

# 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

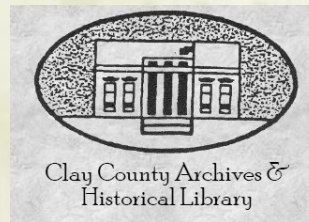
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Happy Thanksgiving! I hope you all had plenty to be thankful for. I'm thankful for all of our wonderful volunteers and our esteemed patrons. Thank You! We've had a busy summer and we look forward to having a busy 2018.

Speaking of summer, in an effort to catch up with our MOsaic issues, this publication combines the second and third quarters in this expanded summer installment. There are more pages and articles this time. Even though we have so much going on, we'll make a greater effort to staying on track with our normal MOsaic schedule.

(Diane Davidson and Elna Cox with help from emeritus committee chair Ken Neth and input from Bob Hazlett and others) has been updating our cemetery files with new infor-



mation and verifying the accuracy of what we have. They have been on many field trips to visit some less well known cemeteries. Part of the project is to geo-locate the sites so we can accurately map them to assist people in finding them.

City Historical Society President James Spawn who brought a brass boat whistle for us to see. It is part of their collection and the attached label said it was from the Anne Cade ferry. He is now doing research to verify that claim and, if so, which whistle on the ferryboat it might be.

Research requests continue to come in. We've had hundreds of on-site patrons this year in addition to voluminous requests via email, phone calls and letters. It is great to see our use and preservation efforts being put to good use.

~Stuart Elliott



For instance, this summer the cemetery committee

Another episode involved a visit from North Kansas



The Archives will be closed beginning Monday, December 25, 2017. We will reopen on Monday, January 8, 2018.

We look forward to seeing you in 2018 and appreciate your patronage this past year.

**2016 Executive Board**

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Corresponding Secretary	Ann Henning
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Membership	Shirley Fansher
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City of Liberty	
Clay County Parks	
Clay Co. Patriots Chapter DAR	Lois Long
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**Newsletter Staff**

Keenan Glidewell Barker  
 Stuart Elliott  
 Shirley Fansher  
 Jo-Jean Chamas

**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 first 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: [MOsaic@claycountyarchives.org](mailto:MOsaic@claycountyarchives.org)

## CARR MURDER MYSTERIES

I attended a recent talk on the Swope Murders in Independence which took place at the turn of the last century. It inspired me to consolidate my research on an infamous murder right here in Clay County. But the more you re-search, the more questions that arise. Are the journalistic accounts of the family, the murder and subsequent trial unquestionably the true? Or are they a sensationalized piece of writing and rewriting to entertain in the name of news?

The bare facts are: a couple married and within a year a child died; a man confessed to the murder; a trial ensued and a judgement of hanging was carried out on the Liberty courthouse square. The man and wife, and perhaps the child are buried in the Crowley Cemetery. Those are provable facts.

A personal account plus a wool coverlet with blue, white and red stripes were donated to the Clay County Museum and Historical Society a number of years ago. This account was originally told by an actual participant in events. In the early 1870s, no one knows the exact date, a boy of approximately four years of age, wandered into Liberty. A band of gypsies had been traveling in the county and speculation was the boy was left behind by them, either having been kidnapped or abandon. A pair of sisters, Mary Stephens and Katherine Young, both widowed took him in. Questioned, he could only state his name was "Carr." Whether this was his given or surname, they did not know. The sisters gave him the name Stephen raising him in their four-room house at the north end of Liberty.

The sisters were religious with one room of their home dedicated for use as a church with a pulpit and benches. Young men from William Jewell College, studying to be ministers took turns preaching there each Sunday. It was said that the ladies gave young Stephen a "proper" upbringing. He had no past, one name, the clothes on his back and a single blanket when he came to them.

In 1896, the man now using the name William Carr, married a widow, Bettie Stephens in Clay County who had a three-year-old son. William and Bettie then had a child. Within a year, William Carr was hanged for the murder of that child; a girl named Belle. Bettie was now a widow for the second time in her thirty years and considered to be of "ill repute." Rumors were rampant that she was the true killer and that William was bewitched by her. Both were seen at the river with the child's lifeless body and reported to the police.

Carr was accused of killing the child and throwing the body in the river. There was a sensational trial and William was sentenced to be hanged. The ladies who had raised him did not believe he was the killer due to his religious upbringing and attempted to visit him in jail to gain the truth. He refused to see them.

The woolen coverlet remained in the family with which Katherine Young lived after her sister passed away. It was donated to the museum with a request for anonymity. The story was an oft told tale within the family even after Katherine's death in 1911.

*The Guthrie Leader* newspaper's 21 Dec 1897 report of the murder varies slightly from the above account and adds many details. It agrees the couple were seen with the child's body at the river, that Carr confessed and that the townspeople widely believed Mrs. Carr to have killed the child with which she could not "get along." Also, that Carr feared she would leave him if he did not get rid of the child.

He was sullen while imprisoned and at his trial unless Bettie was present. The two together talked and laughed up

*(Continued on page 4)*

## CARR MURDER MYSTERIES CONTINUED

until his death sentence was carried out as witnessed by nearly a dozen different county sheriffs. Professor James Love of the Clay County Seminary, counseled with William after his confession and prayed for him on the gallows. When asked, Mrs. Carr was quoted as stating “If Carr is guilty, let him hang. He ought to be punished for it.” Either way, Bettie was believed, in some way, to be responsible for the girl’s death.

Carr was hanged in 1897 and buried in the Crowley Cemetery without ceremony. The sisters died in 1910 and 1911, while Mrs. Carr lived until 1931. She is buried in the Crowley Cemetery with her first husband, their son Benjamin and according to the newspaper the little girl, Belle.

Other newspaper accounts indicate that rather than eye witness accounts of the Carrs at the river; the child’s body was unidentified for a week after being found on the bank by hunters. The story was apparently serialized in an unknown paper which documented the crime and trial differently. One of these papers, the *Los Angeles Herald* of December 18, 1897 indicated that Belle was Carr’s daughter with his first wife which would fit with the child being older than a new born. *The Herald* also stated the hanging had been recorded on film and was to be show across the country; this is the only reference I could find about such a taping. It also told of Carr being contrite, hysterical and remorseful throughout his imprisonment.

The fact that many out of state newspapers would carry stories about this incident shows how sensational in nature the story was then. It is believable that the accounts were further sensationalized to entice the readers to follow it. Research will continue into this tragic tale of early Clay County history.

~ Chery Carr Holtman  
Archives Member

### STILL LOOKING FOR A GIFT IDEA?



Don't forget that the Clay County Archives and Historical Library offers various publications for sale. See page 9 of the MOsaic for available publications for those hard to buy for people on your gift list, or contact the Archives.

Or, maybe a gift of an annual membership to use the vast amount of resources and information available at the Clay County Archives & Historical Library.

Perhaps your shopping is complete, and your spirit generous. Consider a donation to the Clay County Archives & Historical Library before year end for use on this year's charitable tax deductions.

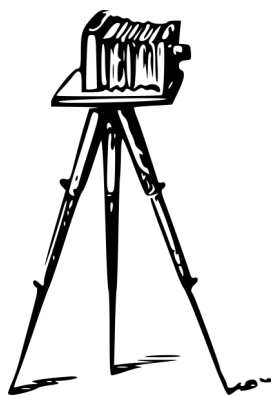
## DEAD FRIEDA?

### ARCHIVES PHOTO COLLECTION INCLUDES MYSTERIES WAITING TO BE SOLVED

The Archives photograph collection contains many photos that are not yet identified.

Contact the Archives by email ([info@claycountyarchives.org](mailto:info@claycountyarchives.org)) with any information that might put a name or family connection to the woman in the photo to the right.

The file shows the photo taken by “Mitchell – Kansas City, Missouri”.



**BAD WEATHER  
INFO LINE  
816-781-3611**

With the potential for bad weather in the coming months, (don't laugh, the recent above normal temperatures are sure to plummet at some point), please remember to call ahead before making a trip to the Archives on bad weather days.

## RECENT DONATIONS

### Donations of Material

Kitty Wyatt Brinkman—Picture of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hughes; Hughes family information.

Bob and Jeanice Corum—Book, Historical Sketch of the North Liberty Baptist Association 1844-1918.

Ann Henning—Booklet: "One Hundred and One Best Songs" with Winn School handwritten on cover. Value at purchase 25 cents.

Ann Larson—photo, unknown outdoor scene, found in garage, Shrader Street, Liberty, MO.

Richard Janulewicz—Journey in Time Clay County Health Center Clay Cop Public Health annual report 2002 Sesquicentennial Program.

Krista Louderback—picture about 1892 of Margaret A Johnson and possibly 2 other Johnson ladies.

Meri Jane McNeece—History of Second Baptist Church, Liberty-1843-1968, by Rider, Tutt and Hester.

Chad Means—J Nichol's ledger for his "Ice Cream Salloon".

Maitland Mehlhoff—Chicago Milwaukee and Pacific Railroad Stations and stops.

Cyndie Neven—Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989.

Barbara Sharp Proffitt—2 computers with monitor.

Peter Vanderhoorn and Diane Davidson—Pushpin Cemetery Large Map.

### Donations of Money

Charles Broomfield

Constance Carder

Diane Davidson

Kevin Fisher

Keith Nelson



**THANK YOU**

## THREE NEW HISTORICAL MARKERS

We live in an area that is full of rich history yet it seems as though it is seldom celebrated or recognized as it should be. Have you ever noticed while travelling back east how often you can find a historical marker? It would give one the wrong impression that all of our nation's history took place prior to the Louisiana Purchase.

Well, thanks to the Native Sons and Daughters of Greater Kansas City, we are seeing more and more markers being placed at historic sites around our communities. I am pleased to announce three new ones that are schedule to be erected shortly near the Clay/Platte border just south of Missouri 152 Highway along the newly installed walking trails.

One marker will be on the old western border of the United States, known today as Platte Purchase Drive and the dividing line of Clay and Platte Counties. It will recognize the significance of the Platte Purchase including the controversial removal of the Native Americans and added land mass to the State of Missouri which allowed slavery in the area.

A second marker will be placed just north of the YMCA Challenger Sports Complex (2100 NW 87<sup>th</sup> Terr., KCMO) on the trail telling the important role the Town of Barry played during the westward expansion. This freestanding plaque will be a few hundred feet west of the Platte Purchase plaque.

The third marker will be installed along the trail where the Old Stagecoach Road ended after Missouri 152 Highway cut across its path. This location is just west of the YMCA facility just mentioned. This plaque will explain the importance of this Military Road that ran from Liberty to Ft. Leavenworth. This was a major road that could be compared to a super highway today.

I have intentionally been vague about the language content so you will go for a walk on the new trail and read the history for yourself. Hopefully, these markers will bring dormant history alive, help preserve it, and will cause curious minds to further research our local history. To quote Missouri's favorite son, President Harry S. Truman, "There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know."

Thanks should be given to Kansas City Parks & Recreation Department for their support and contribution as well as the Native Sons & Daughters of Greater Kansas City for taking on this project.

~ Keith Nelson  
Archives Member & Volunteer





## HOW THE CITY LIBRARY BECAME THE ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL LIBRARY



A home built in 1838, known at the time as “the Lloyd place”, burned to the ground in January 1927. With this event and changes of property ownership, the Liberty City Library was born. Ellen Vaughn Hughes and her husband, Frank, responded to the community’s interest by providing land and money. Mrs. Hughes died in 1936. After Frank’s death in 1937, his will included the following: “I give, devise and bequeath to L. B. Dougherty, Dr. F. H. Matthews and James S. Simrall, trustees, real estate, south 100 feet of lots 5 and 6 in Amanda S. Curtis Subdivision, 104 feet on Franklin and 100 on Leonard. On this lot to be constructed a library building and reading room as well as furnishings, including shelving. I leave \$57,000 to be in-

vested for maintenance and operation.” This property was at the time a vacant lot after the Lloyd place was destroyed by fire a decade earlier.

Following construction of the library, the building was dedicated as the Frank Hughes Memorial Library in November of 1940. Around this time, the Hughes Estate Trustees also turned over ownership of the library building and property on which it was constructed to the City of Liberty. In 1982, the city library operation merged with the Mid-Continent Public Library System. Several years later, the Mid-Continent Public Library constructed a new Liberty Branch on Kent Street at Brown Street, south of M-291 Highway.

Meanwhile, the Clay County Archives was on a path taking it to the Hughes Memorial Building. In late 1978 or early 1979, former Clay County Circuit Clerk Jack Roberts encouraged the formation of a committee to work on the preservation of records from the County’s 150 year history. A six-member committee was formed and made quick work to save tons of historical documents. Soon after, the Clay County Archives was organized by local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), local museums, genealogical groups and historical societies. The many historical documents were initially housed at the Odd Fellows Home, in south Liberty, east of M-291 Highway. By January of 1984, the Archives moved to the Frank Hughes Memorial Building and shared space with the Mid-Continent Library. When Mid-Continent moved its operation to the new branch facility, the Archives was able to expand, using the entire building.

Through an agreement with the City of Liberty, which owns the Hughes Memorial Building, the Clay County Archives & Historical Library continues its efforts to acquire and preserve all historical documents relevant to Clay County history. Many individuals and organizations have generously donated time, records and funds by which the collections have grown and are being made available to all who are interested in Clay County’s rich history.

~ Jane Sharon  
Archives Member & Volunteer



**ARCHIVES  
GIFT SHOP**

**ATLASES**

Reprint of the 1865 Clay County Historical Atlas, with features in color, just like the original!  
Includes an index. \$22  
1877 Historical Atlas of Clay County \$15  
Every-Name Index to 1877 Atlas \$13

***THE STORY OF LIBERTY***...from settlement to suburb, a movie available in two formats:  
DVD—\$17 each  
S-VHS—\$12 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**

Note Cards—10 \$7.50

***IKNEWFRANK...IWISHIHADKNOWNJESSE***

Family, Friends and Neighbors in the Life and Times of the James Boys \$30

***GUERRILLAS AND OTHER CURIOSITIES***

Bud, Donnie and Me \$25

**MISCELLANEOUS / BOOKS**

Civil War Monuments & Memorials  
In Western Missouri \$22  
Clay County Births, 1883-84 \$9  
Clay County Deaths, 1883-84 \$9  
Clay County Historic Map \$15  
(not available to be mailed)  
Clay Co. Sesquicentennial Souvenir \$30  
Doctor on the Western Frontier \$17  
Early Days in the West \$18  
Lost Voices on the Missouri \$64.95

***DIVIDED LOYALTIES - Civil War Soldiers Buried in Clay County*** \$35

Biographical narratives and genealogical information for more than 800 soldiers and family members. Published to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

***DISCOVERING HISTORIC CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI*** \$30

Information on more than 1,100 historic sites and points of interest throughout Clay County. Includes photos, descriptions and maps.

***HISTORY OF CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI—NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMPANY, 1885*** \$30

Indexed and Reprinted by the Clay County Archives and Historical Library

***PORTRAITS OF A FRONTIER COMMUNITY*** \$25

The Jacob T. Hicks Glass Plate Photo Collection

Please make your check payable to:

Clay County Archives

And mail to:

P.O. Box 99

Liberty, MO 64069

All prices include mailing fees. If you wish to pick up in person, please contact us for pricing and to ensure availability.

April–September 2017

WE'RE ON THE WEB  
WWW.CLAYCOUNTYARCHIVES.ORG

Clay County Archives  
& Historical Library

**Street Address**

210 E. Franklin, Liberty, MO 64068

**Mailing Address**

PO Box 99, Liberty, MO 64069

**Phone**

816-781-3611

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.

Clay County Archives & Historical Library, Inc.  
PO Box 99  
Liberty, MO 64069