

The Clay County MOsaic

“Fitting the Pieces Together”

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT PRO TEM

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This issue of the MOsaic is expanded due to delays caused by COVID-19. We appreciate your patience and hope our members have been healthy and safe during these most unusual times. Please see page 4 for additional information.

I was intrigued with the research Chris Harris was compiling about the “Missouri Depot” so I asked him to contribute to the “President pro tem” President’s message this quarter. He is preparing an exhaustive book on the subject. I’m sure you be equally intrigued.

~ Stuart Elliott

When you hear the name Missouri Depot, what comes to mind? A train station? Three and a half miles south of Liberty west of 291 on Seven Hills road sat the Missouri Depot. The Depot is more commonly known as “The Liberty Arsenal.” Many have heard about the Depot in name but know very little about it. Over the past few years, this topic has caught my attention. In my research, there have been several historical events, that have impacted the life of the town of Liberty and Clay County.

The events that put Liberty on the map for the location of the Arsenal

began with a letter to the Congress by Judge John Thornton and Edward M. Samuel, Esq., a local attorney. The title of the letter, like several of that time, was lengthy,



“Application from the Citizens of Clay County, Missouri, for the Erection of Military Posts and Opening Military Roads etc. around the Frontier of that State.”

Evidently, as a result of this lengthy letter, as well as President Jackson’s desire for a military presence on the western frontier of the United States, Captain Simington came to Clay County in August of 1836 with the job of selecting a location for the Arsenal. The chosen location was on the bluff roughly 180 to 200 feet above Liberty Landing. The road

between the two being about half a mile. In 1837 the United States purchases 10 acres from Joel Turnham to be used as property for the Arsenal with following caveats: the best location to erect a landing for the sole use of the United States [Army], the right of way to the spring next to the said land along with the right to use the spring (being on Joel Turnham’s property), the right to quarry stone and “raiding earth for making brick to be used in the construction of the Arsenal.” It continues with using Turnham’s warehouse etc.

In 1839 the construction of the Arsenal was completed. David Bivens did the carpentry work and Mr. Riley and Mr. Dykes did the brickwork. It consisted of a building for officer’s quarters, one powder magazine, three workshops, one armory, two gun-sheds and two laboratories. Total amount spent by the Government \$26,435.96

Fast forward to the year

(Continued on page 3)

2019 Executive Board

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2nd Vice President	Elna Cox
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<u>Through 2020</u>	<u>Through 2021</u>	<u>Through 2022</u>
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Keenan Glidewell Barker
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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.
 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	25 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

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

(Continued from page 1)

1849. The Arsenal was built to protect the people from Indian raids and other safety items that may come up. The ordnance stored had helped supply Fort Leavenworth for a time. Due to the lack of activity and lack of use, the Government effectively “abandoned” the Arsenal and sold off a good amount of overstock, advertised for those going west to the California gold fields. The number of soldiers at the Arsenal was greatly reduced leaving only a small handful including the Military Store Keeper.

On December 5, 1855, a group of Clay County volunteers, roughly 100 men led by Judge James T. V. Thompson along with Maj. Ebenezer Price seized the Arsenal. They ‘borrowed’ 55 rifles, 67 cavalry sabers, 100 dragoon pistols, 20 Colt’s revolvers plus the associated items such as cartridges, shot and shell for canons etc. The men went over to Kansas Territory for the Wakarusa War but really did not participate much. Upon returning to the Liberty area, they returned most of the items taken. A difference of roughly \$400 worth of ordnance was not returned. This event reached Washington D.C. where the Senate had hearings regarding the happenings as well as Harper’s Ferry.

The events in the life of the Arsenal were not over yet. After the “abandonment,” mentioned before, along with the two or three persons keeping the Arsenal up and running, they continued to have weapons and ordnance there. I am not sure how exciting the lives of those persons were. We do know that Nathaniel Grant, Ordnance Storekeeper, owned land west of the Arsenal where he farmed and grew crops.

In 1861 the Civil War began. Eight days after the firing of Fort Sumter (which was the beginning of the Civil War) a group of 200 men from Clay, Jackson, Ray, Platte, and Buchanan Counties took over the Arsenal for the time it took to empty or relieve them of the stores kept there. Nathaniel Grant and two others were unable to do anything but make a feeble protest statement. This time, it was Col. Henry L. Routt who led the raid, for which he was later arrested, tried and sentenced to hang in Gratiot Military Prison in St. Louis. The number of items taken took the men nearly a week to remove.

The property taken by both groups amounted to: 3 Six-Pounder Brass Cannons each weighing 882 lbs. and mounted on field carriages; 12 Six-Pounder Iron Guns, unmounted; 1 Three-Pounder Iron Gun; 5 Caissons; 2 Battery Wagons; 2 Forges, besides all the ordinary artillery equipment’s and accompaniments, and several hundred rounds of artillery ammunition, chiefly solid shot and canister. 1,180 percussion muskets, complete; 243 percussion rifles; 121 Rifle Carbines; 923 percussion pistols; 419 Cavalry sabers; 39 artillery swords; 20 cavalry and artillery musketoons, 1,000 pounds of cannon powder, 9,900 pounds of musket powder, 1,800 pounds of rifle powder, about 400,000 cartridges, besides accouterments and equipment’s for all small arms in great number, and in excess of the arms taken.

Thanks to the requests of friends and family, Routt was unconditionally pardoned roughly three weeks later. All the excitement surrounding the Civil War and the Liberty Arsenal is what the Arsenal is most known for.

It was officially decommissioned, if you want to use that term, on June 18, 1869 when it was sold to Amos Kimball. From that point on, the property was used for farming. At some point around 1930 the Boggess family of Liberty purchased the property and land around it for their farm and it remains in the family up to the current day.

~ Chris Harris
Archives Member & Volunteer

ARCHIVES COVID-19 UPDATE VOLUNTEER SAFETY

The volunteers of the Clay County Archives continue to work toward serving its patrons – safely, while the coronavirus is still active.

Currently, volunteers are working remotely from home and the Archives' is open to the public on Wednesday of each week. Please check the website – claycountyarchives.org – for updates as they become available. And, please feel free to call before planning a trip. The situation could suddenly change.

Requests for research may be submitted via email to info@claycountyarchives.org. If the request requires more than a cursory check of the electronic files, a volunteer will respond and advise how to pay for a more intensive search.

Thank you for your support of the Archives mission to preserve Clay County, Missouri, records.

MISSOURI BICENTENNIAL 2021

Missouri will celebrate its Bicentennial in 2021. More information regarding Missouri's history and associated events can be found at Missouri2021.org.

One project commemorating the Bicentennial is a quilt. The quilt contains a block representing each county in Missouri and the City of St. Louis (independent). Currently, the quilt is scheduled to be displayed at the following locations:

September 2020
Sue Ross Arts Center
215 S. Franklin Street
Kirksville, MO 63501

October 1-4, 2020
St. James Tourist Information Center
100 State route B
St. James, MO 65559

October 6, 2020
Mercer County Library
601 Grant Street
Princeton, MO 64673

October 7, 2020
Dulany Memorial Library
501 S. Broadway
Salisbury, MO 65281



Be sure to check the website for updated display scheduling.

DIFFERENT TAKES ON HISTORY PART I: BIRCH V. BENTON

The civil court case files, going back to the beginning of the county, kept at the Clay County Archives and Historical Library, reveal much of the course of Missouri history. History revealed includes the everyday changes in Missouri life and society over time to specific events involving key characters of Missouri's story.

A good example of a notable Missouri character in the files appears in a slander suit originally filed in 1850. The suit was filed by James H. Birch against Senator Thomas H. Benton, the noted, long serving, antebellum Missouri Senator. In the case file was a response to the slander charges, an original document from Thomas H. Benton himself bearing his signature. Benton's pointed response to the suit was much more forthright than the plaintiff's filing and defines the issue clearly while giving us an insight into the vicious nature of antebellum politics.

The following is the unedited transcription of Benton's response on July 17th, 1850.

*James H Birch, plaintiff
against } In the Circuit Court of Clay County
Thomas H. Benton, defendant*

The defendant states that he is not a non-resident of the state of Missouri, and for answer to the matters contained in the petition says that he did on or about the 16th day of July 1849 at the county of Clay in the state of Missouri speak of and concerning the said Birch the words following, that is to say, "I wonder when the damn scoundrel whipped his wife last?", meaning it to be thereby understood that said Birch had whipped his wife.

The defendant further says that he did on or about the fourth day of August 1849, in Platte City in the state of Missouri, in the hearing of many persons say of said Birch, "He has whipped his wife ---- He has whipped her again since he denied it at Liberty"; but, he denies that he said that said Birch had knocked out three of her teeth, and denies that he did charge or mean to charge that said Birch had committed mayhem on his wife by knocking out three of her teeth, or whipped her till the blood ran down to her heels. Defendant further states that he did say that plaintiff's wife had to fly to a neighbor's house for protection, where she exhibited the marks of his violence, and that said Birch's ill treatment was on account of a negro wench, but, he did not say or mean that he was guilty of adultery with the said negro wench, or kept her, but that the wife of said Birch, who was an aged and respectable lady, charged him with improper conduct with the wench, and that was the cause of the difficulty between them.

Defendant further says that having understood that the said Birch had urged people to follow him and attack him when he went to speak to the people, he (this defendant) was determined not to engage in any altercation, or controversy, or discussion with him, and was resolved to speak in a different place; and finding himself pursued by said Birch, he did, in expressing his contempt for such conduct speak of him as a dog set upon him, and sent for by the Platte Clique & others to be set upon him; and in reference to such conduct did call him a dog, and say that he would as soon meet a dog ---- a sheep killing dog ---- and have a contest with him as with the said Birch.

This defendant further says that said Birch did pursue him about to attack him with abusive speeches, and that he has understood & believes it to be a fact that the said Birch had entered into agreements to do so several months before it happened, and also that he has been informed and believes it to be true, that said Birch was employed and engaged to go about to attack him with obsessive speeches, and that money was contracted to him for that purpose, to wit, to go to the Platte country to attack him with obsessive speeches, and in consequence of this conduct of Birch's he used the words which he admits to have spoken, and in so doing only repeated what

(Continued on page 6)

D I F F E R E N T T A K E S O N H I S T O R Y C O N T I N U E D

(Continued from page 5)

was a matter of general and current conversation in the country in relation to Birch's conduct to his wife; and in so doing he only repeated what he heard publically spoken by so many respectable persons that this defendant had no doubt of its truth, but, should not have repeated what he so heard at the times and places that he did, had it not been that he was pursued by the aforesaid, and followed about from place to place by the said Birch for the offensive purpose aforesaid, until he was stopped by the citizens at St. Joseph in Platte country.

Therefore, this defendant denies that he has done the said Birch any injury or damage, and seeks judgement accordingly. *Thomas H. Benton*

The court case was prolonged for years with "change of venues", continuances and many other legal devices. The newspaper "The Weekly Intelligencer" of Lexington, Missouri dated 12/18/1897 recounted the long life of the historic case:

"During the eventful and long continued progress of this legal joust between them, the two intellectual giants took every form of pleading known to the common law, or the code, was resorted to and exhausted by their astute and skillful counsel."

The case eventually went to trial in Henry County, Missouri and the verdict was against Senator Benton with damages set at \$5,000. The case did not end there though, the case was taken to the Missouri Supreme Court and in 1859 the Henry County verdict was reversed on a "Writ of Error".

Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, Senator Benton lost his U.S. Senate seat of thirty years, probably due to his pro-Unionist stance. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from the St. Louis area, after his lost Senate race. Sadly, Thomas H. Benton passed away in 1858 and did not live to see the conclusion of this case.

(Note: Senator Benton's brave vote against the Kansas-Nebraska Act did earn him recognition in John F. Kennedy's book "Profiles in Courage".)

Though not nearly as well known to history as Senator Benton, James H. Birch (1804-1878) was active and passionate in Missouri politics. At the time of the events in the lawsuit, Birch was very active, (from the "Dictionary of Missouri Biography" by L. Christensen, W. Foley and G. Kremer): "During Benton's reelection campaign, Birch routinely thrashed the senator in print and in speeches, which provoked Benton, fighting for his political life."

A noted political speaker and writer of the time, James H. Birch owned or served as editor for several early Missouri newspapers. He was elected to the Missouri State Senate in 1832 for one term and appointed to the Missouri Supreme Court (1849-1851). He was never elected to a national office.

~ John Perney
Archives Volunteer & Member

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of The Clay County Archives & Historical Library, Inc. was held on November 2, 2019 at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Liberty, MO.

The Archives continues to benefit from the stalwart volunteers who serve on the Board. Re-elected at the November 2019 Annual Meeting were the following:

- Stuart Elliott, President
- Nancy George, 1st Vice President
- Elna Cox, 2nd Vice President
- Marianne Hill, Corresponding Secretary
- Audrey Lammers, Recording Secretary
- Scott Cole, Treasurer.

Two directors were also re-elected to new 3-year terms: Steve Olson and Patty Rendon.

Thank you to the Volunteers at the Archives. Whether serving on the board; present on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday; or working on special projects, these volunteers' efforts are saving Clay County history for the future.

Right: At the Archives' Annual Meeting, November 2019: (left to right): Audrey Lammers, Recording Secretary; Shaneann Fross, Volunteer and Speaker; Emily Hemphill, Volunteer and Speaker; Stuart Elliott, President.



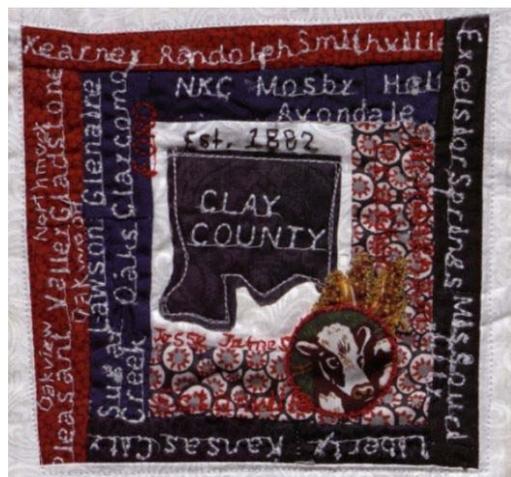
Above: At the November 2019 Archives annual meeting, Shaneann Fross and Emily Hemphill shared their experiences in England and Europe while studying abroad as part of the OxBridge Program at William Jewell College.



MEMBER PHOTO



Talented in many areas, Audrey Lammers, volunteer and Recording Secretary for the Clay County Archives & Historical Library, made the quilt block submitted for Clay County to the Missouri 1821 Bicentennial Quilt. The submission was by Clay County Historic Sites, a sponsor of the Archives.



WILLARD E. WINNER WHEELER • DEALER • VISIONARY

In the late 1800's there were land speculators making (and losing) fortunes that are hard to imagine. The population in the Kansas City area was growing rapidly and farmland was plentiful and cheap. Those with vision and drive could buy and develop land and multiply its value several times almost overnight. They leveraged their personal investment by borrowing money and setting up companies that sold stock to mostly Eastern investors. As long as those Eastern investors were doing well, they kept pouring in more money. But when panics hit markets the flow in new money dried up and half completed projects went bankrupt. And Willard Winner rode this financial roller coaster up to the top and down to the pits more than once.

One of his projects was between Kansas City and Independence, Missouri. He and his brother Albert invested \$868,000 in 2,400 acres. They then built an electric railroad and an amusement park and sold small plots for houses. They sold those houses not for cash but with a mortgage which was not at all common at the time. By 1888 this modest investment had grown to \$2,665,000. Not a bad return on investment! Today Winner Road remains as a reminder of this project.

Flush from this success Winner turned his attentions north of the Missouri River. He formed the North Kansas City Investment Company in 1888 and it is said they bought 10,000 acres of land in Clay County. That number is mind boggling but a quick scan of the 1898 Atlas for land along the Kansas City Northern Connection RR (which later became the St. Joseph Grand Island RR and then the Quincy Omaha and Kansas City RR) shows about 6000 acres belonging to the Northside Land & Mortgage Company. And guess who was one of the principals involved with these railroads... Willard Winner. And Winner developed towns along this rail line like Nashua and Linden and North Kansas City. But to make these towns really take off a bridge to Kansas City was needed in addition to the Hannibal Bridge which was just for rail. So he began building his own bridge across the mighty Missouri. He got the bridge designed and the piers built and began the approach ramp trestle on the north end. But then his sources of money dried up. Without a bridge his land wasn't yet valuable enough to sell. And he couldn't come up with enough money to complete the bridge. In 1897 even Winner's own home was foreclosed upon.

The bridge piers were eventually sold and used for the ASB Bridge that opened in 1911 completing the dream that Winner had begun. Willard Winner died in 1929 just months before the start of the Great Depression. His obituary said he died poor. But without his efforts Clay County would have developed differently and far more slowly.

~Steve Olson
Archives Member & Volunteer

MISSOURI RESEARCH RESOURCES



The State Historical Society of Missouri is a great resource for your research needs. Visit the website at shsmo.org. Online resources include Newspapers, Photos, Art, Maps, and Manuscripts. New items are added on a regular basis.

And, the library staff is very helpful with emailed requests. During a recent encounter, the staff not only answered my questions, via email, but also made suggestions for additional resources not known about.

R O A D W O R K

Winter weather with its snow, ice, salt, and freeze thaw cycles can be tough on our streets and roads. County, city and state workers keep busy filling potholes that us citizens are often quick to complain about. As we near another winter season, perhaps we should seek a bit of perspective by looking back just over 100 years. Back in 1916 there was an article in the Liberty Advance about efforts to improve the county roads. A committee was reporting that they had made a preliminary selection of which roads to improve and were seeking help determining the exact cost before asking the Commissioners to approve putting a bond issue on the ballot to pay for them. Their list included 180 miles of roads out of about 750 miles of roads in the county. So at an estimated cost of \$6000 per mile the bill would come to around \$1,080,000. In 1916 that would not have been pocket change! And this improvement was not for what we would call pavement. This was to upgrade from **mud** to **gravel** roads. The roads selected are listed in the right hand column.

Committee members thought such a bond issue stood a good chance of passing but others thought the odds of getting the needed two thirds vote was unlikely at best.

The corresponding map, as printed in 1916, may be found on the next page.

~Steve Olson
Archives Member & Volunteer

- ◆ North Kansas City north to Linden, Gashland, Nashua, to Smithville and west from Smithville to the county line.
- ◆ Another road runs north from North Kansas City to intersect the Liberty-Barry road.
- ◆ Liberty to Barry.
- ◆ North Kansas City to Liberty over both the hill and bottom route.
- ◆ Liberty to South Liberty.
- ◆ Liberty to Nashua.
- ◆ Liberty to Smithville via Winner.
- ◆ Liberty north past Prairie Home to Arley, to Paradise, to Smithville road.
- ◆ Kearney to Smithville.
- ◆ Liberty to Chandler, to Kearney, to Holt.
- ◆ Liberty to Chandler, to Mosby, to Excelsior Springs.
- ◆ Liberty to Excelsior Springs over Richmond road.
- ◆ Two routes from Missouri City to Liberty and Excelsior Springs road.
- ◆ South from Excelsior Springs towards Cooley Lake.
- ◆ Excelsior Springs north to join Lawson special road district road.
- ◆ From Mosby north to join road running west from Lawson, thence east to county line near Lawson.
- ◆ Two connecting roads, one from Antioch church west through Cambellton and one east from the corner half a mile north of Antioch east to the Winn road.

D O N A T I O N S

Donations of Material

Joe Copenhaver—Memorial leaflet from funeral of Ida Miller Dye (1969)

Donations of Money

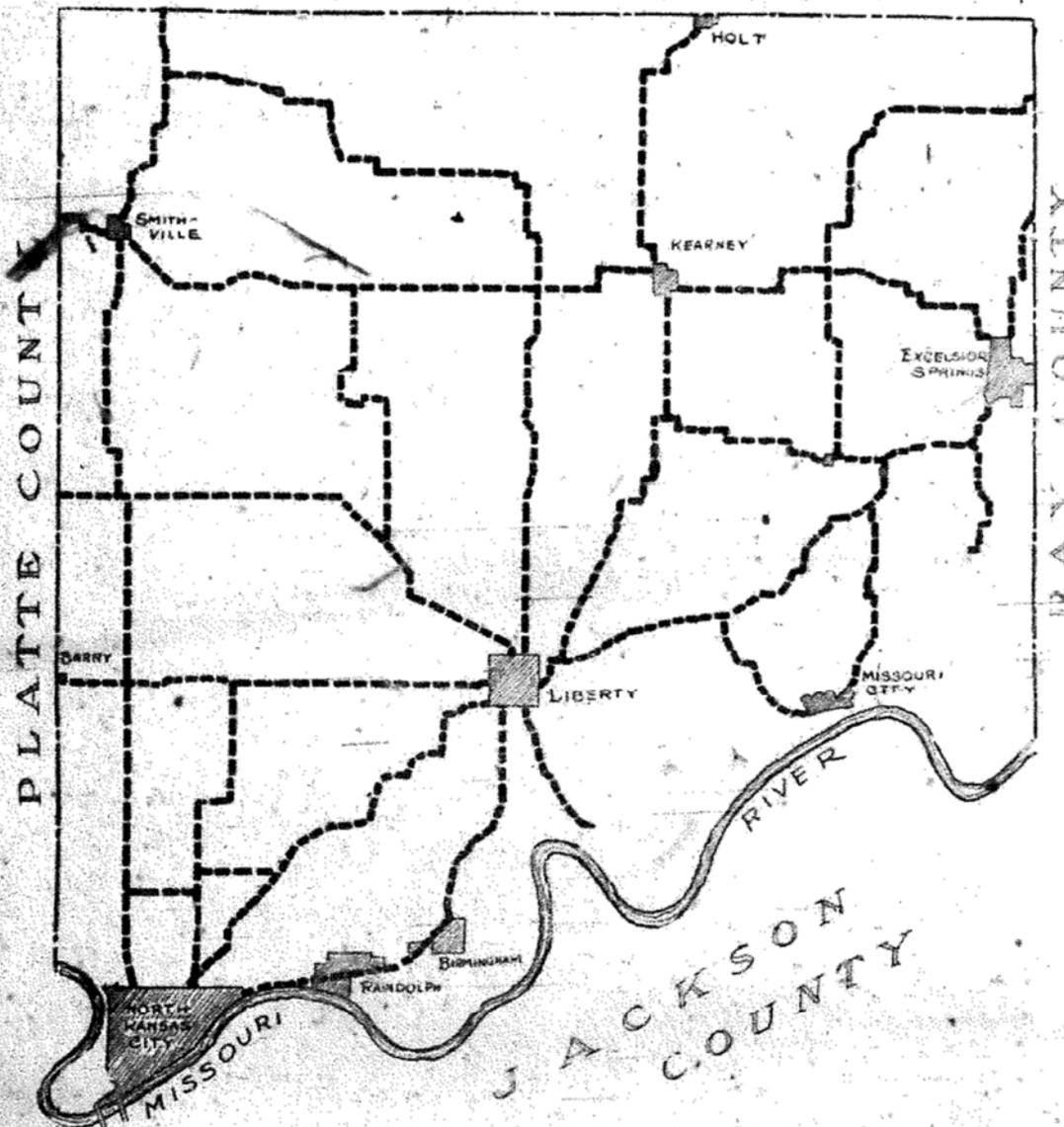
Linda Erkelens
Ann Henning
Keith Nelson

ROAD WORK MAP

Supplement to The Liberty Advance

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 1916.

CLAY COUNTY



The above map shows the routes of the proposed rock roads system of Clay County, as recommended by the executive committee of the "Clay County Permanent Rock Roads Association." It has not yet been decided when the election to vote upon the question of issuing bonds to build the roads will be called.

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
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(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.

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GUERRILLAS AND OTHER CURIOSITIES

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Clay County Deaths, 1883-84 \$9
Clay County Historic Map \$15
(not available to be mailed)
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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

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PORTRAITS OF A FRONTIER COMMUNITY \$25

The Jacob T. Hicks Glass Plate Photo Collection

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Liberty, MO 64069

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please contact us for pricing and to ensure availability.

Oct. 2019–Sept. 2020

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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.

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