

The Clay County MOsaic

“Fitting the Pieces Together”

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT PRO TEM

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Info	2
Feature Story	4
Donations	3
Feature Story	4
Local Bridge	5
Mystery Photo	6
Publications	7
Archives Info	8

This is the second occurrence of the “President pro tem” President’s Message. Elna Cox did a great job in the last issue talking about the Cemetery Project which focused on the Price-Slaughters-Nichols cemetery. This quarter John Perney fills us in on his Civil Case Project.

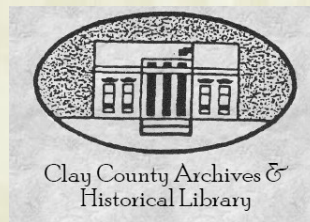
~ Stuart Elliott

My project is to go through each historical civil case and verify our computerized information and add key research information (case number, plaintiff & defendant names, type of case (e.g., damages, estate, divorce, etc.) filing date and book number (where the disposition of the court case can be found).

I began my involvement with this project over a year ago starting with cases from the 1870s and am currently up to 1922 and it has been an education!

I’ve been an American

history buff for some time and going through these



cases over this time period has given me a broad anecdotal feel for the changing times in Clay County.

From the civil cases, you see the rise of the railroads (many cases dealing with damages to railroad workers, farmland and farm animals and people (at crossings!)). You learn what an impact technologies like the telegraph and later on, the telephone had on interactions in society. You learn about the issues involved and the injuries, deaths and property damages caused by the first efforts to “lay gas lines” and “electric power lines” in the cities. It becomes clear that we are blessed to

have OSHA standards and gas, electric and building codes in place and enforced in our modern world.

The appearance and increasing use of the automobile becomes very evident in the civil court cases. Their appearance begins with horses panicked by automobiles and the resulting damages and mayhem. Then, over time, the damages more familiar to us such as collisions between vehicles begin to appear.

You can track our nation’s periodic financial recessions and “crashes” by the number and nature of debt and bankruptcy filings. First you see the retail businesses get hurt, then the wholesalers and finally the manufacturers and individuals.

Apart from the physical and technological changes evident from the span of civil cases (or maybe partially because of them), looking over this time period you notice the mores and

(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 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.
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Original records (such as probate material)	\$1/page
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CONTINUATION OF PRESIDENT PRO TEM MESSAGE

(Continued from page 1)

social aspects of life changing.

In the late 1800s, for example, the court is petitioned for charters for the incorporation of “Women’s Christian Temperance Unions” in many towns and cities within Clay County, as well as “The Odd Fellows” and other social and charitable organizations.

Divorce actions seem to become more frequent (though this may be at least partially a function of increasing population), though the filings seem to become less lengthy, more to the point, and with less use of what we see as quaint phrases. For example, a cause for divorce from the 1880s might charge a husband with “keeping company with women of known poor character” or a wife with being “seen riding in a carriage in the company of other men”, a decade or two later, the charge is more likely to be that the spouse is simply an adulterer. There is a definite trend towards less use of “flowery” euphemisms in the legal language as the cases approach the modern world of the 1920s!

However, I have also learned (what most everyone already knows) from this project is that human nature has not changed. This is particularly evident in the civil cases involving the division and allocation of deceased individual’s estates, but also in divorce and slander cases as well. Of course, I always try to keep in mind that what I read in most civil court cases are those issues that people have come to the court to be resolved for them under the law; which makes me thankful that we live in a country where the rule of law guides our lives.

~John Perney
President, pro tem

D O N A T I O N S

Donations of Material

John Carr—Loan of abstract for 134 S. Terrace (copied & returned)
Excelsior Springs Museum & Archives (Kathy Duncan) - Picture of Liberty School 1901,
3 rows of early elementary students
Dennie Hendren—2 boxes of old books, variety of subjects
Cheryl McCann—2 Cookbooks and 1 Guide to Collections Care
Margaret Thomson—Miscellaneous Clay County Items
Gayle Potter—Memoirs of Mrs. Melinda Houston Estes
Jeanine Thill—12 Liberty, Missouri City Directories

Donations of Money

Kathleen Bird
Jane Elliott
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FIRST WOMAN SHERIFF IN MISSOURI



Lillie Pence Clark was appointed Clay County Sheriff in 1938 after her husband died early in his term. It is believed she was the first woman sheriff in Missouri. In a recent search, however, it appears Clay is not the only county in Missouri laying claim to having the first female sheriff.



For example, Helen Church, of Jefferson County, Missouri, is listed as the first female sheriff in the State, having been appointed to serve out her husband's term in 1960, after he died in a traffic accident.

With Lillie Clark being appointed in Clay County 22 years earlier, it would appear that Clay County can legitimately boast this milestone. George D. Clark, was elected in 1936 and took office in January, 1937, but he died unexpectedly early in the next year. On April 19, 1938, the Clay County Court appointed his widow, Lillie Pence Clark, to serve until a special election could be held the following November. Her bond was presented to and accepted by the Court on April 23, 1938.

As an aside, when asked if she would carry a revolver, the 58-year-old (now Sheriff) Clark replied, "No. I suppose my deputies will do most of the gun toting."

More recently, having elected a woman as sheriff in November, 2016, both Saline and Madison Counties have the right to boast the first women elected to the position of County Sheriff in Missouri. But until another history search turns up something earlier than 1938, Clay County still gets this "first".

~Jane Sharon
Archives Member & Volunteer

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Do you know a student looking for volunteer service hours? Send them our way!

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Or, email at info@clacountyarchives.org.



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THE WINNER BRIDGE

This neat photo from around 1900 looking north east from near Harlem shows the approach from the north to the Winner Bridge that was never completed. Around the time this photo was taken the Winner Bridge project went bankrupt and all the timbers seen here were sold off to help settle the debts. The Winner bridge piers were later used for the ASB Bridge.

~Steve Olson
Archives Member &
Volunteer



SNAIL MAIL?

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) with any information that might put a name or family connection to the unidentified man in the photo below.



Photo of unidentified couple in front of the Missouri City Post Office.

**ARCHIVES
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Reprint of the 1865 Clay County Historical Atlas, with features in color, just like the original!
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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

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Street Address

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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.

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