up at various activities in the county over the last year.

We are pleased to announce that the display has a quasi-home at the Mid-Continent library branches for 2013 and we couldn't be more excited to share the information.

Stop in for a visit and support the local libraries.



2013 Travel Schedule

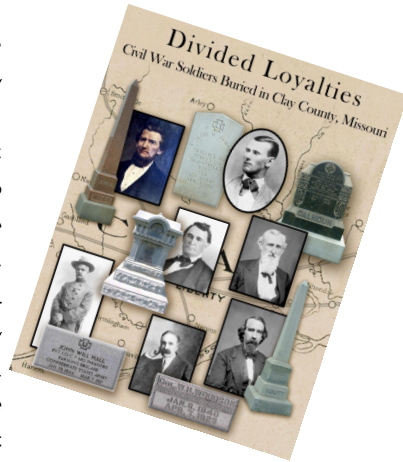
September: North Oak

October: Excelsior Springs

THE CIVIL WAR IN CLAY COUNTY BOOK NOW AVAILABLE!



It doesn't seem possible now that the temperatures are frequently toping 90 degrees, but just a few weeks ago snow was falling. The *Divided Loyalties* book release event, which was held at the Archives May 2, was well attended in spite of the snow that fell that evening. During the gathering, Tony Meyers and Keith Nelson presented an overview of the book. Project team members were on hand to sell and sign books. In recent weeks, the team has focused their efforts on marketing. Dana Nelson and Carol Olson designed a bookmark which is being used to promote the book. Copies were distributed to area shops and museums to share with their patrons. Presentations have been given to several civic groups in the Northland including the Sons of

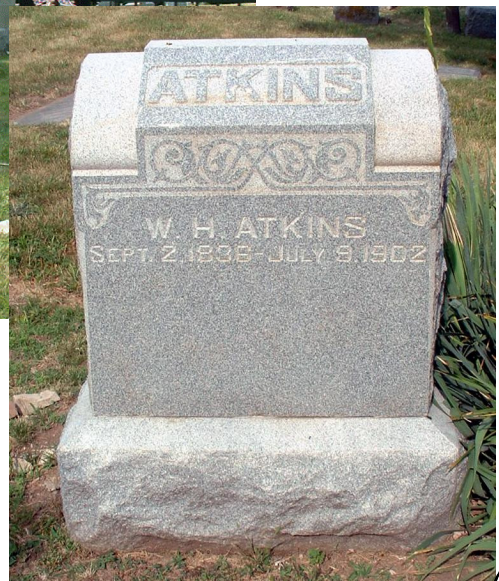


the American Revolution, the North Kansas City Kiwanis Club and the Gladstone Rotary Club. Keith and Tony were invited to present during the June 22 meeting of the Friends of the Atkins-Johnson Farm and Museum. During that discussion, special focus was given to William and Jacob Atkins (who grew up on the farm), as well as other Civil War veterans that are buried at the nearby Big Shoal Cemetery. Since its release, *Divided Loyalties* has been well received and sales have been brisk. The first printing (100 copies) sold out by mid-June. A second printing has now arrived so we have plenty of inventory on hand. *Divided Loyalties* is being sold for \$30 with all proceeds benefiting the Archives. More information can be found on the Archives' web site: <http://claycountyarchives.org/index.php/merchandise/266-divided-loyalties-civil-war-soldiers-buried-in-clay-county-missouri>

~ Tony Meyer



William Thompson





0 1928

MISSOURI STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

Do not see this space.
298549

1. PLACE OF DEATH
County *Clay* Registration District No. *207* File No.
Township _____ Primary Registration District No. *H-121* Registered No. *91*
City *Mo. Clay Mo* St. _____ Ward _____

2. FULL NAME *Jacob S. Atkins*
(a) Residential No. _____ St. _____ Ward _____
(Usual place of abode)
Length of residence in city or town where death occurred yrs. mos. ds. New born in U.S., if of foreign birth? yrs. mos. ds.

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

3. SEX *Male* 4. COLOR OR RACE *White* 5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED *Widowed*

6a. If MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED HUSBAND OF (OR) WIFE OF _____
6. DATE OF BIRTH (MONTH, DAY AND YEAR) *Aug 9 - 1839*

7. AGE Years *88* Months *9* Days *27* If LESS than 1 day, hrs. _____ min. _____

8. OCCUPATION OF DECEASED
(a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work *Farmer*
(b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer)
(c) Name of employer

9. BIRTHPLACE (CITY OR TOWN; STATE OR COUNTRY) *Mo.*

10. NAME OF FATHER *Jacob Sam Atkins*

11. BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (CITY OR TOWN; STATE OR COUNTRY) *Mo.*

12. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER *Mary Jones*

13. BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (CITY OR TOWN; STATE OR COUNTRY) *Mo.*

14. Informant *Widdie S. Atkins*
(Address) *Mo Clay Mo*

15. Filed *4/10/28* by *Wm. G. Gordon* Registrar

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

16. DATE OF DEATH (MONTH, DAY AND YEAR) *Oct 31 1927*

17. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from *Sept 1st 1927* to *Oct 21 1927* that I last saw him alive on *Oct 30 1927*, and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at *11 a.m.*

THE CAUSE OF DEATH* WAS AS FOLLOWS:
Cancer of esophagus - Cancer, Esophagus
18. *Cancer of esophagus - Cancer, Esophagus*
19. *444 Nat. plan of death*
20. UNDERWRITER *W. H. Nield*

Jacob Atkins portrait and death certificate.

Explore Liberty's Heritage

2013 Walking Tours

All guided tours are free and open to the public.
Tours begin at 10 a.m. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes.
For more information call 816-439-4537.

Saturday, August 3
Dougherty
Historic District
Tour meets at Rotary Park, corner of Franklin and Gallatin Streets

Saturday, September 7
Historical Murals
Tour meets at the Lewis & Clark Mural, corner of Mill and S. Water Streets.

Saturday, October 5
Mt. Memorial Cemetery
Tour meets at the entrance to the cemetery.
(Enter William Jewell College campus from Miller Street and continue up the hill.)

R E C E N T D O N A T I O N S

Donations of Material

Kay Alpaugh—*The Rollins Family* and other Rollins/Rawlings papers.

Jane Elliott—Jan. 1956 NKC Report to Its People and 8 page newspaper size document, excellent condition.

Lowell and Alpha Fairchild—A Retirement Keepsake for Judge Pratt (scrapbook); Certificate, badge, election certificate and other paper work for Judge Pratt.

Krislin Fenner—Barry Community Information, including Barry history, National Register of Historic Places Inventory and Nomination Form.

Kevin Fisher—Pharis Farm material; Ridgeview School yearbooks 1963-1971; William Jewel College Tatler, 1985-86; Sun-News, Liberty's 175th Anniversary.

Joyce E. Greer—Johnson Papers from Neoma Johnson, various papers, *The Mormon Story*, c. 1957, Copple Family File.

Frank McMillian—1 used computer scanner, 6 new 3" binders, 5 new 1.5" binders, 1 new 2" binder, Microtek ScanMaker 1320, USB connection, XP.

Mrs. Nil G. Mohler—Small book listing Clay County Soldiers who fought in World War II.

Janice Patterson—5 boxes of PTA minutes for Forrest Hill, Big Shoal, Cooley, Linden East, Norclay and Eastwood schools, all closed about 1981; Scrapbook from Oakridge PTA; yearbooks from 1958-59 Englebrook School.

Robert G. Reed—Shaver Collection, Photographs, etc. from Grattan P. Shaver.

Sylvia Marshall Wees—History of Minerva White Malott Brown, titled *Minerva, When the Country Felt New*

Elvin Perrin—KC Star and Liberty Tribune 1963, President Kennedy assassination and burial.

Donations of Money

Ann Henning

Mark Kelly

Douglas Kinney

Chad Means

Thank you for your support!

A CLOSED CASE?

IS TIME UNIMPORTANT IN HEAVEN?



What I want to tell you might possibly make you believe in the hand of Providence.

In 1923, on June 19, a young woman named Orian Virginia Johnson, who would have been 21 in two months, decided she could no longer deal with the health problem that was plaguing her and presumably ended her life on this earth by drowning herself in the Missouri river just

south of Liberty. At least, the coroner wrote his report having made that judgment.

Orian had been seen that day by garage man, Keller Bell, leaving her home in Liberty and going to the Inter-urban railroad station which was at the intersection of Mill and Lightburne streets. There she met a man who was unknown to Mr. Bell. The man wore no coat, which was unusual in those days, had a ruddy complexion and was heavy set.

When their conversation ended, Miss Johnson hired a taxi to take her to South Liberty. When she got out of the taxi, Miss Johnson asked the taxi driver, Lemar Smith, how far it was to the river. He told her she was about a mile away from it. She set out in that direction, carrying a vanity case.

No one seems to have seen the coatless man again and no one said they knew him.

At some point an alarm was raised for the missing girl. Searchers began looking for her. Late in the afternoon a woman's footprints leading to the river were found but

there was no sign of Miss Johnson. Her vanity case was sitting on the river bank. Her Aunt, Mrs. Orian Cave, identified the case as belonging to her niece. It was felt she had committed suicide.

Early the next morning, John Kennedy, deputy sheriff of Clay County, in charge of conducting the search, was told of Miss Johnson's conversation with the coatless stranger. Kennedy and John Hicklin, also a deputy sheriff, went to look at the footprints again and found a mark at the water's edge that would have been made by a boat. The footprints terminated at the boat mark. Search parties scoured the river banks and the river was dragged. Blasting of the river with dynamite continued all night. Authorities of all nearby communities said they would watch for the stranger. There was no sign of the boat and no sign of Miss Johnson.

Then two days later, on the evening of the 21st, a young man thought he saw a body float into some driftwood. His father, Bert McIntyre, a fisherman living at Nebo Hill, found it lodged in the driftwood the next morning. This was where the waters from Rush creek join those of the Missouri river, about four miles down river from the point where she seemed to have boarded a boat. The body was brought out of the water and onto the bank.

Miss Johnson's body was identified by a black bracelet she owned and was still wearing, examined by the coroner, H. L. Wysong, taken to the Church-Stephens undertaking rooms shortly before noon, then sent up to Brookfield, Missouri, her hometown. The funeral was held at 4 o'clock Sunday afternoon, June 24. Many friends and relatives attended to say goodbye to Miss Johnson. She was buried next to her father's grave. Her ordeal was finally over.

There could be the question of foul play since the stranger seems to have disappeared, but that was evidently not pursued.

This would seem to be a very sad, but complete, story.

(Continued on page 9)

A C L O S E D C A S E C O N T I N U E D . . .

(Continued from page 8)

However, 90 years after Miss Johnson's death, I was finally going through a box of mementos that had been in my possession for several years, boxes that had belonged to one of my cousins who was about five years younger than Miss Johnson. The box had been stored in my large basement but now had to be dealt with because my current residence, an apartment, had only a small storage locker which was already filled. In this box with the usual unlabeled pictures, dance cards and scrapbooks were two fragile newspaper clippings about someone whose picture presented the face of an attractive young woman in a pretty, ruffled, high-necked blouse. I had never heard her name before and I don't have the slightest idea of why my cousin kept the clippings.

I almost threw the articles away but decided to show them around at the Archives on my volunteer day. None of the other volunteers recognized her name or her picture. We looked up her name in our index and found several references. One was an abstract that listed a Johnson family as owners of a certain plot of ground in Clay county. The abstract contained the wills of both the husband and wife who owned the property. In the final will, made by the wife, a son with the very unusual name of Orian, was listed among the heirs. We hoped we had found her father but her death certificate, found later in a different search, listed her father's name as Jerrald

Johnson.

One of the men at the Archives that day, who was unfamiliar with the name Orian Virginia Johnson, did recognize the name of his paternal grandmother in the list of heirs in this will. We were over-awed by that discovery, just out-of-the blue, and immediately started searching the Archives' databases and the internet for more information. We haven't put it all together yet, but the answers are somewhere and hopefully we will track them all down.

What are the odds that two little clippings, loose in a box stuffed with scrapbooks, photos and large pictures, survived ninety years and traveled through my hands to another Archives volunteer, who just happened to be at the Archives that day, and who may turn out to be related to this young woman who gave up on life so young?

Providence? kismet? alignment of the stars? or is Orian Virginia Johnson reaching out to her kinsman from beyond the pale?

~ Donna Root

Turn to the next page to read the original news clips found in the box..

A CLOSED CASE . . . ?

**NEW CLEW IN LIBERTY
GIRL'S DISAPPEARANCE**

Strange Man Seen Talking to Miss Johnson; Boat Marks on River Bank.

A mark on the river bank, and a strange, coatless man are the new clues which are urging searchers to renewed efforts today to find Miss Orian Johnson, who disappeared yesterday at Liberty, Mo. Miss Johnson, until today, was believed to have committed suicide.

Miss Johnson engaged a taxicab yesterday afternoon and was driven to the Missouri river banks, four miles south of Liberty. Footprints led to the water's edge. Miss Johnson was not found.

John Kennedy, deputy sheriff of Clay county who is conducting the search, was told early this morning that Miss Johnson had talked to a strange man shortly before her disappearance.

Keller Bell, garage man, said he saw the young woman leave her home, go to the interurban station at Liberty and meet the man. The stranger was unknown to bystanders, but was described as florid, coatless and heavy set.

Immediately following her conversation with the man, she engaged Lemar Smith, taxicab driver, to take her to the river. Since then the stranger has not been seen.

Kennedy and John Hicklin, also a deputy sheriff, on closer inspection of the woman's footprints leading to the water's edge, found a mark at the water's edge which has been declared to have been made by a boat. The footprints terminated at the spot.

Various searchers believe she was whisked away by the craft, while others believe the strange man was connected with the disappearance.

All night searchers blasted the river with dynamite. Searching parties covered both sides of the river for the mysterious boat, and it is understood that authorities of all nearby towns and cities will assist in seeking the stranger.

Miss Johnson was 21 years old, and formerly an art instructor at the University of Missouri.

Miss
Orian Johnson

M. U. :INSTRUCTOR A SUICIDE?

Miss Orian Johnson Believed to Have Drowned Herself Near Liberty.

LIBERTY, Mo., June 20.—The Missouri River near here is being dragged today in search for the body of Miss Orian Johnson, who is believed to have committed suicide yesterday by drowning. Miss Johnson was art instructor at the University of Missouri last year and lived here with her aunt, Mrs. Orian Cave. Her mother is matron at the Girls' school in Chillicothe, Mo.

Miss Johnson last was seen about 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon in South Liberty, about one mile from the river. Late in the afternoon a woman's footsteps leading to the river were found and on the river bank was a vanity case, identified by Mrs. Cave as Miss Johnson's.

A taxicab driver was the last to see Miss Johnson. She got into his cab at the railroad station about 2 o'clock yesterday and directed him to drive her to South Liberty. Arriving on the outskirts of South Liberty, the driver said, Miss Johnson got out, asked how far away the river was and then started walking in that direction.

Relatives said if Miss Johnson committed suicide she did so because of despondency over ill health.

ARCHIVES GIFT SHOP

OUR NEW PUBLICATION

Reprint of the 1865 Clay County Historical Atlas, with features in color, just like the original! Cost is \$20, plus \$2 for mail delivery.

THE STORY OF LIBERTY...from settlement to suburb, a movie available in two formats:

DVD—\$15 each

S-VHS—\$10 each

(add \$2 for shipping and handling)

The VHS version is available in two formats, for older model players and for the current model players. Specify which of the formats you desire.

GREETING CARDS

Christmas Cards—12 for \$10

Note Cards—10 for \$5

DOCTOR ON THE WESTERN FRONTIER

The Diaries of Dr. William Wallace Dougherty, 1854-1880

\$12, plus \$5 for mail delivery

IKNEWFRANK...IWISHIHADKNOWN JESSE

Family, Friends and Neighbors in the Life and Times of the James Boys

Hardback: \$55 members

\$60 non members

Soft cover: \$17 members

\$22 non members

GUERRILLAS AND OTHER CURIOSITIES

Bud, Donnie and Me

Soft Cover: \$15 members

\$17 non members

MISCELLANEOUS BOOKS

(all postpaid)

1877 Historical Atlas of Clay County \$15

Every-Name Index to 1877 Atlas \$13

Clay County Births, 1883-84 \$7

Clay County Deaths, 1883-84 \$7

DAR Sesquicentennial Book \$18

Every-Name Index to DAR Book \$11

Please make your check payable

to:

Clay County Archives

And mail to:

P.O. Box 99

Liberty, MO 64069



DID YOU KNOW?

Empire Spring / Twin Wells and Pavilion was located on Richmond Street (south of The Elms Hotel and across Fishing River) in Excelsior Springs. It was discovered in 1881 and named by Captain Farris. Water from this spring received a medal at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. It was renamed Regent Spring.

WE'RE ON THE WEB
WWW.CLAYCOUNTYARCHIVES.ORG



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Our Mission

To procure, preserve, restore, maintain, study, and promote manuscripts, instruments, records, charters, evidence, and documents of a public or private nature which may have statistical, legal or historical significance to Clay County, Missouri, its government or residents, or such documents as might be desirable to the association and to encourage public interest therein.