

THE CHARITON COLLECTOR

**NORTHEAST MISSOURI
HISTORY AND FOLKLORE**

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Editor's Comments

With the completion of this, our fourth *Chariton Collector*, our efforts to preserve our community's unique heritage continues. With the publication of each issue we not only hope for successful sales, but we hope to enrich you, the reader, with an appreciation of local history. The success of this magazine has depended greatly on the public's response and support. Not only has this program been supported with abundant sales, but also with infinite verbal approval and complimentary letters.

One of the major objectives of this class is to develop a photographic and an oral history library. In publishing this magazine, we took an extra step in order to share this library with the public. Not only does this develop a material library, but the library of knowledge each student stores up, as a result of being a part of history, cannot begin to be measured.

We feel that with the supervision we receive and with the community's support, our present program is thriving.

Bobby Poston, editor

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Lina K. Ewing was perhaps one of northeast Missouri's most well known women. Pictured here with her mother, Anna Ewing, Ella stood eight feet and four inches tall at age 26. Her story, "Missouri's Tall Daughter," begins on Page 19. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Platz)

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The Chariton Collector is published by the Local History Class at Kirksville Senior High School. This special class attempts to preserve the history and folklore of Northeast Missouri.

THE MEEKS MURDERS

An Ozark folksong begins:

"I'm one of Mister Meeks' little girls, an' if you'll lend an ear, I'll tell you all the saddest tale that ever you did hear..."

Just before dawn on May 11, 1894, Mrs. John Carter, who lived four miles southeast of Browning, Mo., heard a knocking at her door. She rose from her bed and found on her doorstep a pathetic, bedraggled child of six or eight years. The girl's clothing was torn and caked with dirt and blood and she had a large gash in her forehead. A kind woman, Mrs. Carter brought the girl in and began to tend to her needs. She questioned the child about how she came to be there and the story that unfolded is among the most bizarre and most repeated in Missouri history.

The child said her name was Nellie Meeks, and she had spent the night in a strawstack. In garbled, incoherent sentences she explained that "they" had killed Papa and Mama and Hattie and the baby and left them in the strawstack.

Shocked, but not quite convinced, Mrs. Carter awakened her nine-year old son, Jimmy, and sent him to investigate. After the child found the bodies, he came back and reported this to his mother. She then sent him out to tell the neighbors. Passing through the field, the boy caught sight of George Taylor harrowing around the old strawstack, attempting to hide the wagon tracks he had made the night before. The boy innocently walked over and informed him there were dead people in the stack, so he should be careful not to harrow over them.

George Taylor must have done some of the fastest thinking of his life. He took the boy with him to the house and told him to go in and sit down, that he would be in as soon as he put up the team. Then they would both go and investigate.

Needless to say, the child waited a long while. George Taylor saddled a horse, rode to Browning and found his brother. The two of them then left the area.

George and William Taylor were well known in the northeast Missouri area. They were ambitious young men with a finger in every pie. Bill was a graduate of Missouri University School of Law, and had served in the Missouri General Assembly. After this he worked as a cashier at the People's Exchange Bank in Browning. Both men were good-looking and well dressed, and it is said that George, the younger, was exceedingly handsome.

Throughout the late 1880s The Taylor brothers prospered and eventually the public discovered why. They were charged with forgery and larceny in 1891 for writing false bank drafts, some of which went through the First National Bank of Kirksville. Additionally, they were indicted on charges of arson and cattle rustling. Gus Meeks was also implicated in the cattle rustling case and was indicted along with the Taylors. He pled guilty and was sent to the penitentiary.

About one month before Gus Meeks' tragic death, the governor pardoned him in order that he might be used as a witness against the Taylors.

Anxious to be rid of Meeks, the Taylors agreed to provide him with a wagon, team and \$1,000 if he would get out of the area. It was agreed that Meeks would leave with the Taylors on the night of May 10, 1894, spend the night with them, and leave the next day. His family was to join him later, after he was settled.

But when the Taylor brothers came to pick up her husband just before midnight, Delora Meeks refused to let him go without her. Fearing for her husband's life, Mrs. Meeks reasoned that the Taylor brothers would not try anything with the family along. She had already packed their meager belongings and awakened their three daughters, Mamie, not yet two years of age; Hattie, four years; and Nellie, probably around six years old.

THE VICTIMS

May 11, 1894, all but one member of the Gus Meeks family were murdered and their bodies placed under a strawstack. Gus, Delora, Hattie and Mamie Meeks were all killed by William and George Taylor, but a third daughter, Nellie, survived the gruesome incident. The story of the murders has become an important part of Missouri folklore and was recorded in dozens of poems and songs which have circulated since that time, especially in the southern part of the state.



The family loaded themselves into the wagon, but their trip was abruptly and tragically brought to an end on Jenkins Hill a short distance east of Browning. George Taylor jumped from the wagon, pulled out his gun and shot Gus Meeks. His frightened wife started to jump from the wagon; she, too, was shot. Hattie, the four year old, was also shot, and Mamie, the baby, was beaten to death with a rock. Nellie was also beaten, and assumed to be dead.

The brothers then loaded the bodies back into the wagon and took them to a field near George Taylor's home. One shallow grave had already been dug beneath a straw pile. Four of the bodies were crammed into this grave, but it is not known exactly where Nellie spent the night. Nellie said she roused a little when she was thrown from the wagon, but she did not move or speak. In "The History of Sullivan County," it was stated that Nellie later said, "When the man put me in the straw, the one with the whiskers (Bill) kicked me in the back and said they are all dead now, the villain sons of bitches!" They covered her with straw and she heard them trying to burn the family's belongings. They were unsuccessful, however, and ended up burying them near the strawstack.

There are some interesting theories about how Nellie arrived at the Carter house the following morning. The George Taylor home and the Carter home were at equal distances from the strawstack. She could have easily went to the Taylor home and lost her life. Some simply say "Providence" guided her to the Carter's. There is another story that claims Nellie heard her dead mother's voice and it told her which way to go. Regardless, she was miraculously guided; Nellie arrived at the Carter home and the whole gruesome story was brought to light.

A coroner's inquest was held, and the Taylor brothers were subsequently charged with murdering the Meek's family, but by this time neither of them could be found. Some 1,000 men from surrounding counties had pursued the pair with bloodhounds, with no success. George and Bill were not found until June 26, 1894, when Jerry South apprehended them in Batesville, Ark. They had spent the last month-and-a-half in towns throughout southern Missouri and northern Arkansas, staying in hotels and living in relative comfort.

The trip back to Linn County had to be rerouted to avoid a lynch mob, but the group finally arrived safely. The Taylor brothers were both refused bond. The original trial was January 29, 1895, but it was delayed because of a misunderstanding about the date.

THE TRIAL

The trial began March 18, 1895, in Carrollton, Mo. Carloads of people came in on the railroads from Sullivan County and surrounding areas. The Taylor brothers arrived, neat and well groomed, and apparently not nervous. They maintained they were innocent and seemed confident they would be cleared.

From all indications the Taylor brothers were given a fair and thorough trial. Both the prosecuting and defense attorneys fulfilled their responsibilities well. Perhaps it was because both sides did such a thorough job that the case had to be tried twice.

The prosecuting attorney was T. M. Breshnehen, and the defense attorney was Colonel John Hale. Several witnesses from around Jenkins Hill testified to having seen the bodies. They testified to the gory condition of the bodies and about the track around the strawstack. Mrs. Kitty Edens came to the stand and testified to having heard five shots just after midnight the morning of May 11, 1894.

The mother of Gus Meeks, Mrs. Martha Meeks, lived in the same house with her son. She told about how the Taylor brothers often visited her son, and how they asked to see him after he returned from the penitentiary, and how she overheard the conversation in which the Taylor brothers agreed to give Gus \$1,000 to leave the area.

Mrs. Meeks said she was always afraid the Taylor brothers would kill her son. She testified Gus received a letter May 10, which had the heading of the People's Exchange Bank of Milan. It read, "Be ready at 10:00. Everything is right." It had three stars for a signature. She tried to persuade her son not to go, but that night George Taylor came in and helped Gus carry out the household goods. Gus told his mother that William was outside, but Mrs. Meeks said she did not see him.

Several people testified to having seen the Taylor brothers out in the wagon about 10 o'clock the night of the murder. A man named Dillinger testified that Bill Taylor had told him he would kill Gus Meeks.

Mrs. John Carter told about how Nellie had appeared on her doorstep and relayed everything Nellie had told her. Jimmy Carter told of his experiences when he talked to Nellie and found the bodies. Several witnesses testified to seeing blood stains in the Taylors' wagon, and several said they saw George Taylor riding home at a fast rate early in the morning of May 11.



THE ACCUSED

William and George Taylor were convicted of the Meeks murders. William was hanged in April 1896, but George was never recaptured after breaking jail.

Story by Ellen James

Jerry South, member of the Arkansas legislature and captor of the Taylor brothers, took the stand for the state. He had received \$1,500 from Linn County for capturing the pair, and if they were convicted, he would receive \$500 from the state. The defense insinuated that this was the reason South was testifying for the state.

Most of the witnesses for the defense were relatives of the defendants. Some cousins and the mother of George and Bill testified they had seen no blood in the wagon, only old, dried, red paint. Mrs. George Taylor testified that her husband had slept in her bed all night May 10. Mrs. William Taylor testified her husband had returned home at 10 p.m. May 10 and had slept until 5 a.m. On cross examination she was asked if she had told Rev. P. M. Best that her husband was gone all night the night of the murder. She denied saying any such thing.

*Bill said he thought that
they were being framed, because
it was general knowledge that Meeks
was going to testify against them.*

Then Bill Taylor himself took the stand. He gave some general information about himself and his education. Then he told what he did the night of the murder. He said George went home with him at 4 p.m. on the 10th. They ate supper together, and then George went home and Bill went back to the bank, where he worked until 10 p.m. He said he went home then, and slept until 5 o'clock the morning of the 11th. He said George came to the bank just after 8 a.m. and told him that Gus Meeks was dead and the body was on his place.

George wanted to get an officer and take him down to investigate but Bill said he thought they were being framed because it was general knowledge that Meeks was going to testify against them. So Bill recommended they simply wait and see what developed.

George Taylor took the stand as cool and collected as his brother. He more or less matched Bill's testimony.

The case was given to the jury April 9, 1895, but they failed to reach a verdict. The case was retried but little new evidence was introduced.

D.C. Pierce testified that George Taylor had told him that he (George) was not afraid of Meeks because they would get him out of the way.

Nellie Meeks, the ward of Mrs. Pierce, was at the trial. During some of the proceedings she went to where the counsel for the state was sitting and climbed into the lap of Prosecuting Attorney Pierce.

Much of the testimony was the same as at the first trial but this time the jury found William and George Taylor guilty. The judge sentenced them to hang.

March 3, 1896, the Supreme Court of Missouri upheld the verdict and set April 30, 1896, as the execution date.

April 11, 1896, George and Bill Taylor broke jail. Bill was recaptured but his brother was never found. George Taylor

was reportedly seen from time to time but he was never captured. Several men on their deathbeds confessed to being George Taylor.

April 30, 1896, William Taylor was hanged in Carrollton. Before his death he left this written statement:

"To the public: I have only this additional statement to make. I ought not to suffer as I am compelled to do. Prejudice and perjury convicted me. By this conviction my wife is left a lonely widow, my babies are made orphans in a cruel world, my brothers mourn and friends weep. You hasten my gray-haired mother and father to the grave. The mobs and that element have haunted me to the grave. I had hoped to live at least till the good people realize the injustice done me but it cannot be so. I feel prepared to meet my God and now wing my way to the great unknown, where I believe everyone is properly judged. I hope my friends will meet me all in heaven. I believe I am going there. Goodby all.

W.P. Taylor

Nellie, reportedly a charming and pretty child, was raised by her Grandmother Page. She married Albert Spray at a young age. She gave birth to a daughter, Hattie, in February 1906, and she died soon thereafter of complications from childbirth. There is some confusion about when Nellie was born, but she was probably only about 18 or 19 when she died. It is said that she carried a deep scar in her forehead throughout her life.

Over the years the story of the Meeks murder was recorded in dozens of songs and poems which circulated throughout the state. Many of the songs were collected in the Ozarks, where Nellie lived with her grandmother. Most songs were very sad and sentimental, and some were more accurate than others. This is one version circulated in Northeast Missouri:

THE MEEKS MURDER OF 1894

*In Milan, Sullivan County, there lived a family poor,
A father and mother, three children 'round their door.
The man was sent to prison for stealing he hadn't
done,
But for telling on some others his freedom he won.*

*He said the Taylors hired him or rather led the way;
For this the Governor pardoned and sent him home to
stay
Until he was needed further to swear before the
court
Against the Taylor brothers and his country to
support.*

*On the night of May 10, two men to Milan came
To get the Meeks family and murder the same.
They said they wanted to hire him, they told him of
their scheme.
They would give ten thousand dollars, a wagon
and a team.*

*If he would leave the country and not appear
in Court
Against the Taylor brothers and this the cattle suit.*

*The wife said they will kill you, but the husband
he thought no,*

So they bundled up their baggage and started off to go.

They traveled very nicely until near George Taylor's farm
And there the murdering ended with but a slight alarm.

They thought that all was ended and now to rest a while,
But alas, God's hand protected and saved a little child
Who saw them kill poor papa, dear mama, sisters two
And then they tried to kill me and that was all I knew.

Until we reached the strawyard the burial to prepare,
But God was with me there before and God was with me there.

The burial was ended, the murderers were gone
And this poor little orphan who was left in
the world alone,

Came forth to seek protection
In her dark lonely hour
With God to guide her footsteps
By his mysterious power.

This man sold his life some money to gain
To his wife and dearest children the price
was just the same.
Kind friends and dearest people who in this
world are poor
Be true and ever honest, for honesty is power.

Dozens of other versions remain so that although a great injustice occurred and four lives were cruelly cut short, their story is preserved forever through our music and folklore.



Albert Spray of New Salem, Mo., displays his unusual fiddling style. Spray married Nellie Meeks in 1905, and they had one daughter, Hattie, in 1906. Nellie died soon afterward of complications from the childbirth. Spray learned how to play the violin at an early age, and entertained at local events and fiddling contests for many years. (Photo courtesy of Josh Shoop)

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Ozark Folksongs Volume II — Songs of the South and West. Collected and edited by Vance Randolph. Copyright 1980 University of Missouri Press, Columbia and London.

Milan Standard Newspaper, Milan, Mo.

Interview with Azelene Evans.

Postcard photos of the Meeks family and the Taylor brothers (Pages 2 and 3) courtesy of Patton Carter.

Scenes from the Past

OLD POST OFFICE



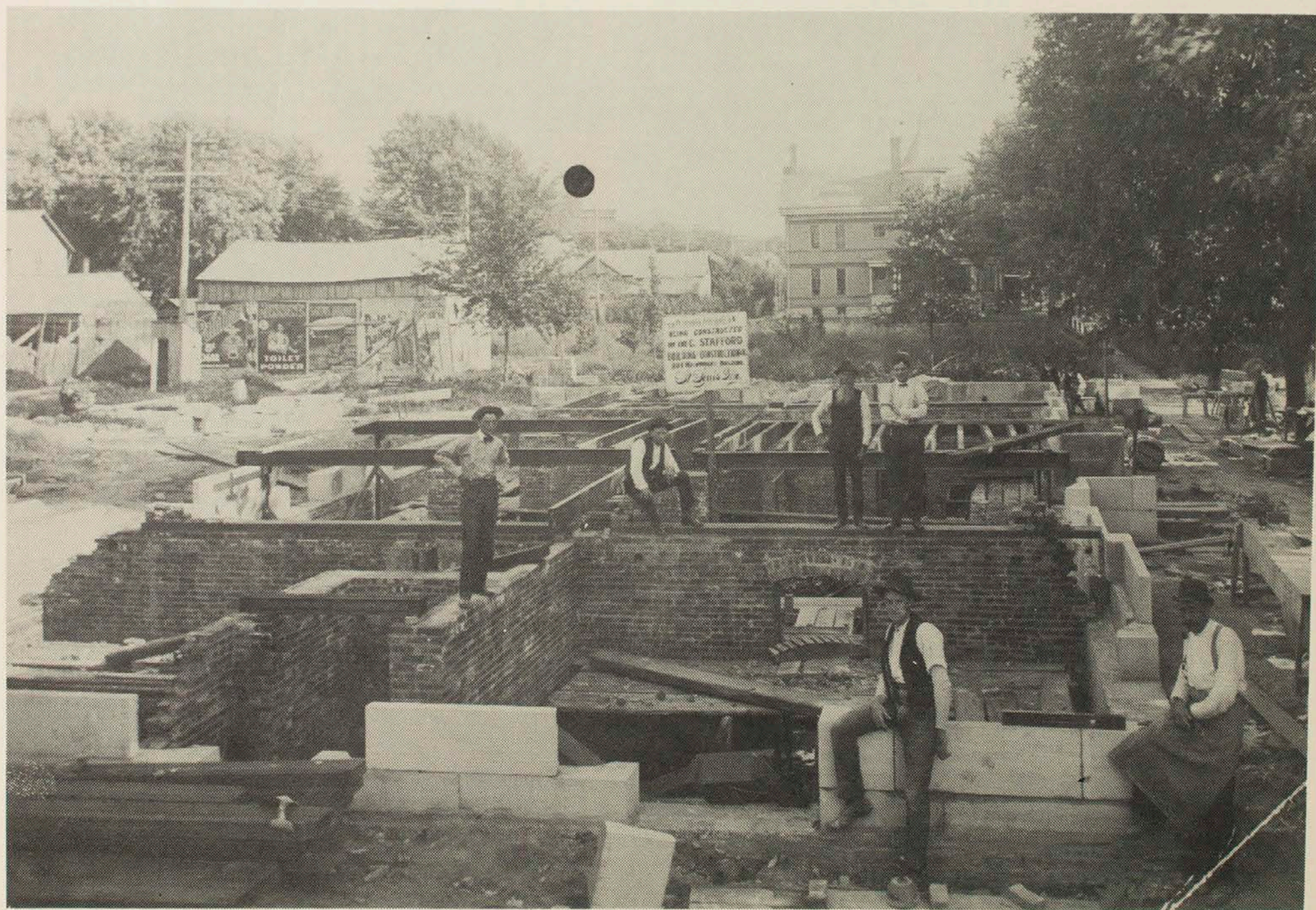
Above, the Post Office building site facing north toward what is now Baldwins. The Courthouse is in the background. Below, the construction workers for the G. Stafford Construction Co. of St. Louis are shown in July 1904. This view faces south toward NMSU.

By Claudia Frazier

At one time Adair County sheltered 59 post offices throughout the county, and of all of them only Brashear, Gibbs, Kirksville and Novinger are presently operating. The Kirksville Post Office is the largest of the four currently in operation. Evidence shows it was at least Jan. 17, 1843, before a post office was established in Kirksville.

In 1843 the first postmaster was Jesse Kirk, for whom the town of Kirksville was named. He also owned a tavern near the present Willard School. Before 1905 the post office was kept in rented buildings and frequently moved from place to place.

In 1873 it was on the south side of the square, two doors west of Baird's bank; in 1876 it was moved to the north side; and in 1898 it was moved to a room just east of the northeast corner of the square. There it remained until the government building was erected on the corner of Franklin and McPherson in 1905, the building now serving as the Kirksville City Hall.



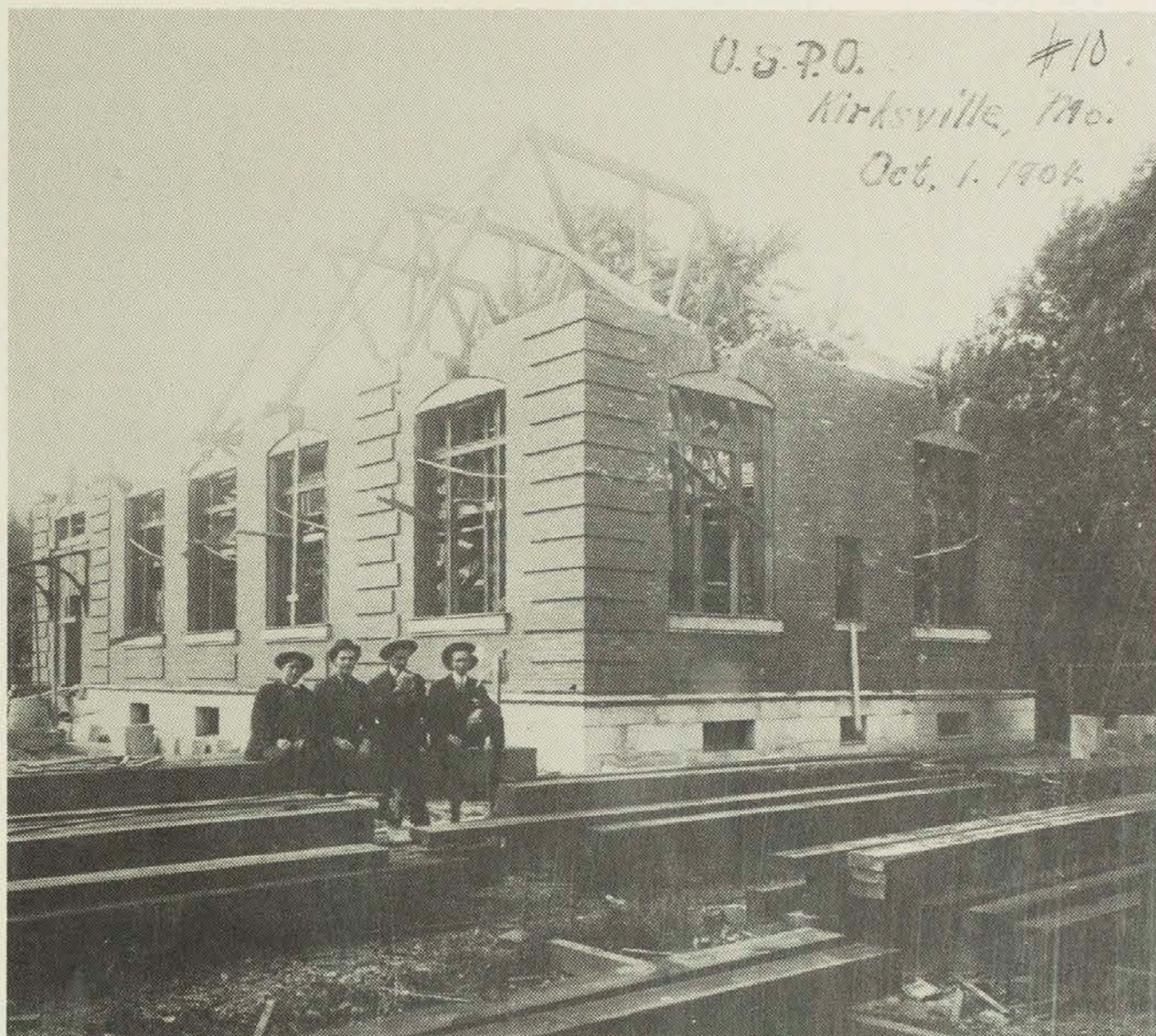
The building was built to resemble the capitol in Williamsburg, Virginia. In 1916, 11 years after the completion of the post office building, it became necessary to add on to the structure.

The class of post office depends upon the amount of business transacted by it during the fiscal year. Kirksville became a second-class post office in 1895 and a first-class office in 1921. The dollar volume of business, a figure which excludes money orders and business not of a postal nature, has steadily increased and has leaped with the increase of postal rates. In 1875 the receipts were \$3,576; in 1905 they were \$18,850; in 1910, \$22,881; in 1960, \$171,145; in 1974, \$675,000; and in 1981, \$1,668,000.

In 1961 five homes were torn down in the block between Marion and High and Jefferson and Pierce, and the present one-story post office was completed in 1962.

**POST OFFICES OF
ADAIR COUNTY
1832-1976**

Adair	Ninevah
Beatyville	Novinger*
Blandin	Page
Blanket Grove	Paulville
Brashear*	Pettuce
Bullion	Prairie Bird
Chariton Mills	Pure Air
Charleston	Resort
Clay	Ringos Point
Connelsville	Rye
Danforth	Sand Creek
Dart	Shibley's Point
Domey's Mills	Sloan's Point
Fegley	Sperry
Floyd's Creek	Spring Valley
Freeborough	Sublett
Gibbs*	Stahl
Hilberton	Timber Branch
Ida	Timbered Brank
Idaho	Tippecanoe
Jasmine	Trade Centre
Kirksville*	Trinity
Lindersville	Troy Mills
Loeffler	Waltersville
McPherson	Willmathsville
Millard	Wilson
Middle Fabius	Yarrow
Morgan	Youngstown
Nefy	Zig
Nind	* Presently Operating



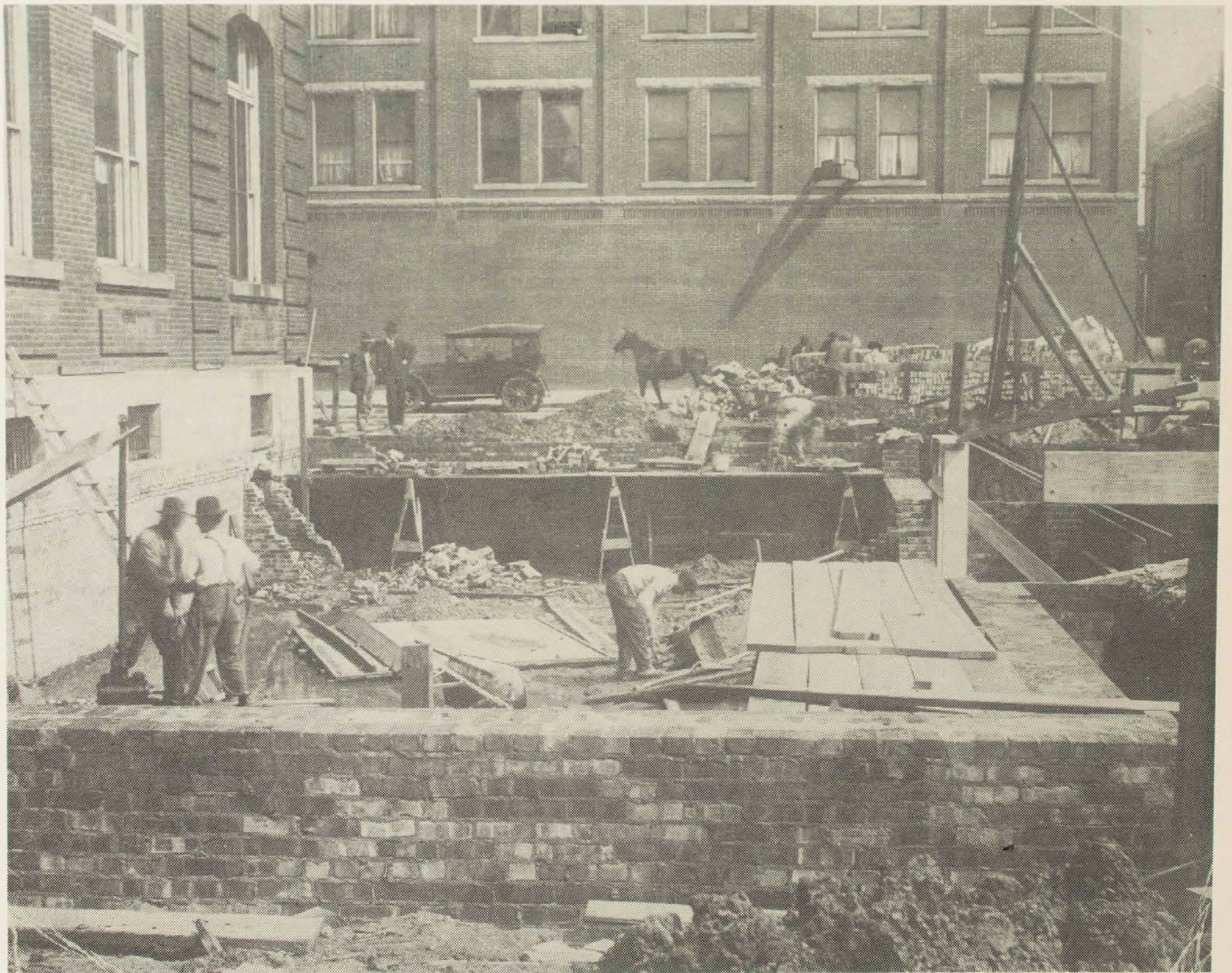
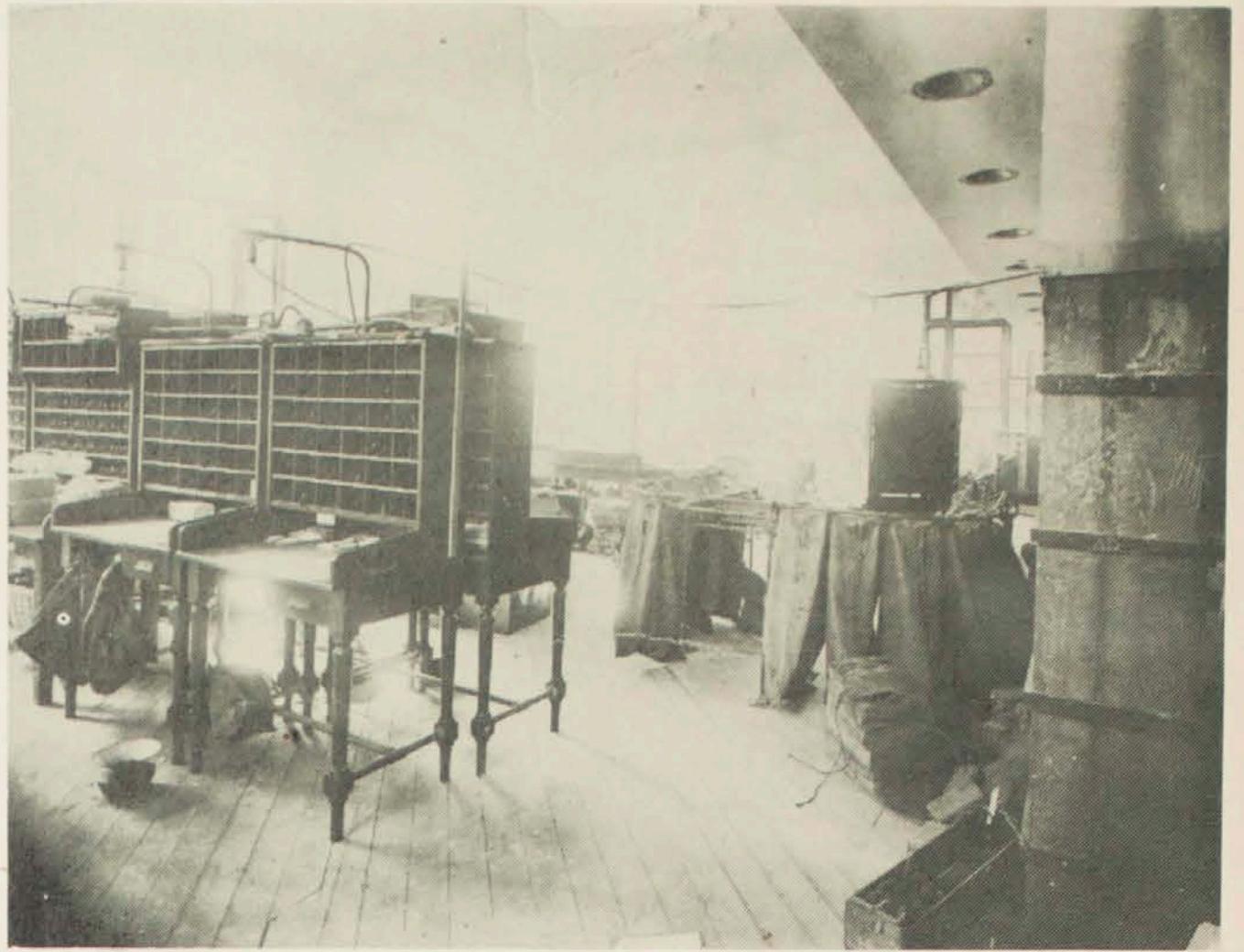
In the top photo, four gentlemen posed at the back of the Post Office in October 1904. The bottom photo is dated December of that year, showing workers putting on the finishing touches to the roof and cupola.

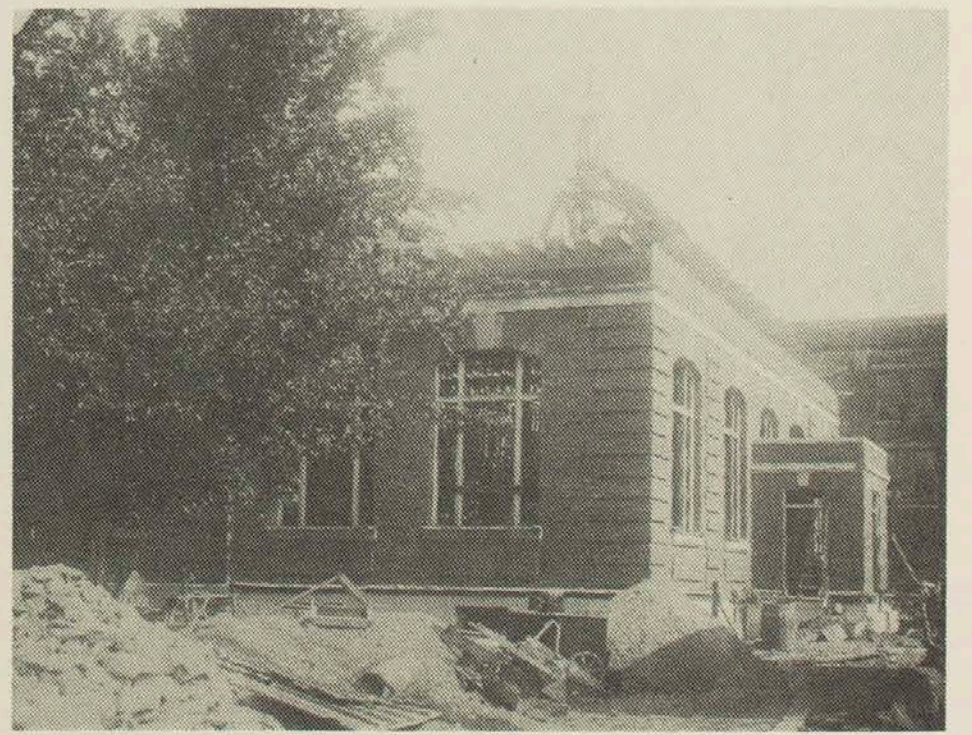
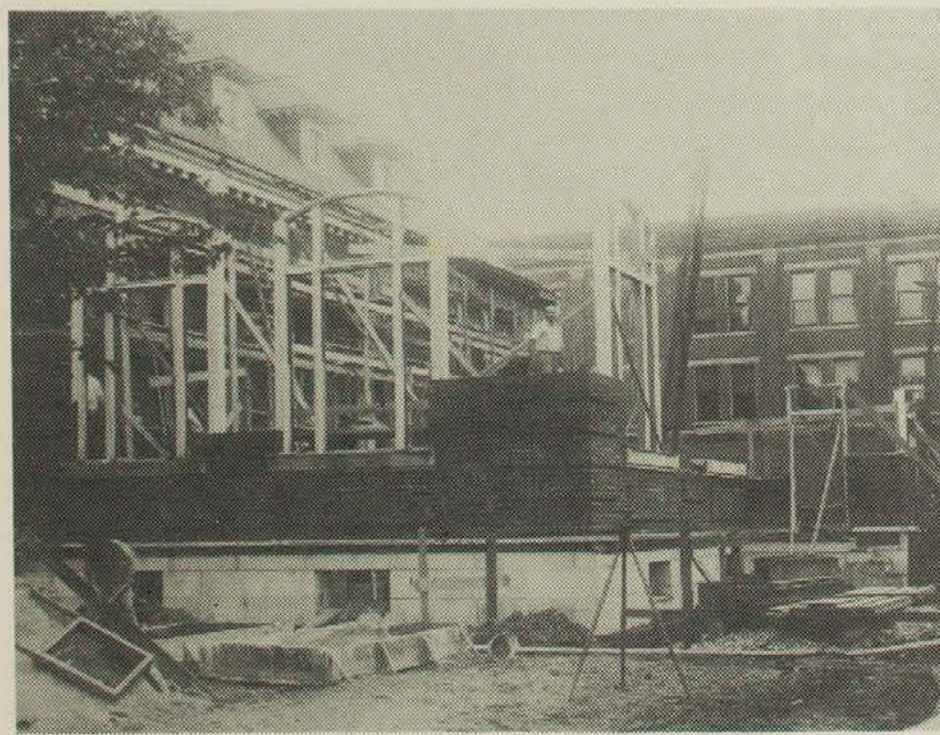
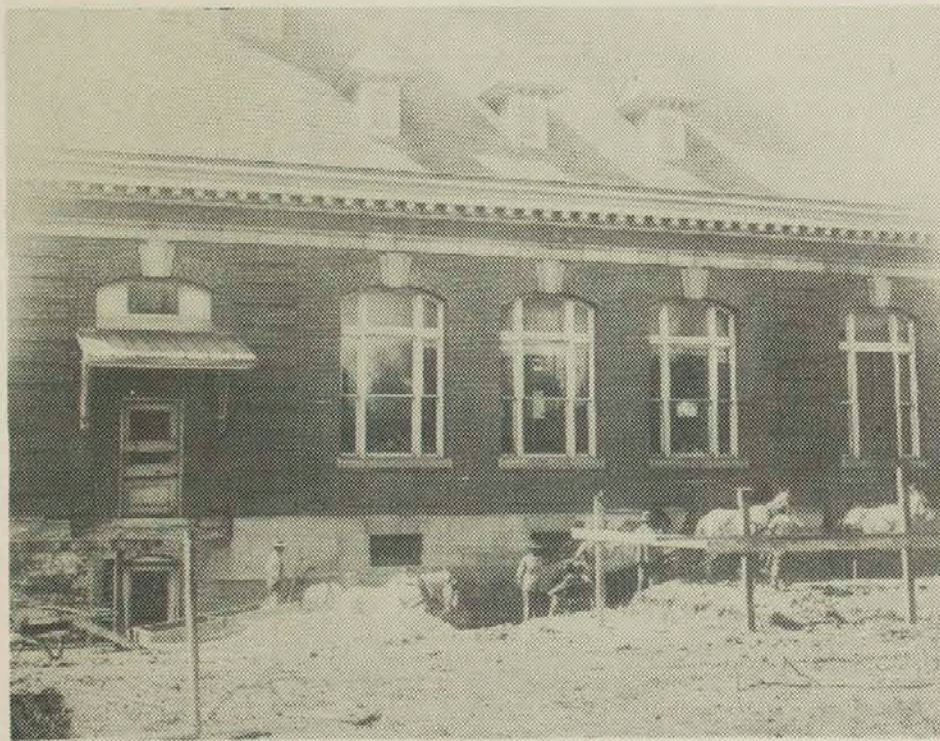
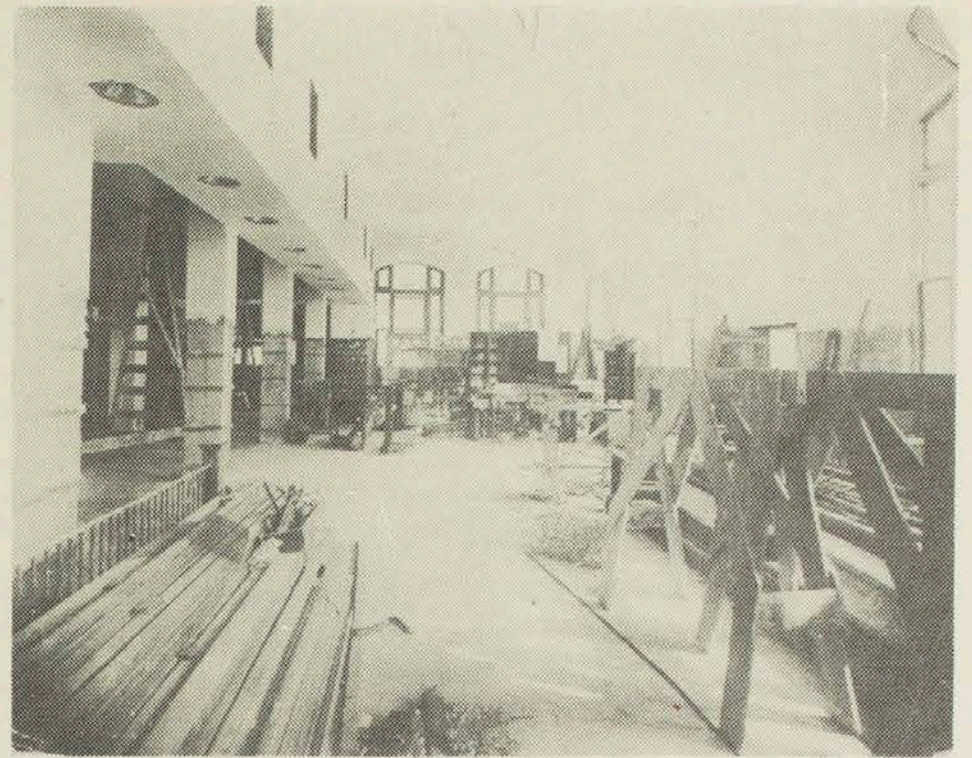
**Photos of the original construction courtesy of the
Kirksville Postmaster**

Remodeling photos dated 1916 and after courtesy of David Lawson

OLD POST OFFICE

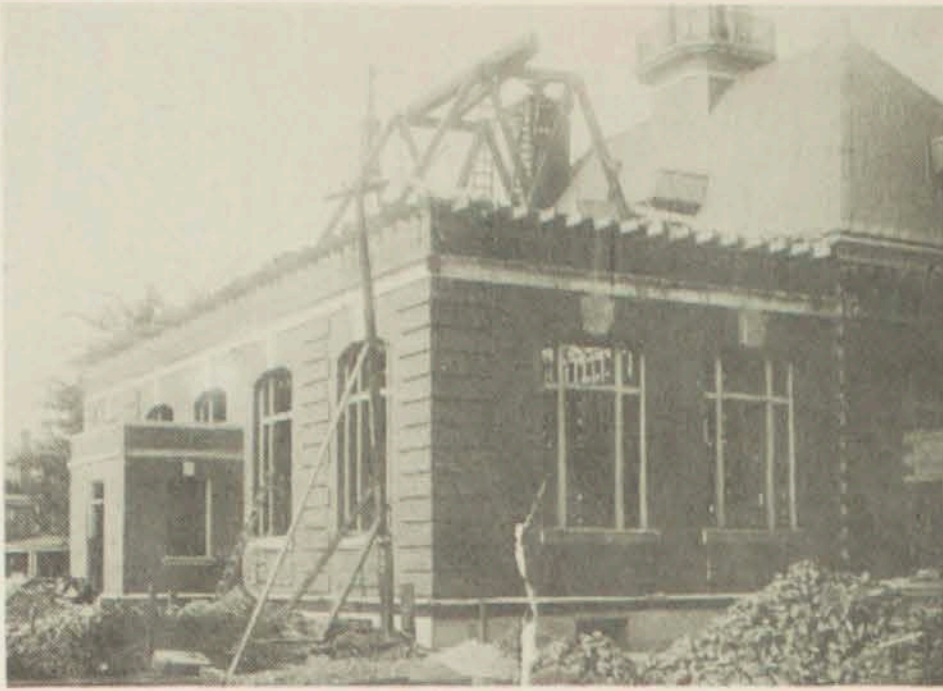
In 1916 the Kirksville Post Office was remodeled and expanded into the lot on the east side of the building. The view below shows the new construction site facing north toward what is now Baldwins in Kirksville. Note the vehicles and carriages in the background. In the photo on the right, the interior of the Post Office is shown. On the righthand side of the photo are rows of hanging mailbags.





THE 1916 REMODELING PROJECT

The top left photo shows workers inside the newly built Post Office in May 1905. The top right photo was taken in September 1916 during the remodeling of the building. The center photos both show the 1916 exterior work in its early stages; center left is facing north and center right is facing south. The bottom left shot, facing north, shows the shell of the expanded portion of the building. Bottom right is the completed walls of the expansion, with work on the roof just beginning.



OLD POST OFFICE

The top two photos show the final stages of the 1916 remodeling project. Throughout the years other renovations have been made on the building. Right, a photo of the building in the 1950s shows that the cupola and old lamp posts were still intact. Below left, in April 1956 a new, wider entrance was made. Below right, a flagpole was also added in 1956. Notice the brick streets and, in the background, the old Palace Bakery.



The Battle of Kirksville

By Jennifer Noyes

On a hot August day in 1862, a group of 500 Confederate sympathizers galloped into the streets of Kirksville, Mo., a village of about 700. At the head of the band was an Adair County farmer, Captain Tice Cain, a successful Confederate recruiter in northeast Missouri. The occupation of Kirksville was an easy task for the Confederates because the detachment of Union soldiers in Kirksville had been called to Macon. Upon arriving and taking over the town, Cain sent word to Colonel Joseph Porter, a Confederate recruiter in Missouri, that he was occupying Kirksville and that he should join him there.

The Civil War in Missouri was a turbulent time. Because it was a border state, Missouri was torn between the Loyalty and the Rebellion. As a result, Missourians saw a lot of action and recruiting campaigns were strong in the state with numerous clashes between the rival bands.

Adair County was no exception. Although Union sympathy was strong, there were also Confederate sympathizers in the county. It was almost completely surrounded by Confederate counties, the only exception being Putnam County.

Both groups held mass demonstrations in Kirksville which included speeches. In May and June of 1861, E. M. C. Morelock, the editor of the Kirksville Weekly Democrat, was one of the organizers of the Confederate companies in Adair County. When a section of the Third Iowa Regiment entered Kirksville, Morelock left town and the regiment took over the paper. August 23, 1861, the Iowa soldiers put out a special edition in which they dared Morelock to return and continue publishing the Democrat. Morelock did not return and Kirksville was left without a paper until 1864.

There were several home guards organized in the summer of 1861. The Adair County Home Guard Company Infantry was organized in August to guard the fords of the Chariton River and it saw duty at Hartford, Putnam County. This unit was disbanded in October 1861. The Adair County Home Guard Company Mounted Infantry was formed in May 1861. This company saw duty in Adair, Shelby, Monroe, Mercer,

Marion, Linn, Livingstone, Caldwell, Clinton and Clay Counties. In August 1861 they joined the Third Iowa Infantry in pursuit of Colonel Green, a Confederate recruiting officer. August 19, 1861, a squad of men from the Home Guard Company under Corporal Hervey Dix stopped at a farm 10 miles northeast of Kirksville. There they were attacked by a company of Confederate scouts under Captain Bob Hagar. The first blood was shed in Adair County when Hagar shot and killed Corporal Dix.

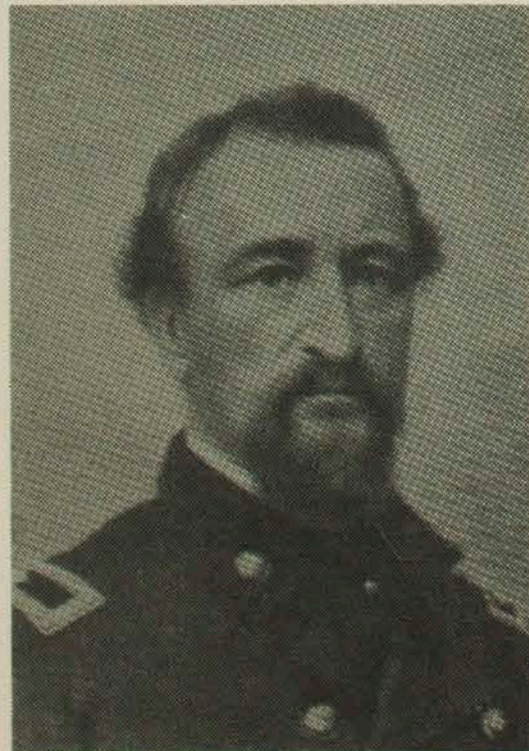
The Battle of Pea Ridge, Ark., March 6-8, 1862, marked a turning point in Missouri history. Confederate General Sterling Price's defeat at Pea Ridge ended the possibility of Missouri joining the Confederacy by military force. Therefore, guerilla bands were organized in Missouri to recruit and hinder federal forces wherever possible.

One of the most successful recruiters in northeast Missouri was Colonel Joseph Porter, who had been with Price at Pea



Tice Cain

Captain Mathias (Tice) Cain was an interesting and mysterious character. According to Mrs. Kenneth Swann, a descendant of Cain, he disappeared during the Battle of Kirksville and his family never heard from him again.



John McNeil
Colonel John McNeil of St. Louis was in charge of one of the five major Union divisions of Missouri, and his unit had been chasing Joseph Porter for months. They met at Kirksville Aug. 6, 1862, and McNeil's force routed the Confederates in less than three hours.

Ridge. He and his company were involved in skirmishes in several places in northeast Missouri. After receiving the message from Captain Cain, Porter made his way toward Kirksville. He had been pursued since July by a Union force under Colonel John McNeil and the chase continued to Kirksville.

Porter's decision to meet McNeil at Kirksville could have been a crucial mistake. According to Joseph A. Mudd's book, "With Porter in North Missouri," Comrade J. T. Wallace of Oakland, Calif., said about Porter's decision to take a stand at Kirksville, "I think it was unfortunate that he chose to fight in a town where, on the high open ground, the enemy with their artillery and their long range guns had all the advantage. If he had gone on to the breaks of the Chariton we, with our inferior arms, would have had nearly an equal chance."

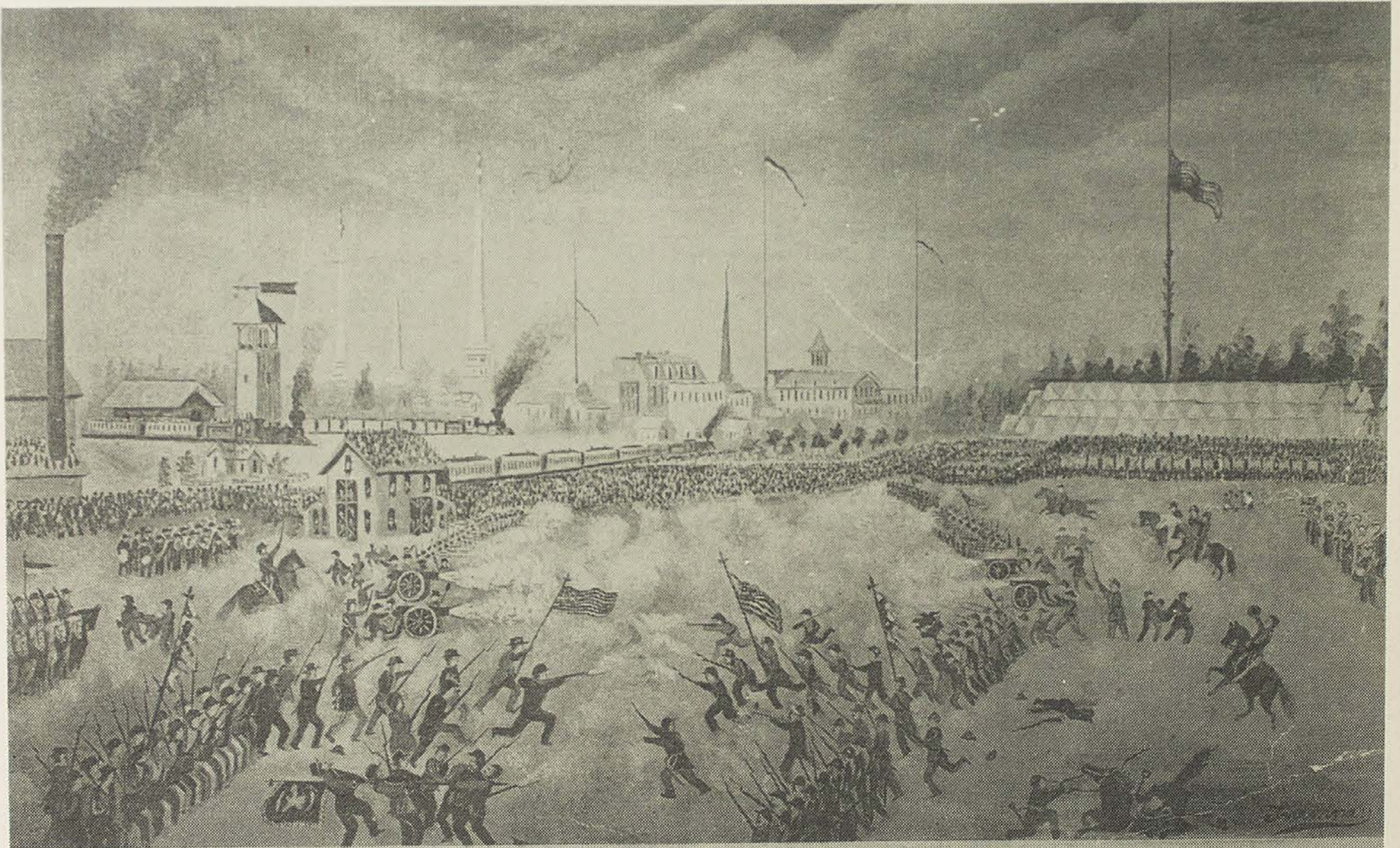
Upon arriving in Kirksville around 8 o'clock on the morning of August 6, 1862, Porter deployed some men from his combined force of 2,200 to positions in the courthouse. Anticipating an attack from the north and east, Porter ordered men to take up positions behind houses in the northeast side of town, and along a rail fence that ran west of the square. Most of the 2,200 men were inexperienced and without arms so they were sent to the woods west of town.

McNeil's force of 1,000 men and five cannons approached Kirksville from the northeast about 10 o'clock the same morning. Of the 1,000 men only 500 would actually fight in the battle. They set up headquarters in the Cumberland Academy building located where Memorial Park now stands. McNeil's men were drawn up in a line from their headquarters to the present site of Washington School.

When the Union preparations were completed around 11 o'clock, the next problem was to discover where the enemy was hiding. Nine men volunteered to ride into town and circle the square to find the position of the Confederates. They drew fire from the northeast part of the square. Therefore the federals then knew where to aim their cannons.

The federals advanced fighting from house to house. They closed in around the town forcing the Confederates to flee toward the Chariton River. Porter and perhaps 20 men escaped by heading toward the river. Within three hours the Confederates were routed.

The Confederate losses were much greater than the Federals'. One hundred fifty Confederate men were killed and 300 to 400 wounded. Only six Federal soldiers were killed and 32 wounded. The Union wounded were taken to hospitals that were set up in the Cumberland Academy building and in a home just outside of town called the



*Sham Battle.
Soldiers' Union, Kirksville, Mo., September 3rd, 1880.*

SHAM BATTLE

Kirksville artist John W. Tinsman made this lithograph of an 1880 Sham Battle commemorating the Battle of

Kirksville that took place August 6, 1862. (Lithograph courtesy of Mabel Willbanks)

Parcell's Place. The Confederate wounded were placed in a hospital set up in the Ivie Hotel, which stood where the J. C. Penney store stands, and in a church south of the square.

After the battle McNeil and his men began interrogating the prisoners. Fifteen of the 47 captives had been paroled. This meant they had already been prisoners once and had taken an oath not to fight against the Union again. Since they had violated their oath, they were sentenced to be shot. The sentence was carried out by a firing squad at the future site of the Wabash Railway Station.

After the war a monument was erected by the GAR to mark the grave in Forest-Llewellyn Cemetery of 26 Confederates killed in the Battle of Kirksville and buried in a mass grave. Memorial Park in part also commemorates the battle.

Although the Battle of Kirksville was not a major battle (in fact it was only a skirmish), it was significant in two ways.

First, it showed the splitting of families that was found in Missouri during this time. Mrs. Mabel Willbanks said in reference to her grandfather, "He (Enoch Rinehart) was in the Battle of Kirksville and fought on the northern side and his two brothers fought on the other side." There was also a man by the name of Lycurgus Bozarth from Adair County who was killed in the Battle of Kirksville. He had fought on the southern side while his family were Union sympathizers.

Second, the Battle of Kirksville marked the end of Confederate recruiting efforts in Northeast Missouri.

The skirmishes connected with the pursuit and overthrow of Colonel Porter were the most important of the encounters between the state militia and the Confederate guerillas.

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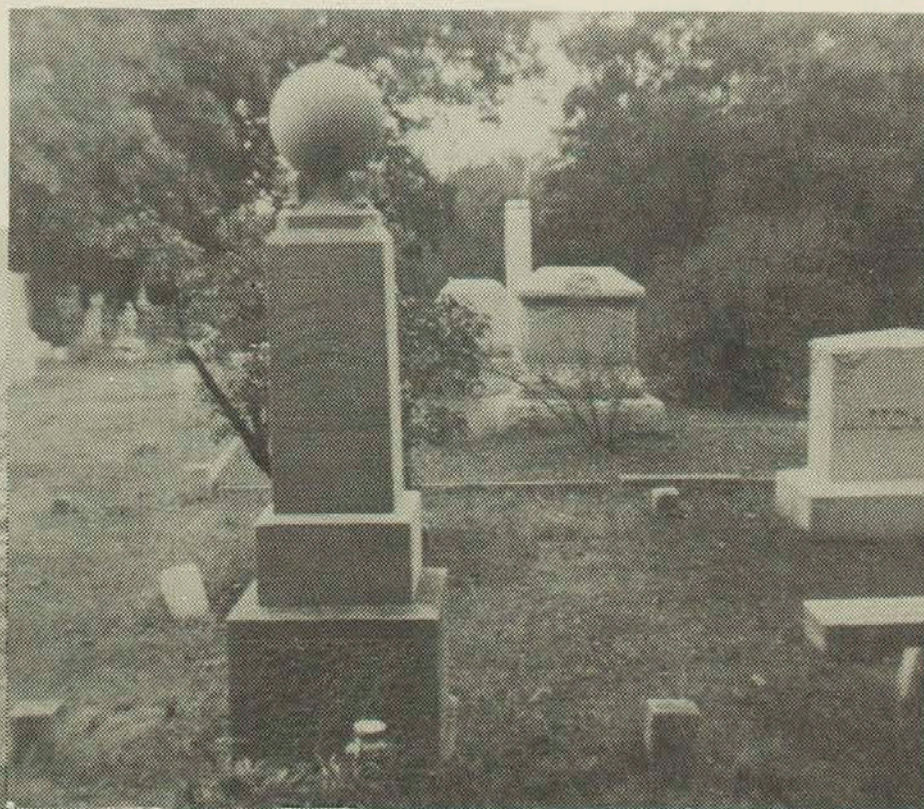
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Interviews with Mrs. Mabel Willbanks and Mrs. Kenneth Swann



Enoch Rinehart
(Courtesy of
Mrs. Mabel
Willbanks)



This monument was erected in Forest-Llewellyn Cemetery to mark the mass grave of 26 Confederate soldiers killed in the Battle of Kirksville in 1862. The left photo shows the monument as it appears now, with the stone ball on top missing, while the above photo was taken in the 1950s as part of a project for Mrs. Jean Hanks' English class.

TEA FOR THREE

Throughout the years sassafras tea has been a favorite of the people of North America, and it was used in Europe as a cure-all in the colonial days. The mitten-shaped, three-lobed leaves and tender twigs are often chewed for their spicy flavor. Although this tree is usually small and grows like sumac, it can reach a height of six to eight feet.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Virginia Barnes, Delma Danner and Anna Kelly for their patience and for the information they have given us. Following are quotes from them on the making of sassafras tea.

VIRGINIA BARNES

"Well, there were two things I made in the spring of the year. The first one was soap. I made soap until I had it running out of my ears. I'd make it in a big iron kettle. It would come out in bars and it would be the prettiest white. I used to enjoy making soap. It wasn't hard work, it just took time.

"The second thing was sassafras tea. I'd take the root or bark and wash it, then scrub it with a brush. Then put some water on and bring it to a boil; drop the bark in, which has been cured out, you know, like you lay it out in the sun and let it cure. If you want weak tea, you don't boil it as long, and if you desire stronger tea, you boil it longer. Then you strain it and add some sugar in it just like other tea. Of course, you would have to strain the real kind anyway, but this store-bought sassafras tea, it's a lot faster. I like sassafras tea because it has a different kind of taste than the other tea.

"You know, another good tea that is good for your blood that we used to make was rhubarb tea. We made it by putting rhubarb slices into boiling water. We'd boil it for about 10 to 15 minutes, then strain the juice through a cloth or a strainer, put it on the back of the stove and heat it up again. Then we would put a stick of cinnamon in it. I suppose we could do like the old grandmas used to do. They used to take catnip and put it in their tea, and it seemed like the more they drank the harder they rocked!"

DELMA DANNER

"The old timers always said that sassafras tea was good to purify your blood and thin it in the spring so your blood isn't too thick for the summertime. When we were kids we always had to have a batch of sassafras tea in the spring to get us ready for the summer.

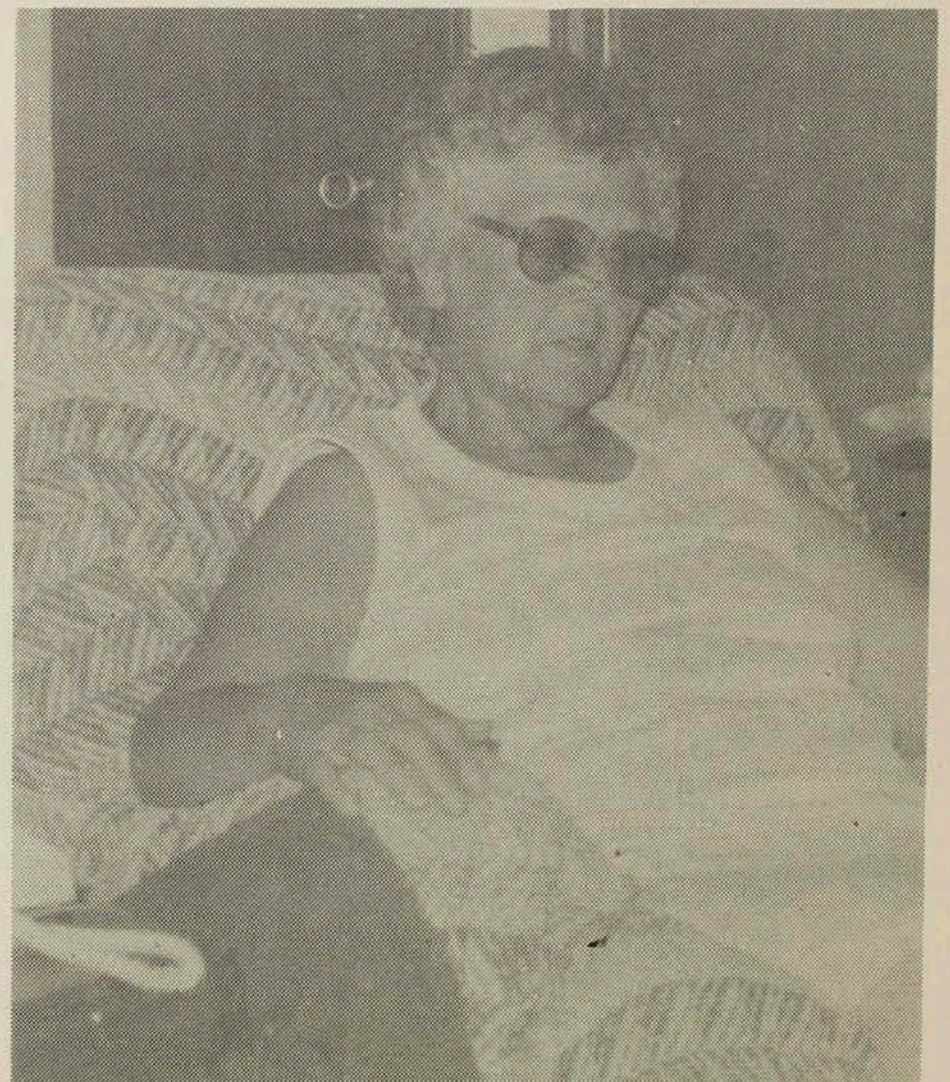
"First you cut the roots of the sassafras. Then you wash and scrub them until all of the mud and dirt is off.

"Put some of the roots into a pan and cover them with water. Put a lid on and then boil them. I don't usually boil them too long. Take the pan off the stove and let them sit in the hot water until the water cools. You can drink the tea hot or cold. Some people put sugar in and others don't. The bark can be taken off of the roots if the roots are a pretty good size. Boil the bark until it turns a pinkish color.

"I don't know where any grows around here but I know it does, because Papa used to go out and bring the roots home. He'd find it when he would be out squirrel hunting in the spring when it would be tender. He used to bring in the roots and if they were pretty good sized one's he'd peel off



DELMA DANNER



ANNA KELLY

the bark and if they were small roots he'd just put in the whole thing.

"If you get the tea too strong it tastes bitter. It tastes better sweetened; some people like it when it is not sweetened. If the tea is too strong or bitter you can add more hot water."

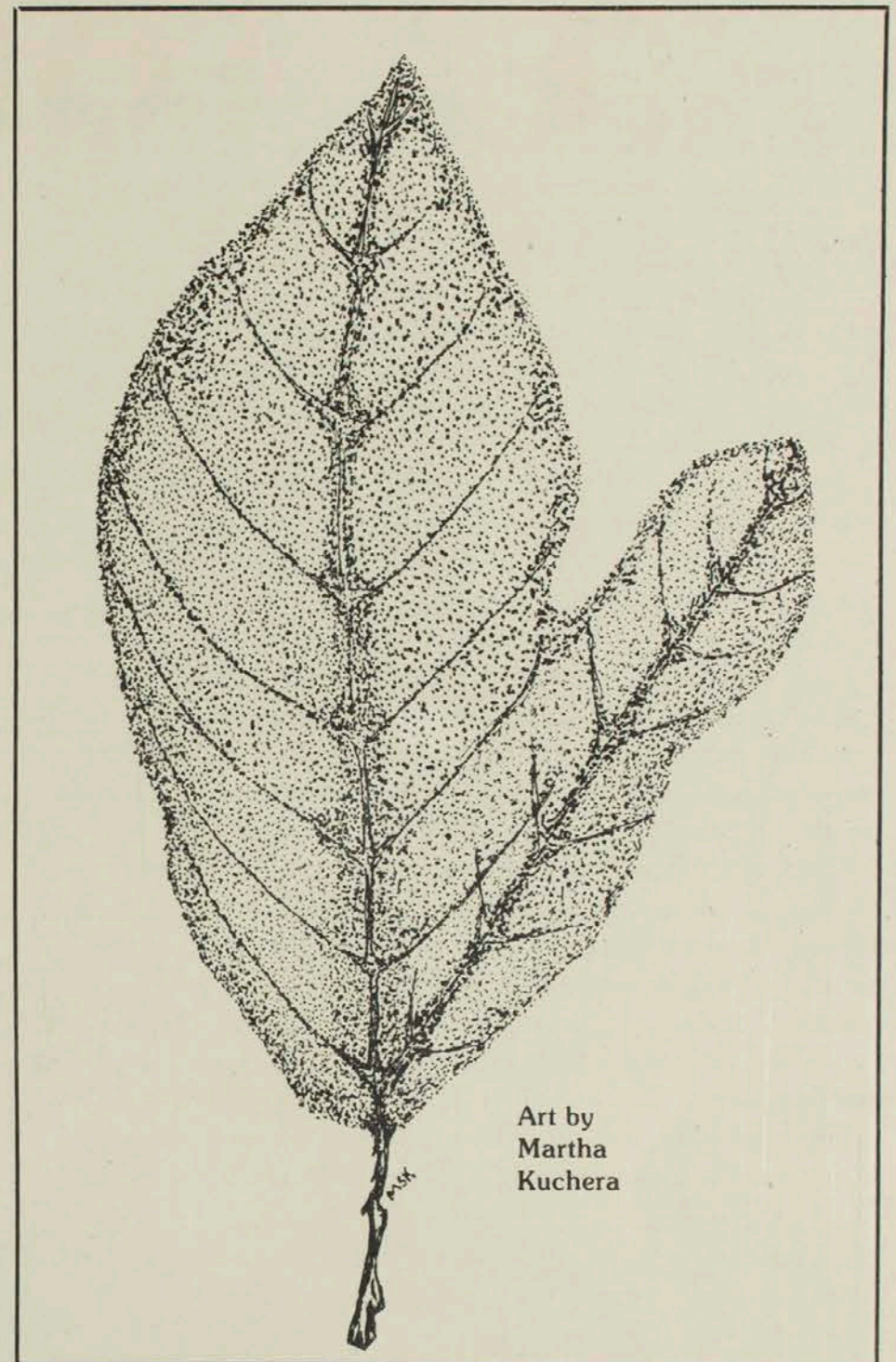
ANNA KELLY

"Well about all I ever knew about sassafras was that my folks, in the spring of the year, always planned to have sassafras tea in March. That's when you find it you know. My folks used to go to the Baldrige Drug Store in Milan, Mo., and buy the shavings in little plastic bags. You could always find it at Baldrige's and you could buy it by the bulk. It would be a real thick bark and it would always look sort of reddish.

"Now my mother had a home comfort range with six lids, and she always had a large kettle on it. She would wash the bark, put it in the kettle and pour a gallon of water over it. Then she'd set the kettle, which was about half full, sort of to the back of the range. She liked for it to simmer, slightly boil, but she'd cook it for four to five days. Of course, she would have to add water along just like with anything else that is boiled. It would simmer down, so she would add water and she'd boil it again through the second day, third day and it would be the fourth day before us kids would ever get to taste it. Oh, it would turn the prettiest shade of red.

"Well we all loved it. Mother loved it and we just liked it like you like Lipton tea or whatever. We grew up as little kids to love it and we could hardly wait until March to taste it. Chores were never a problem because they claimed it thinned their blood and would make you feel better. You'd be ready to ...well you'd feel more like working in the spring of the year.

Story and photos by
Susie Danner and Martha Kuchera



Art by
Martha
Kuchera



VIRGINIA BARNES

Virginia Barnes demonstrates the old-time art of brewing sassafras tea. Making sassafras and rhubarb tea was an annual spring project, along with making homemade soap. After the bark or roots are washed and scrubbed, they are boiled for varying lengths of time, depending on the desired strength. Delma Danner said the oldtimers believed that sassafras tea was good for purifying and thinning the blood. Anna Kelly also attested to the belief that the tea made one feel better, saying that chores always seemed to go a bit easier in the spring after the first batches of sassafras tea.

The Coming of the Colletts

By Al Lewis and Mark McIntyre

Not long ago America was caught up in a new wave of fashion. This fashion was the result of Alex Haley's novel and the movie, "Roots." "Roots" inspired Americans to research their past, to review their heritage, to discover the very roots of their own families.

Many started on the vast research project, but few actually accomplished it. Perhaps the challenges were too great for most's meager resources, as the piecing together of related bits and scraps of family history is an enormous task. This story is about two who embarked on such an adventure.

Mary and Gordon Collett were fortunate to have had enough interrelated information to piece together their family line. This information was obtained from family diaries, relics and stories passed down through the generations. But they had to be careful; it wasn't as easy as it sounds.

The Collett farm had an amazing amount of history in and around its once enormous area: such relics as antebellum homes, ice age boulders, the former site of a fort, a rare natural spring, strange soils of sandy-loam, a unique cemetery and mysterious Indian burial mounds. These all combined to make a truly classic setting for the history of this family.

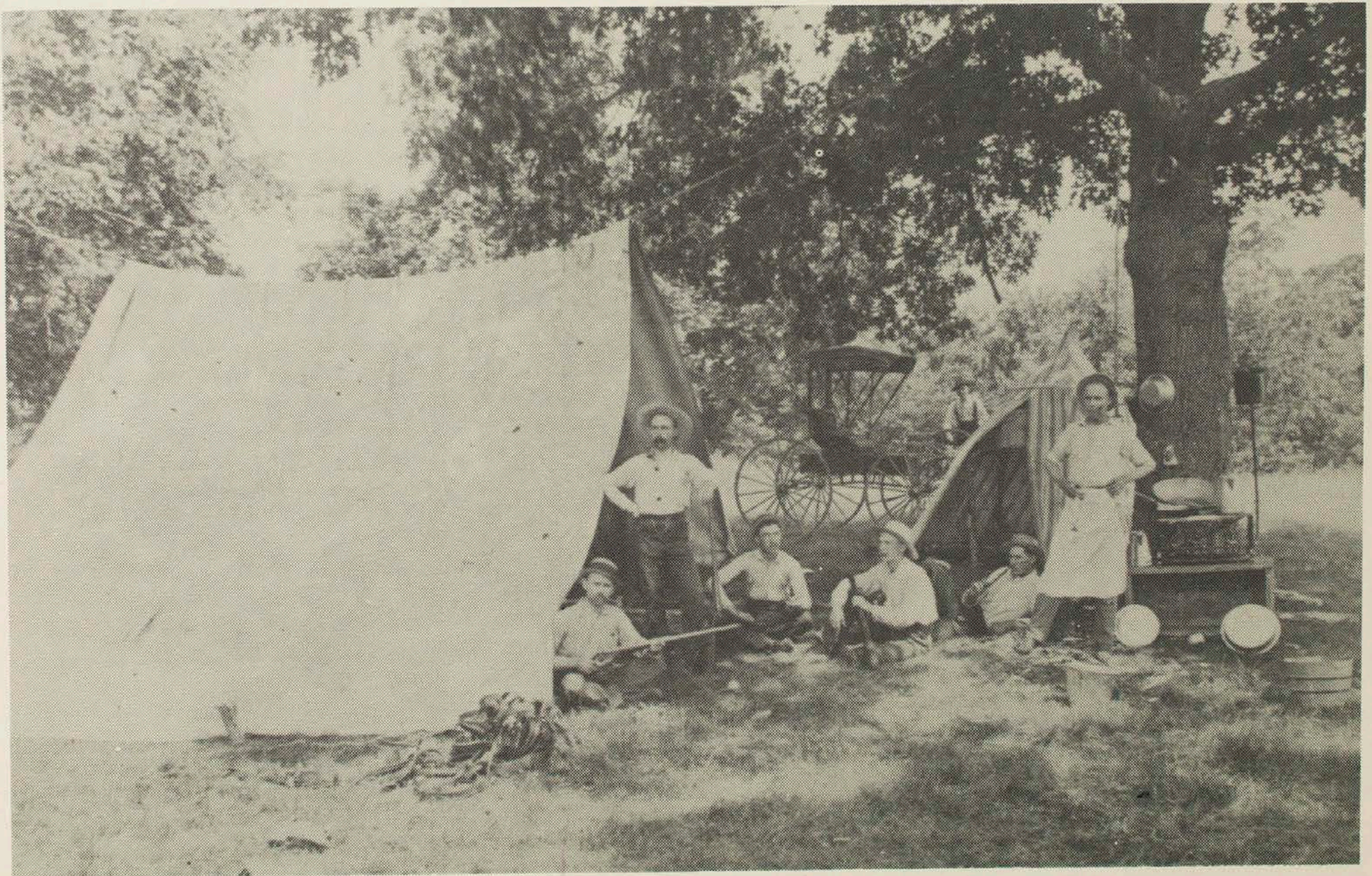
The story first began in 1821, when Missouri became the 24th state in the Union. Three years later the local Indian

tribes, Iowas, Sacs and Foxes, signed a land renewal treaty. According to this agreement, the Indians would forfeit their lands around what is now Macon County to the state. A flaw soon developed over definition of the northern boundary, however, producing dire consequences.

In 1829 settlers began to move north from Howard County. Most settled around what is now Macon, but a few continued north, deciding to settle the land around the upper Chariton River. Here they formed what is known among the Indians as "the Cabins of the White Folk" or "the cabins."

Soon afterward, the settlers began to encounter Indian hunting parties. The flaw in the treaty came to light at this time as the Indians believed that they still had the exclusive right to hunt in the area. The settlers didn't see it that way however, mistaking them for Indians on the warpath. Thus the Big Neck War between the settlers and the Iowa Indians under Chief Big Neck began.

The prospect of an all-out Indian war frightened the settlers so much that they appealed to the federal troops for military aid. So, in July 1829, a small force of 26 men left Howard County and marched north. When they arrived at the Cabins they found that the Indians had retreated northward toward what is now Putnam and Schuyler County. At a small stream the two opposing forces met and fought a skirmish, which



Camp Collett was founded around 1863 by Asa and Barbara Collett. It was probably the first recreational campground in northeast Missouri. Invitations were sent out to encourage families to come out and spend a quiet time in the country.

neither side clearly won. The result frightened the whites so much that they gathered a large force of militia and federal troops, then moved northward once again, determined to crush the Indians and secure a homestead. But as events would have it, the settlers were left holding an empty bag because the Iowa Indians had fled the area soon after the first battle.

History has a way of repeating itself as another unfair treaty started the Black Hawk War. During this war the federal troops built Fort Clark, a three-cornered log fort, just south of the present Ira R. Collett house. One purpose of the fort was to protect the settlement from the Black Hawk Indians.

From this dark spot in our country's history came John Cain, a Collett family relative by marriage. Cain, a born "hunter," moved west from his birthplace in North Carolina to Kentucky. After living in Kentucky, Cain moved to Howard County, then moved to the Cabins in 1828. Soon after he arrived both he and the original settlers of the Cabins were forced to flee the area because of the Big Neck War. When the war was over Cain traveled back and settled there.

In 1830 Cain moved his family north to the Cabins. Along with the family members, Cain brought one of Adair County's first slaves, Richard Hill. Racial discrimination didn't apply to this slave as he was treated with dignity and respect by the settlers at the Cabins. They alternated boarding him and working him, while teaching him how to read and write. Hill, in turn, taught his family how to read and write. Hill and his family are buried in the Collett cemetery; their markers are made of sandstone.

Along with Cain came several other families. Like Cain, this group moved off during the Big Neck War but stayed during the Black Hawk War. Among them were the Conner Brothers, William "Billy" Collett and his son Asa. The Conner brothers later built the first business in Adair County, a tannery. After his marriage to Bartheba "Bash" Cain, Asa worked at the tannery.

1849 witnessed the Great California Gold Rush. Risking everything, prospectors flocked into the gold fields in search

of fame and fortune. Asa, hearing of Sutter's Mill, headed west to stake his claim.

After arriving on the scene, Asa found the fields filled to capacity. Doubts began to appear in his mind after observing the many failures and only few scattered successes of the miners. Matters were also complicated by the fact that all of the favorable prospecting sites were occupied and prices for supplies were high.

Prices may either rise or fall, and it occurred to Asa that the introduction of a middleman could put a flux in the market price of supplies. So, instead of buying mining gear, Asa purchased a wagon and a team of mules. Thus Collett began a transport service, transporting mining supplies to the mines and selling them for a profit. Asa's business was so successful that it occupied his attention for 12 years.

This lengthy absence from home convinced Bash that her beloved husband was dead, so she began to plan for the future. While occupying her time with general woman's work of that era such as raising sheep, spinning cloth and making coverlets, it became evident that she should remarry.

Some people believe that chance plays a major role in their lives. It may have been by chance or by information that caused Asa to return home on the exact day Bash was to be remarried. This, of course, cancelled the wedding and saved the Collett family. After returning home, Asa and his neighbors began construction of what later became known as the Ira Collett house.

Ira married Emma J. Grimm in 1882. Emma was a sister to the Grim brothers, who later helped found the Grim-Smith hospital. The life of this couple was different from the average family of this time period. While most either farmed or worked in a factory, Ira and his wife did a variety of things. Ira operated a horse farm, raised cattle and hogs, and a few grain crops. Along with farming, Ira also built fences, cleared timber and was active in community affairs.

Some people still recall camping on the Collett farm. Around 1863 Asa and Bash opened Camp Collett, probably the first recreational campground in northeast Missouri.

While the camp was in operation, invitations were sent out to encourage families to come out and spend a quiet time in the country, free from the problems of city life. The area must have been enjoyable for a campsite, because several Kirksville families camped there. Camp Collett operated until the early 1900s.

Before becoming Ira's wife, Emma taught in public schools. Later at home Emma helped perpetuate Camp Collett by taking care of the camp's provisions and menus, often furnishing home grown foods and meats to its campers.

The couple also had a family of three children, Hubert, Ruth and Anna. Their son, Hubert, was born in 1890. Hubert's life was different from that of his mother and father. He attended college at the Normal School in Kirksville studying mathematics, chemistry and music. His education and interest in geology helped him get a job in Midian, Kansas, working in the oil fields.

This is a typical winter scene near the Collett farm. (Photo courtesy of Gordon and Mary Collett)





This is a sketch made from a photograph of Asa and Bash Collett, ancestors of Gordon Collett. (Photo courtesy of Gordon and Mary Collett)

Prior to leaving for Kansas, Hubert married Alice Hill. During their stay in Kansas the first of their four children was born. After returning to the northeast Missouri area, Hubert went into farming with his father, then went into the frozen food business in 1941. During the depression, the Colletts had fences built and cleared land for pasture, allowing Ira and Hubert to provide needed jobs during that period of history.

Gordon Collett was born in 1928. Like his father, Gordon was bound to have a good education. He first attended Bunker Hill and graduated from Kirksville Senior High School in 1945. Gordon then went to the Kirksville State Teachers College (now Northeast Missouri State University) and obtained a bachelor's degree and then a masters degree in music. While in school Gordon worked with his father in their locker business.

Gordon married Mary Kerr in 1959. Like Gordon, Mary had a good education with a bachelor of science degree in social studies and a masters in secondary education and counseling.

Gordon began singing professionally at an early age and today teaches piano, voice and organ to talented students. This couple also realized many of their family heirlooms should be preserved. In fact, the Colletts had so many pieces of antique furniture that they were able to help furnish three houses for "The Friends of Arrow Rock" at Arrow Rock, Mo. This furniture became a permanent part of that National Historic Site.

For their generosity, Gordon and Mary were recognized for their contributions to this site by the governor. Mary also had enough recipes handed down from the past to compile a cookbook which contains recipes as old as five generations.

Today Gordon and Mary Collett still live on their farm south of Novinger, and they still retain all of the original buildings and sites except the John Cain house. With all of the old buildings and relics now a part of a National Historic District the Colletts are constantly reminded of their rich heritage.



**ASA AND BARBARA "BASH" COLLETT
(Photo courtesy of Gordon and Mary Collett)**



This photo shows children riding in goat carts at Camp Collett, one of the first recreational campgrounds in northeast Missouri. (Photo courtesy of Gordon and Mary Collett)



Missouri's Tall Daughter

By Bobby Poston

She was born Ella K. Ewing in LaGrange, located in Lewis County, Mo. Later, she moved to the small remote town of Rainbow, Mo., located southeast of Gorin. But as years passed, she became known to everyone world-wide as the "Missouri Giantess," or "Ella the Giantess." Her record height was a towering eight feet and four inches and she carried a weight of 256 pounds. Some folks thought of Ella as a "freak exhibition piece," but there was more to Ella some overlooked. She had feelings and a personality just like everyone else, and to her neighbors in Rainbow, she was "normal" compassionate friend.

Her date of birth was March 9, 1872, and she was the only child of Benjamin F. Ewing and Anna Eliza Herring Ewing. Ella seemed to be an average child, and was for seven years.

During Ella's school years, she enjoyed playing with the other school children. Soon after her seventh birthday, Ella's pituitary gland started mass production of the hormone which was to be the cause of her abnormal growth. By the age of nine it was obvious Ella's growth was extreme. At the age of 12 she was more than five feet and six inches and stood taller than her mother. One of the many problems Ella faced was finding shoes to fit her. It was at this age she would go with her father to Memphis to buy shoes. In later years Ella's shoe size finally stopped increasing but at size 24. So naturally Ella was always self-conscious of her feet. Only on rare occasions were her feet pictured.

Her parents felt she was just a rapid-growing child, but at the age of 14 she was as tall as Ben, six feet and two inches, and her parents started to pray her growth would stop. At age 16 she stood seven foot and by 18 she had added eight more inches. By then her parents feared her growth would never stop.

The growth Ella experienced was from her waist down and in her arms and hands. She wore several rings on each hand in an attempt to disguise the size of her fingers. Her little fingers were comparable to the size of a man's thumb.

By then the happy, frolicking school days Ella once knew were gone because she obviously stood out from her friends. She tried to participate in games but try as she would, she always seemed the center of attention. At times she would get so embarrassed, due to the other students stares and snickers she would burst into tears. This was only the start of the sorrow she was to experience from cruel remarks from the entire world.

Ella was a kind, compassionate lady. But this didn't have any bearing on the attention Ella drew in public. It was a 4th of July celebration in 1885 in Wyaconda that Ella made her first public appearance. She was scheduled to read the Declaration of Independence but as she stepped to the stage the crowd was immediately drawn to silence and stares. Ella

struggled to read but the fixed stares overran her confidence. She was led away in tears by her ever-comforting parents.

1889 was to be the blossoming of Ella's career in public tours. Lewis Epstein, who had connections with the manager of a Chicago museum, received information of Ella's abnormal size. It was impossible for Ben and Anna to keep their daughter's size a secret. Epstein presented a business deal to use Ella in the museum. The Ewings refused, but after persistence from Epstein he convinced Ben and Anna to permit Ella to go on tour. The \$1,000 offered in the contract was sure to relieve some of the financial burdens of those hard times, and the contract was only for five weeks, but just the thought of Ella being exhibited as a freak seemed to be an insult to the proud Ewings. They didn't know it, but this was to be the beginning of the end of Ella's peaceful homelife.

In January 1897 Ella, accompanied by her mother, prepared to go on tour with the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Her contract was to begin in February and she received \$125 a week for 26 weeks of circus traveling. The contract also offered Ella and Anna an all-expense-paid trip as well as allowing Ben to visit six times, and his expenses were also paid.

In the winter of 1897 Ella returned home with the idea of building a home and settling down. She purchased an 80-acre plot and hired John Beck to build her a customized house. To accommodate her extreme height Ella ordered the doors built 10 feet high and the ceilings 15 feet. Her tables were four-and-a-half feet tall from the floor and her bathtub was six feet long. For sleeping comfortably, Ella's bed was nine-and-a-half feet long and she had a hammock 15 feet long.

After the completion of Ella's house in 1898 she was rested and again became eager to go to work. She signed a contract with Buffalo Bill's "Wild West Show" thinking it would bring the same joy and satisfaction she received from performing with Barnum and Bailey. This contract offered \$150 a week and lasted from March until mid-October.

The first few weeks seemed like an eternity to Ella; this job was not what she had expected. Finally in June, Ella could stand it no more and decided to break her contract. She returned to Rainbow and stayed with friends and loved ones until her next business deal.

1900 was going to be one of Ella's most shattering years. In February Ella signed a contract with a Chicago museum. After a few weeks her mother became deathly ill with

pneumonia. By the middle of March Anna's health had deteriorated so much that Ella telegraphed Ben and told him to come to Chicago. Soon after Ben arrived, Anna died March 23, 1900, at the age of 62. Anna's body was taken by train back to Gorin. Ella and Ben were overcome with grief as they made the long trip home. Anna had always been with Ella to help her through her trying moments, but now Ella was alone.

For some time after Anna's death Ella was in mourning. But April 3, 1900, she was baptized and this seemed to renew her spiritually. This stirred up Ella's desire to go back on tour again.

Of all the prominent cities and elegant countries Ella visited she found time to exhibit in Kirksville, Mo. This



Ella had reached a height of eight feet, four inches at age 26. She had a customized house built to accommodate her height. (Photo courtesy of Maxie Gardner)

engagement was with the Royal Neighbors Lodge on May 3, 1902. This was one of her more unusual exhibits because it took place in a vacant storeroom. A fee of 10 cents was charged and all proceeds went to the Lodge.

Ella was not all business. She had the same traits and interests as any woman: shopping, cooking and hosting parties. As a devoted church member, Ella put God before anything else. She was an active member of the Harmony Grove Baptist church and a Sunday school teacher.

Ella made few public appearances during 1909-1910. She appeared at a few fairs and at one museum engagement. In May 1911 she signed a contract to exhibit in Chicago. She had to break it due to her health, however, and never exhibited in show business after this.



She had a persistent cough which she could not seem to shed; it was due to tuberculosis. By Oct. 27, 1912, Ella's condition was so bad that a doctor and her immediate family was sent for. The doctor worked futilely trying to "gain ground" on Ella's condition but on Friday, Jan. 10, 1913, at 8 a.m., Ella Ewing died of pulmonary tuberculosis at age 40 years, 10 months and one day.

As the years went on Ella's home fell to shambles. Vandals, as well as sight-seers, came to look for anything of value. Some of the local residents considered purchasing the frame and restoring it, creating an Ella Ewing museum, but fire gutted the house June 17, 1967, and leveled the two-story shell.

After the fire a group was organized to reconstruct her tombstone which was almost obliterated by weather. Donations came from about 7,000 sources and the money received helped to purchase a new rose granite marker. It reads:

*In memory
of
Ella K. Ewing
Born March 9, 1872
Lewis County, Mo.
Died Jan. 10, 1912
Scotland County, Mo.
Height 8 ft. 4½ in.
Weight 256 lbs.
Member of the
Harmony Baptist Church
Daughter of
Benjamin and Anna
Herring Ewing
This memorial
made possible
by folks that
knew of Ella
1967*

October 1, 1967, the Missouri Soil Conservation Service built and dedicated "The Ella Ewing Lake," a 15-acre lake created near Gorin in memory of Ella.

She may be gone now, but the memory and impressions she left on the whole world can never be forgotten. In addition to the memory Ella left behind, the landmarks in her name will always be here to refresh the memory of those who knew her or just knew of her.

Ella's was self-conscious about her large feet, which finally stopped growing at size 24. She rarely allowed them to be photographed. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Platz)

VACANCY:

Historic Site Seeking Another Worthwhile Tenant

Have you ever stared in awe at the strange, deserted brick structure south of Macon on U.S. Highway 63? Many have, but few have ever stopped to find out the true history of this magnificent building.

When first built, the building provided training for boys as the Bles Military Academy, and in later years it was converted into the Still-Hildreth Sanitorium. But after more than 50 years of service, the doors were locked in the late 1960s. Now the 64,000 square-foot structure stands gloomily over its destitute court yard, waiting for restoration.

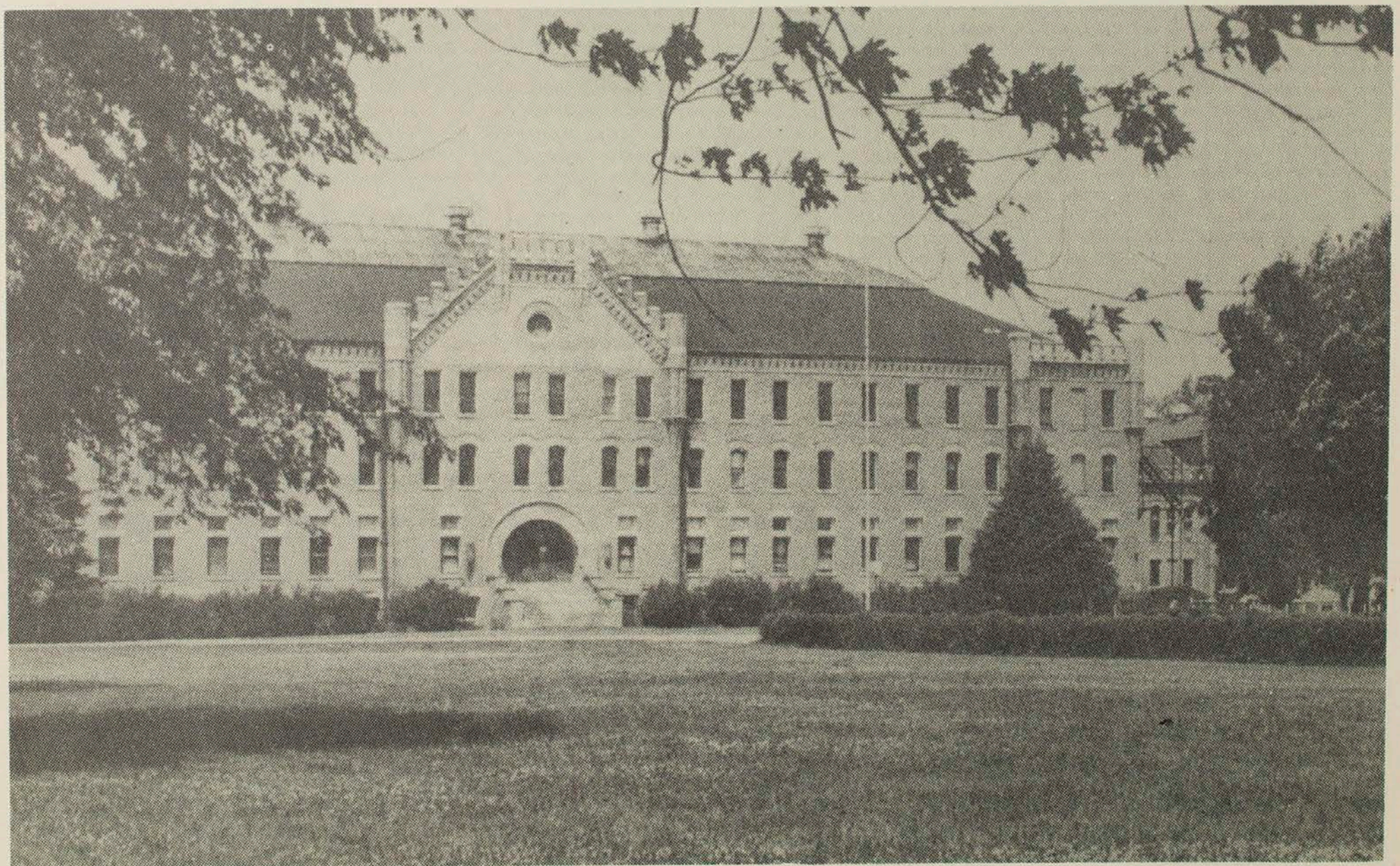
Frederick Bles was an outstanding Macon citizen. He was president of the First National Bank of Macon, the Macon Citizen Printing Co. and the Hartford Loan and Investment Co. He owned the Bles Theater and the Jefferson Hotel in Macon. According to a story in the Macon Chronicle-Herald, he was responsible for replacing mudstones and cobblestones with bricks, creating parks and establishing contemporary buildings and a modern sewage system.

Fredrick William Victor Bles was born in Aix-la-Chapelle, Germany, March 30, 1860. He came to America in 1881, became a lieutenant colonel in the Iowa National Guard, and was appointed aide-de-camp to Governor Horace Boies.

He next became headmaster of the St. James Academy in Macon, a good school but a financial failure. Bles served there for five years until he retired due to failing health. After his father's death in 1896, Bles inherited a German estate and a large sum of money which he used to build the Bles Military Academy.

For the cost of the building, about \$1 million, Bles really got his money's worth. The building consisted of 64,398 square feet and was constructed of fireproof brick. Every door, door casing, baseboard and window in the building was of molded copper. Many of the floors were made of marble and there were marble pillars.

Bles, a good scholar and soldier, wanted to establish a school with high standards. The academy was developed as a home and school for fifth through 12th grade boys. The goals of the academy were to teach the boys respect, honor and reliability, as well as military discipline. Their academic studies, which covered six years, included chemistry, physics and foreign language, as well as English, math and history. The academy employed 12 teachers giving it a 10 to one ratio of students to teachers. Tuition for the Bles Academy was higher than for any other western academic school.



The school, however, was not all academics. The students had a recreation room with pool tables, a piano and tables for chess, checkers and cards. There was a one-twelfth-mile running track and a swimming pool. The ground floor housed target rifle ranges, bowling alleys and complete gymnastic equipment. A lake of 20 acres provided a place for fishing, boating and skating.

Blees died in September 1906. His widow later married an instructor of the academy and they continued to operate the school until it went bankrupt three years later. The building was then purchased by Andrew Taylor Still, Arthur Grant Hildreth, Harry Still and Charles Still for the treatment of patients with mental and nervous diseases.

The Still-Hildreth Sanitorium was founded March 1, 1914. According to the 1965 "Journal of Osteopathy," the institution "was known for the handling of nervous diseases, proper environment, the right kind of food, and the proper system of exercise, all coupled with proper osteopathic treatment."

Dr. Andrew Taylor Still had for years said, "insanity and kindred nervous troubles could be cured by proper conditions and surroundings." Following his belief, his sons, Drs. Charles and Harry Still, and Dr. Arthur Hildreth opened the sanitorium in Macon.

In 1914 the national recovery rate from mental illnesses was 10 percent. "Due to the positive approach toward their patients," Dr. Harry Still said, "Still-Hildreth's recovery rate was 35 to 65 percent."

According to Dr. Harry Still, "They started a different social trend. The patients ate in a dining room in a co-educational existence with linen, crystal and silverware." The patients were exposed to a variety of recreation. They played softball, tennis and golf. Many residents of Macon came to the sanitorium to play bridge and bingo with the residents. The patients were allowed to attend large balls and regular parties. They went on excursions, picnics, in town to movies—things that were relatively unheard of in those days." Dr. Still said.

The Still-Hildreth Sanitorium was unique in its osteopathic approach to mental illness, but the hospital also used



Fredrick William Victor Blees opened the Blees Military Academy in 1899 in order to teach boys between the fifth and 12th grade "respect, honor and reliability, as well as military discipline." In addition to his emphasis on academics, Blees provided the students with several forms of recreation, including pool tables and board games, and a wide range of athletic and gymnastic equipment. (Photo courtesy of Macon Chronicle-Herald)



The grounds of the 70-acre estate in Macon include a 20-acre lake. The building itself was built by Fredrick Blees with money he inherited from his father's estate in Germany. His academy consisted of 64,398 square feet of fireproof brick, with molded copper doors, door casings, baseboards and windows. The structure became the Still-Hildreth Sanitorium in 1914. (Photos these two pages courtesy of Jo Morrow)



treatments similar to other institutions of that day. The three main types of therapy used were psychiatric therapy, physical therapy and chemotherapy. The physical therapy included electric shock treatments and fever therapy. During fever therapy, the patient was locked in a cabinet and his temperature was raised to 106 or 107 degrees. Hydrotherapy was used to promote elimination of poisons that had a bearing upon the condition.

When the sanatorium went out of business in the late 1960s, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine took over for a few years using their interns and doctors for the same cause, but the institution was closed soon after.

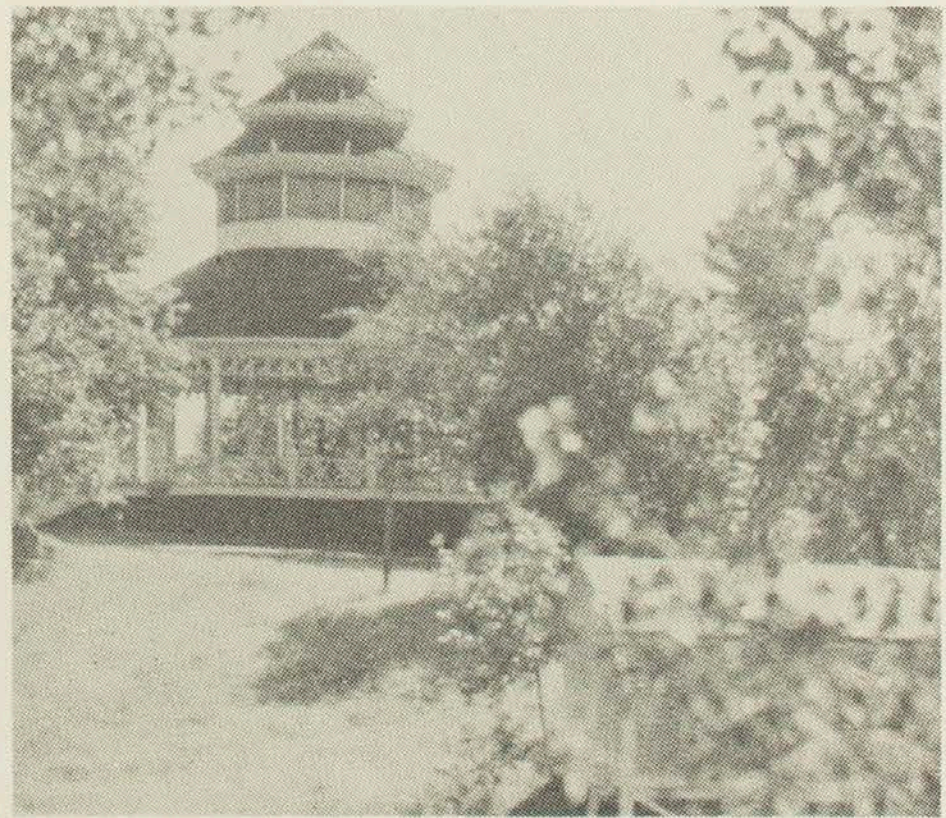
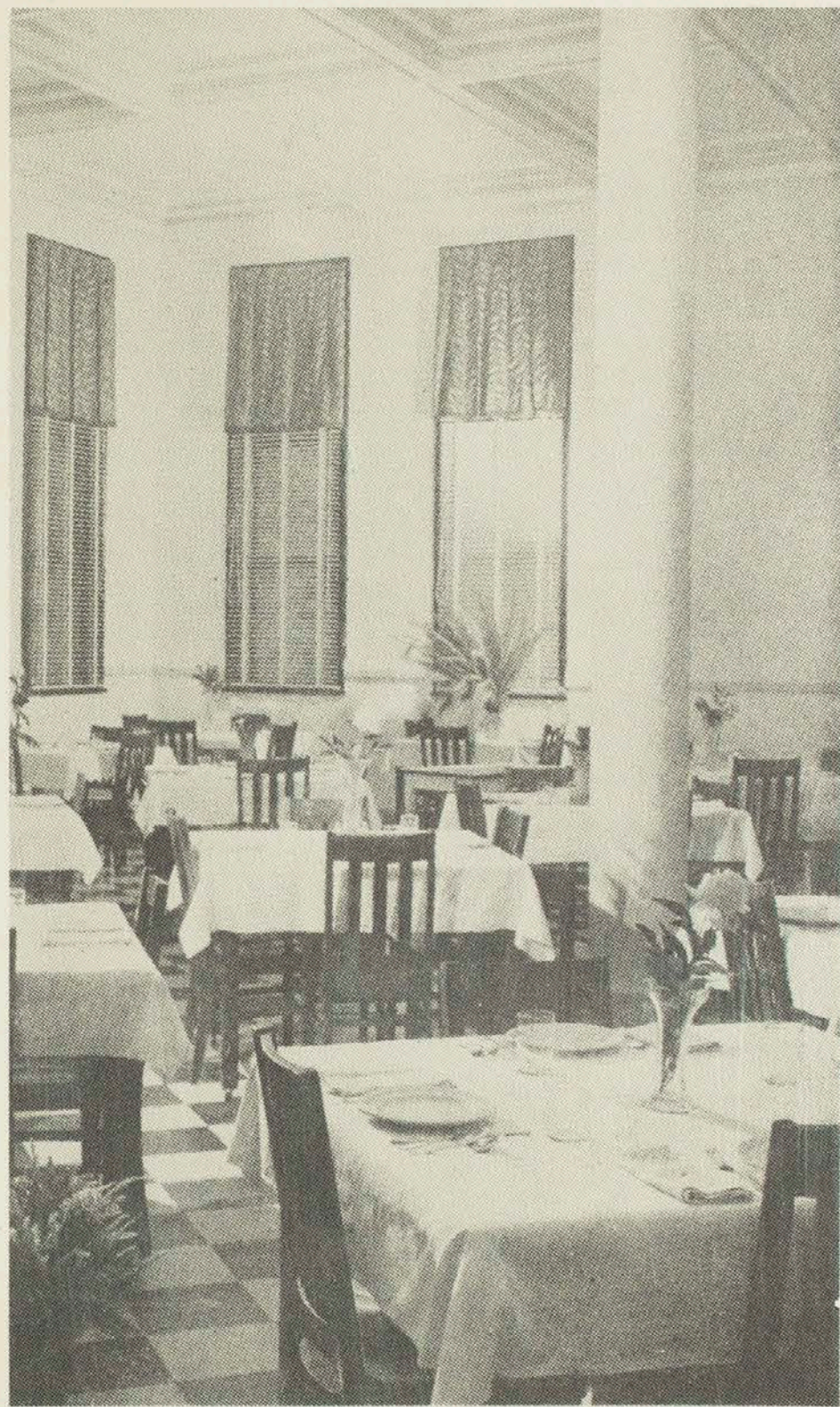
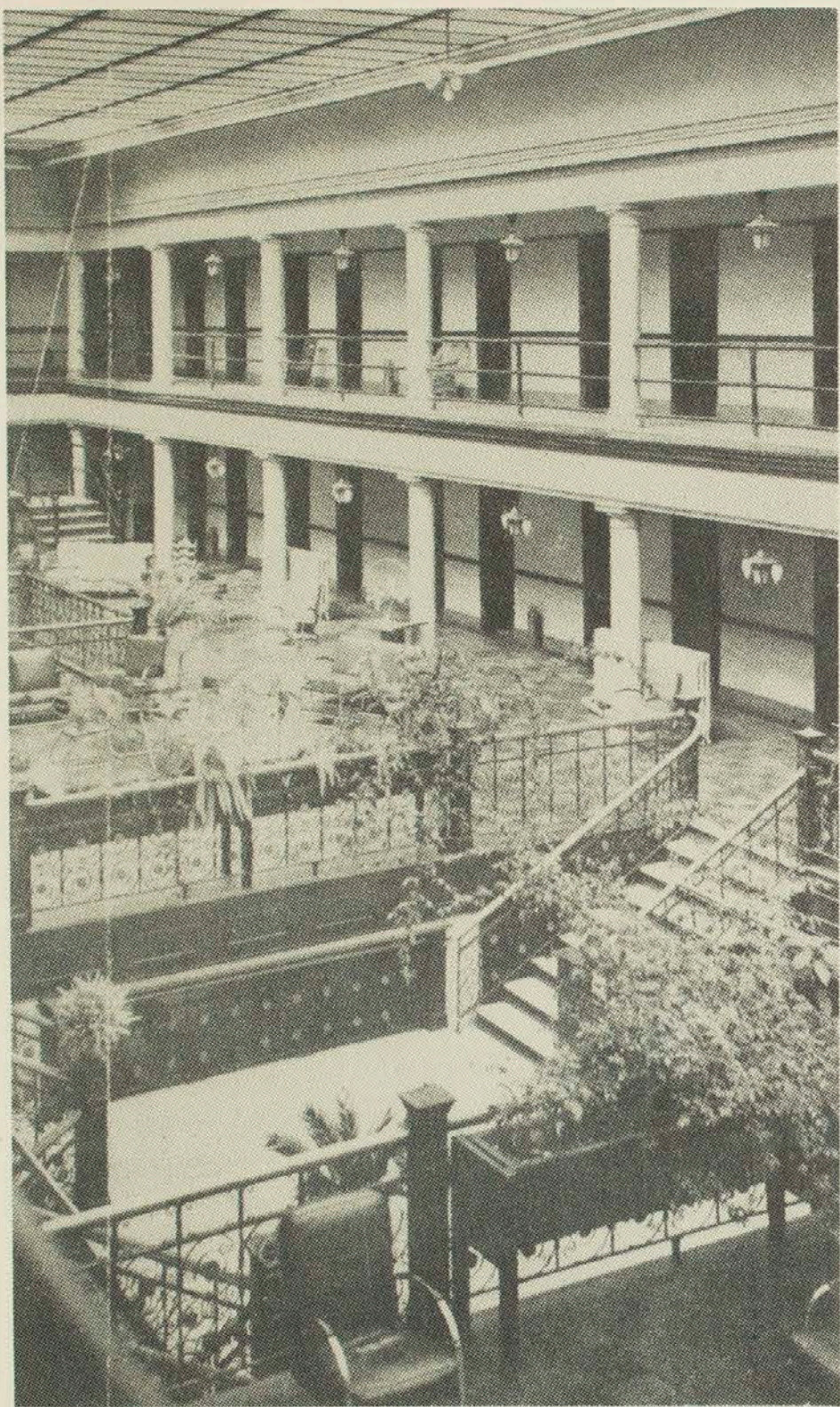
Gary Dickinson purchased the property for \$75,000 and gave it to the city of Macon with the agreement that the city would purchase the other 70 acres. Dickinson said the building was assessed at above \$800,000 several years ago; Mayor Kiser said the value might be as much as \$1,000,000.

Mrs. Jo Morrow of Macon is a member of Bles Still-Hildreth Building Preservation Incorporated. She said, "It's kind of a lengthy name but there's a lot of sentimental value attached to the building. So many people in Macon County worked here and had connections with it; no one wanted to see it destroyed." The group wants to preserve the building and try to keep it from deteriorating further. Preservation committee members hold flea markets on weekends in the annex building to raise money for the preservation project.

Some people want to tear the building down and sell the brick but Mrs. Morrow opposes this. She would like to see the building preserved and possibly used as a display area for local community groups. Mrs. Morrow feels it would be a big mistake to tear the building down. She has had architects examine the building, and they said, "This will be here when the new buildings are rotten and gone. There's just no building that they've put together like this."



Dr. Andrew Taylor Still (above) and Arthur Grant Hildreth (right) purchased the Bles Academy to use as the Still-Hildreth Sanatorium for the treatment of patients with mental and nervous diseases. Although the national recovery rate from mental illness at that time was only 10 percent, Still-Hildreth's recovery rate was 35 to 65 percent, according to Dr. Harry Still. Their innovative approach to treatment of mental illness was responsible for the hospital's success. (Photos this page courtesy of Still National Osteopathic Museum)



The top two photos are interior shots of the Still-Hildreth Sanatorium. Left, the hospital operated its own dairy. Above, another view of the grounds shows an ornate gazebo built near the lake. (Photos this page courtesy of Jo Morrow)

On the Banks of Hazel Creek

Since the new city reservoir is going to cover parts of the Hazel Creek/Fegley area, some of its rich heritage will be lost. The community has had an active past and this should never be forgotten.

The boundaries of the Hazel Creek area are the Schuyler County line on the north, the Chariton River on the west and Highway 63 on the east; the southern boundary is about eight miles west of Kirksville. The area includes the town of Fegley, two churches and an old school. It was a rich coal mining area and is still a fertile farming area.

Fegley is located on Route B, 10 miles northwest of Kirksville. Other than one house, only the general store remains. The first store was built by a man named Hatfield. It was located across the road from where the present store is. The first store burned down and a new structure was built on the east side of the road. The new store was built by Sam Halley, and opened June 16, 1902. Dewey Sevits said, "People came from as far away as five miles or even further to trade at Fegley, both at the store and the mill."

Between the years of 1913 and 1926 the store changed hands four times. March 26, 1926, Herman and Lena Miley purchased the store, and they owned it for 50 years. The store was closed in February 1976.

Francis McCabe, a life-long resident of the Hazel Creek area, gave us the following information on how Fegley got its name: "The place was named Fegley after a German farmer, Dave Fegley. The Fegley farm is still there, but the Fegleys are gone."

Coal mining played an important part in the Hazel Creek area; the first coal was dug before the 1860s. Mining was done in a unique way in that the farmers tended their fields in the summer months and worked in coal mines during the winter. Most of the mines in the Hazel Creek area were shallow. In some places the men dug into the creek banks where the vein was exposed. Another method of mining coal was to dig a slope into the hillside until the vein was struck. A shaft was sunk in still other places.

There were rumors of slave labor in these first mines.



This group photo of classes at the Hazel Creek School was taken around 1912. Front row, left to right are George Hargis, Leo Bell, Harvey Sevits, John Hatfield, Earnest Sevits, Leo Glaspie, Roy Findling, Frank Glaspie, John Willis, Ellsworth Rash, Fae Kirkpatrick, Ceceil Felker Nichols, Sylvia Paris Vickers, Sylvia Glaspie Fowler, Edith Houston Vestal, Ellie Houston McCullough; Second row, Roy Norris, Willie Summers, Otto Bell, Dewey Sevits, Roy Glaspie, Geno Paris, Ada Glaspie Beck, Alta Findling Stiles, Dessie Rash, Myrtle Glaspie Tillapaugh, Delia Willis Dillabaugh, Gertrude Felker Wimber, Lulah Sevits May, Beulah Sevits Rhoads, Thelma Bell Sanders, Lula Findling Kenner, Mattie Stamper (teacher); Back row, Charlie Bledsoe, Jerry Bledsoe, Reed Black, John Hargis, Bert Summers, Delia Filkins Lay, Opal Willis Baker, Anna Bell Buchanan, Mabel Felker Hanlin, Alta Glaspie Newcomer, Clair Rhodes Edris, Pearl Summers Daniels, Maude Willis Sevits.

There was a Negro settlement in this area and also a log church for the Negroes.

One important event in the lives of the Hazel Creek residents was the making of molasses. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Ted and Lola Sevits, about how Jim Newcomer, a former Hazel Creek resident, made his molasses.

"When Jim Newcomer started out in the molasses business it was just a horse and cane mill. The horse had a big sweep on him and went around and around. That was really slow work.

"Later he shipped the molasses out of the mill in wooden barrels sometimes as big as 30 gallons. Like whiskey barrels

at one time, the barrels were made out of solid oak. After it was shipped, a hole was drilled in the barrel."

Ted continues, "When I started to work for Jim he had a big enough operation to have a belt pulley that you could run a tractor on. He would have 10 or 12 hired men in the fall of the year.

"When he started the harvest everybody stripped cane, that is they took the leaves off. You used a board or a stick to strip it. Then you left the seed part on top. They claimed that the leaves made the molasses bitter. The molasses was the juice that was squeezed out of the stalk.

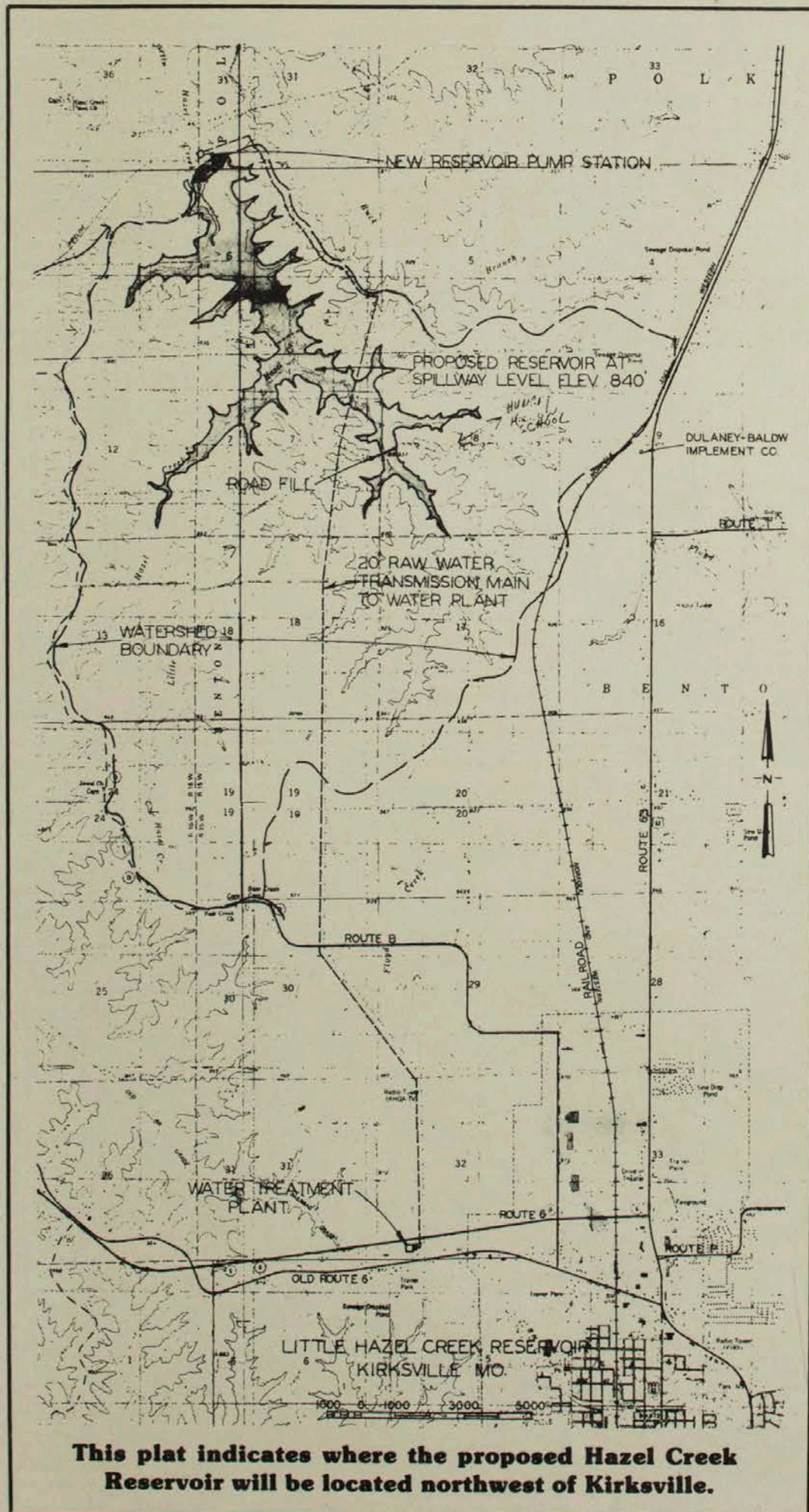
"Cutting the cane was quite a job; it was all done by hand. Two men would go along and do two rows apiece with a corn knife. They would put the heads of the cane in a pile and later it would be thrashed or fed to the chickens. About everybody would feed them to their chickens. Jim would always have enough to run them through a thrashing machine and get the cane seed.

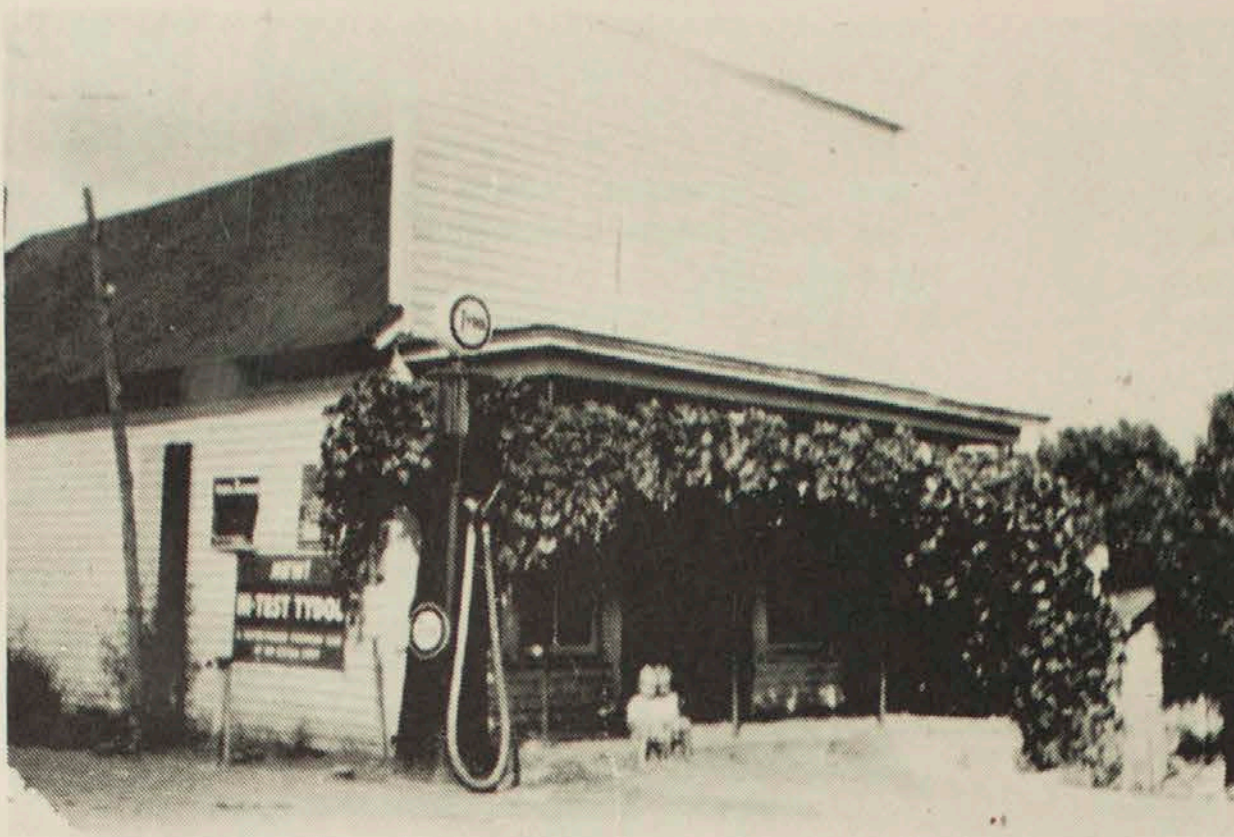
"The pummies (pummies are the stalks of the cane after the juice has been squeezed out) had to be disposed of if you didn't have use for them. Jim just had so many of them he'd build a shed and make a roof out of those pummies. They'd have to be pretty deep to shed the water and snow. Some would last over a year. When the pummies would come out of the old mill, they would go through a silage chopper.

"When the juice was squeezed out of the cane it went in a barrel. In the bottom of this barrel we fastened a pipe. The juice would go into a box about four feet wide and 12 to 14 inches deep. It had a tin bottom in it. When we got that full of juice then we'd run it through clay. We would go over to Frank Glaspie's place just across the creek because that was the kind of clay Jim always said he wanted. You couldn't use just any kind of clay. We would throw so much clay in there and stir it all up. It really looked like a mess. Then all the clay had to settle. A little pipe came out of the barrel to let the juice out to go into the pans. The juice didn't come right off the bottom; we had the pipe put high enough that we didn't get any sediment, but we strained it through cloth anyway.

"When we would fill those pans we would make as many as four batches. We would do this four times a day so we'd make as many as 16 batches a day. A panful would be about 50 or 60 gallons of juice. The amount of molasses made from a panful of juice depended on the desired thickness. When making really thick molasses we'd only be able to make about eight gallons from a panful.

"The molasses was sold in gallons. Right after the molasses was made, it sold for about \$1.25 or \$1.50 a gallon. If a lot was left over the next summer and if Jim couldn't sell it for 50 cents, he'd give it to the hogs. Jim had stickers to put on the container when he sold his molasses. They said 'J. A. Newcomer.'"





There are two churches in the Hazel Creek area, the Hazel Creek Union Church and the Hazel Creek Primitive Baptist Church. A new Hazel Creek Union Church is presently under construction.

The Hazel Creek Union Church was built in 1896. Peter Voelker was the head carpenter. The seats and the Bible stand that Voelker made in 1896 are still being used today. A member of the church, Samuel Scott, had predicted that he would be the first to be buried in the cemetery, and he was, in 1896.

The Primitive Baptist Church is older than the Hazel Creek Union Church by only eight years. It was built in 1888. The founding date for the organization of the Primitive Baptist was 1843. The Hazel Creek Primitive Baptist is a leader of churches in that denomination and holds an annual summer conference.

The Hazel Creek School was built in 1903. At one time about 100 children attended the school. Now the building is used only for storage.

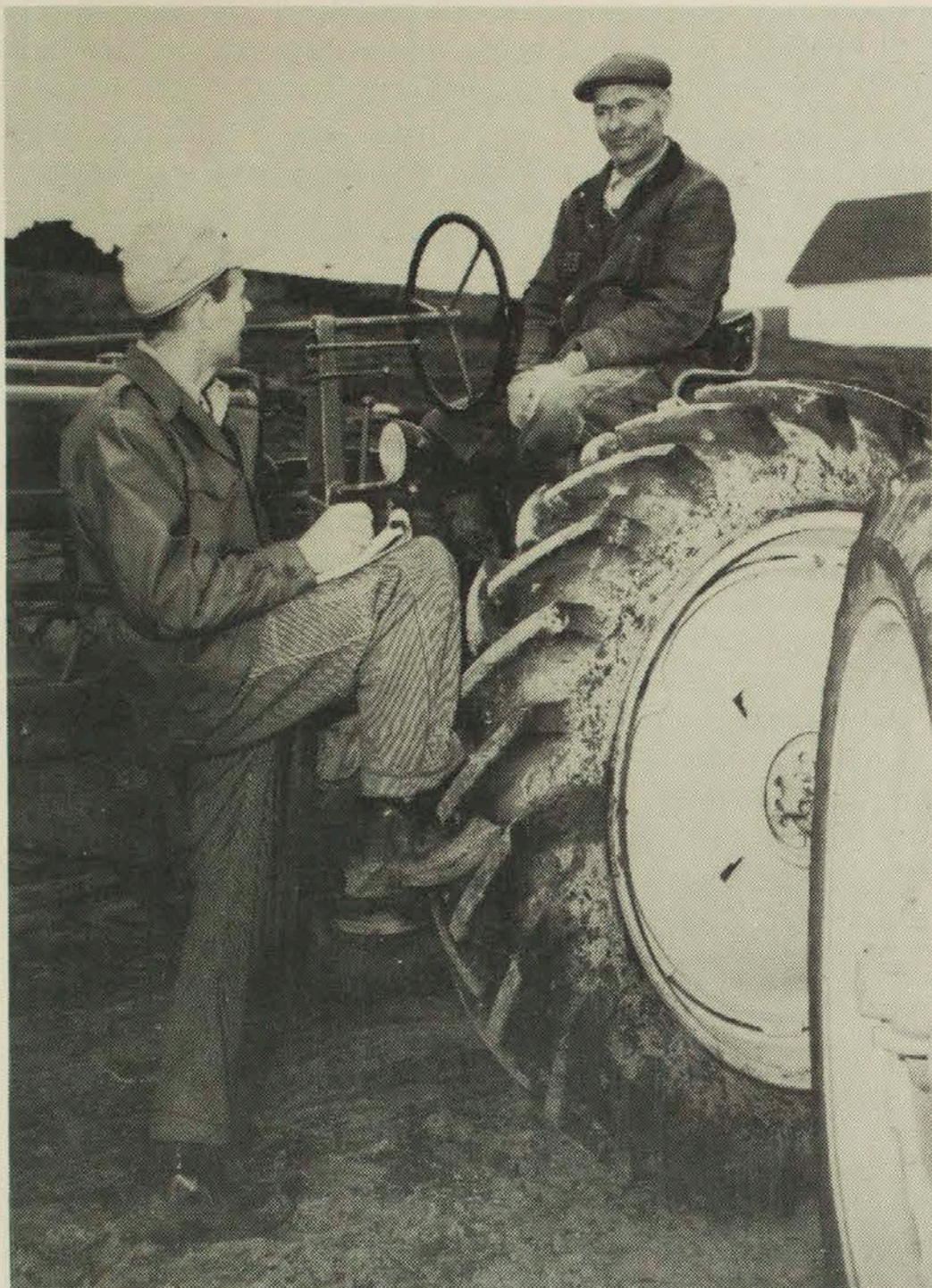
More and more people are hearing about the Hazel Creek area due to the proposed construction of a new city reservoir. By writing this article we are recording some of this area's history before it is forgotten.



The photos on the left are of the general store in Fegley, Mo. Other than one home, it is the only Fegley building still standing. Herman and Lena Miley purchased the store March 26, 1926, and operated it for 50 years until they closed its doors February 1976.

This photo of the Hazel Creek School was taken around 1913, when the school was only about 10 years old. The building is now used only for storage, but at one time as many as 100 students attended school there.





A good place to raise cane...

Jim Newcomer ran a successful molasses business in the Hazel Creek area for several years. In the final stage of the new city reservoir, the lake will be about one mile south of the Newcomer farm. The Hazel Creek bottom pictured in the lower photo is the same land on which Jim produced the cane used for his sorghum. Jim is seated on his tractor in both photos, which were taken in 1949 with Eugene Locke, former MFA tank wagon driver. These photos appeared in the April 1949 issue of the Missouri Farmers Association Publication.

Photo Credits

*Photos this page courtesy of
Mae Hughes*

*Hazel Creek School photos courtesy of
Mr. and Mrs. Carl Sanders*

*Fegley Store photos courtesy of
Mrs. Lena Miley*

**Story by Melanie Hughes
and Ramona Richardson**



It's a Family Affair

By Janine Shriver and Jennie Higgins

In rural America music was a family, church and community affair. Little other entertainment was available in those areas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Musical instruments were often played by even the very young. It was not unusual to find all members of a family proficient string players and singers. String bands, square dances and folk music interchanges were part of their daily lives.

As was in these earlier times, a local family carries on this tradition today. The Vincent family, better known as The Sally Mountain Show, reside in Greentop, Mo. The family has five members, all of whom participate in the band. "The family was always playing, Dad's-Dad's-Dad; it was handed down from several generations," Rhonda Vincent said.

Johnny Vincent, the father, plays the banjo, along with other instruments. He sings lead and harmony. Carolyn, the mother, plays dog-house bass fiddle, and also sings harmony and lead. Rhonda, their 19-year old daughter, plays mandolin, fiddle, bass fiddle, guitar and dobro (forerunner of the electric guitar). Rhonda sings lead and harmony, and also composes some of their songs. Darren, 11, the oldest son,

plays guitar, fiddle, mandolin, bass fiddle or whatever he decides to pick up. He sings lead and harmony. Brian, the youngest of the Vincents, is seven years old. He sings and is learning the mandolin and fiddle.

Where does the name Sally Mountain come from? Johnny explained, "That originated from where we was all raised, over in Putnam County, not too far from Unionville. There's a hill over there called Sally Mountain and Lickskillet was down at the bottom of Sally Mountain. Lickskillet was an old mining town and several years back there was a lady that lived on this hill whose name was Sally Mosely. She was an old-time fiddler, and she kinda had a get-together occasionally, and had a little moonshine. She kinda run a bad-house. It was a no-no to the community but they called that Sally's Mountain."

Some people think of country music and bluegrass music as the same thing. What is the difference between country and bluegrass music? Rhonda replied, "Country is electric and bluegrass is all acoustic. There are no electric instruments in pure bluegrass music." The Sally Mountain Show is not



THE SALLY MOUNTAIN SHOW—Based out of Green City, Mo., the Johnny Vincent family is preserving the tradition of family-oriented entertainment. The whole family gets into the bluegrass and country act; pictured are Johnny, Brian, Darren, Rhonda and Carolyn Vincent.

strictly bluegrass. "We do more or less country songs," said Rhonda, "Now the real pure bluegrass we don't do." Everything might be called bluegrass, but it's not hard-core bluegrass, it's acoustical country music."

Rhonda explained that hard-core bluegrass is, "your typical old bluegrass numbers, like Bill Monroe came up with several years ago. Bill Monroe is the daddy of bluegrass music, songs like 'Foggy Mountain Breakdown.'"

Some of the most frequent opportunities for the Vincents to play before an audience are weekend bluegrass festivals around the Midwest. Festivals consist of more than listening to bluegrass or country bands; they are more like mini-conventions of musicians and bluegrass lovers, drawn from all directions. It is good, wholesome family entertainment.

Organizations such as SPBGMA, the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America, sponsor the events, which are usually held outdoors throughout the spring, summer and fall months. SPBGMA was founded in 1974 by Chuck Stearman, a musician from Kirksville, Mo., who was concerned that bluegrass music might become a thing of the past. Smaller organizations have formed as associate groups to SPBGMA, as well as many Midwest clubs which operate independently of the larger organization. SPBGMA is concerned primarily with preserving bluegrass in its pure, traditional form, so only acoustic instruments are allowed on stage; no band may use an electrical instrument at a SPBGMA-sponsored festival.

Bluegrass festivals usually last three or four nights; groups perform Friday, Saturday and Sunday. "You get there and

you play. It's pretty informal," Rhonda said. "Saturdays, sometimes we have workshops in the morning. In that case, we could get up early; otherwise, we would sleep in. That afternoon the shows usually start at 1 p.m. and last until 5 p.m., and your group will play somewhere in there. Then, some stay up all night and pick around the fire. There are people from everywhere. Saturday night you want to stay up all night, because you know you're going to have to leave the next day."

The days get shorter and the nights get longer as the Vincents drive the many miles they have to travel during the summer months. Their schedule is not one you could call relaxing. The Sally Mountain Show has performed in several parts of the United States. The family lived in Texas in 1974, performing at an amusement park and country music show. In the past five years they have played in Missouri, Florida, Georgia, Arkansas and Oklahoma. They worked at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Mo., during the summer months of 1977-78. Presently, the Vincents are playing at many bluegrass festivals, churches and shows.

The family has won many awards in the past. Among them are the SPBGMA Award for Best Female Vocalist-Traditional, which Rhonda won in 1980 and 1981.

Their latest album, "The Sun's Coming Up," was recorded in Nashville, Tenn. This was their fifth recording effort, but their first album released through their recording contract with Stardust and Wizard Recording Company. They are now completing their sixth album, an all-gospel record which they hope will be released in late October.





JUST AS THE CLOUDS PASSED O'ER



By Kevin Menz

The evening of April 27, 1899, tragedy struck Kirksville. A fierce cyclone ripped through the southwest corner of town through the present campus of Northeast Missouri State University and exited over Kellwood Hills. The cyclone unleashed its fury, coming to a standstill at several points.

The funnel-shaped monster appeared in the sky southwest of town about 6:15 in the evening. The funnel dipped down about a mile west of the Normal school campus and ripped its way in a northeasterly path until it reached Jefferson Street. It veered slightly to the north and worked its way between McPherson and Washington Streets until it reached Baltimore, and passed out of town over Kellwood Hills. The fury of the storm left a path 600 feet wide with 40 homes destroyed and many more damaged. More than 30 people were killed and 179 were injured.

This cyclone was not an average twister. Some eyewitnesses claimed to have seen a complete house intact hundreds of feet in the air before it exploded into fragments. Another victim was the only witness to a freak incident; a woman claimed to have been picked up by the twister and carried above the trees before she finally came to rest in a mud pool. It was also reported that a Kirksville resident found parts of his belongings 95 miles away near Batavia, Iowa.

The railroads ran excursion trips to Kirksville following the storm and brought thousands of sightseers to the disaster-stricken area. Relief came from all directions, from as far away as Minnesota and Pennsylvania.



WRECK OF W. D. HOWELL'S RESIDENCE



The devastating cyclone of 1899 resulted in a 600-foot wide path of destruction, leaving 30 people dead and 179 injured. The photos above show what little was left of the W. D. Howell residence in Kirksville. The photo on the right is a typical scene taken after the disaster. The event was chronicled by Edward Kloefer in his waltz, "Just as the Clouds Passed O'er," published by Charles H. Harrington of Kirksville. The music, shown on the opposite page, is published here courtesy of Dr. and Mrs. Roger Cody.



A BEAUTIFUL WALTZ SONG

JUST AS THE CLOUDS PASSED O'ER



WORDS & MUSIC BY

EDWARD KLOEPFER

PUBLISHED BY

CHAS. M. HARRINGTON

KIRKSVILLE, MO.

JUST AS THE CLOUD PASSED O'ER.

Words and Music by EDWARD KLOEPFER.

Andante.

Andante, con dolore.

1. The shades of eve were clos - ing o'er the cit - y of Kirks - ville; Its
 2. A dear old moth - er wait - ed for her dar - ling boy that night, His

qui - et hap - py peo - ple nev - er thought of com - ing ill, But
 sup - per steam - ing, read - y and the house cheer - ful and bright. His

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just when all seemed most ser - ene, no warn - ing of a - larm, There
 home was in the sub - urbs, and be - fore he reached the gate, The

came up - on this cit - y that twist - ing, whirl - ing storm.
 dead - ly cy - clone did its work, and he had met his fate.

Deal - ing death and de - struc - tion where ev - er it may strike; And

man - y homes were swept a - way, none, saw the like be - fore; Where

CHORUS.

Slow Waltz Tempo.

A cy - clone is a ter - ror, to man and beast a - like.

all was calm, now ter - ror reigned, Just as the cloud passed o'er.



TURKEY HUNTING

By J. V. Scofield and Fred Benson

The history of the wild turkey dates back to primitive times. It was a source of food for the Indians of North America and was an important factor in the survival of the Pilgrims when they first came to the New World. Benjamin Franklin had wanted the turkey to become the national bird of the United States, instead of the hostile bald eagle. But for lack of popularity as a beautiful bird and for its supposed lack of intelligence, the turkey never became the national symbol.

O. Fred "Brownie" Veach, a retired conservationist in Missouri, told *The Chariton Collector* a little about the smart old bird that was once thought to be one of the most ignorant animals on the face of the earth.

"In 1960, when the Department of Conservation became a non-political organization, we probably had about 3,000 turkeys in the state of Missouri and they were all located in the southern part of the state. We started out with 21 birds in Adair County; they were brought from Ozark and Taney Counties in south Missouri. Shag Grossnickle and W.O. Mackey stocked the birds in Thousand Hills State Park in 1960. It was 17 degrees below zero when they let them out. They had been used to the warmer temperatures of south Missouri and it was quite a change."

Adair County opened its first turkey season in the spring of 1967. That year there was a reported 35 turkeys killed. Fourteen years later, in 1981, 948 birds were killed.

"There are five different species of wild turkeys," Brownie said. "The Mexicana and Rio Grande birds are found in the northern part of Mexico. The Osceola bird, named after the Seminole Indian Chief, is found in Florida. The pine forests provide the main habitat for the Rocky Mountain Bird. Then, finally, the oak and hickory forests in Missouri are the habitat for the Sylvester strain.

"The male Sylvester will average somewhere around 21 to 22 pounds. The female is a lot smaller, in the neighborhood of 12 to 15 pounds. The Sylvester's breeding season usually starts around April, and is usually governed by light, but temperatures have a little to do with it, too. The female will stay fertile for about 56 days and will go through the breeding process every morning. So if something happens to the gobbler, she will still be able to lay fertile eggs.

At the end of the breeding season, the female will skip a day, and then at daylight the following day she will lay her first egg. Every day after that she'll lay another egg an hour later. For instance, if she layed an egg at 7 o'clock one morning then the next morning she'll lay an egg at 8 o'clock and so on until it gets too late; then she will go back and start at daylight again. This is what makes your spring hunting good. That ole' gobbler won't have anything to do while she is laying, so he'll just move around and gobble, and that's what makes him vulnerable to a call. The female will

Four Turkey Calls

By J. V. Scofield

Strik? dowel against slate to make turkey cluck.

Slate
Dowel rod with burned end.

Diaphragm

The diaphragm call, which is used in the mouth, can imitate almost all of the turkey calls when used correctly.

Wood
Chalked area
Wood

Rub chalk against the top edge of the bottom piece of wood until lightly covered and then rub top piece of wood longways against chalked area to imitate the sound of the turkey.

usually lay a clutch of 11 to 12 eggs or more. The hen doesn't set on them or incubate them until she has laid all the eggs."

Since the first spring turkey season, the art of calling in the wild turkey has been a growing sport for many Missourians.

Long-time turkey hunters Emery Lawson of Connellsville, Mo., and Gerald Blacksmith of Novinger, Mo., have been hunting wild turkeys since the first spring season opened in Adair County. They shared some of their experiences with *The Chariton Collector*.

For many turkey hunters like Emery and Gerald, most of the fun and sport in hunting the wild turkey is being out in the woods and calling the smart old bird. Gun range is usually around 40 to 45 yards. Emery shared one of his stories with us.

"The best hunt we ever had we never got him. I called that turkey and he went around and around and, Gerald, you had your gun ready three or four times."

"Yeah," Gerald agreed, "for almost an hour."

Emery continued his story. "We was huntin' in Putnam County, and we heard one gobbler right at the head of a holler. Well Gerald went up ahead of me and I stayed behind and called. There was a little ridge on both sides all the way around us. I called that turkey; he was about a 100 yards off. He'd come up one side of the ridge and then circle around to the other side, and he did this several times. Three or four times Gerald had his gun ready to shoot cause it was that close. We was an hour with that turkey, wasn't we? We must have been 25 yards from him and then he took off. We called him and he gobbled and then directly took off and never paid no more attention to us.

"He crossed the road and we went after him again and he never come back to us. Directly I said, 'He's gone to Lancaster, so let's just let him go,'" Gerald said.

For most Missourians there are two gun seasons for turkeys. One begins in the early spring usually around the middle of April and lasts two weeks. During this season a hunter can take one turkey with a visible beard each week of the season. Rarely will a female have a beard. The fall turkey season lasts two weeks, usually opening the latter part of October. It allows the hunter to bag one bird of either sex.

Various types of turkey calls are used to lure the turkey, and the hunter uses different calls in the spring than in the fall season.

"I have a whole drawer full of calls," Gerald said. "I made some box calls, one out of walnut, and I made one out of

cherry. I made one out of a pill bottle. I cut a hole in the top and put a piece of rubber from a balloon in it; works real good. Not very loud but you don't have to call very loud, unless its windy. Those things can hear! I had one made out of the wing-bone of a hen, and it worked real good. I don't see why it would work any different from the wing of a tom, though. I think a lot of people are all wet about it; they hear that only the hen's wing-bone will work and they believe it." Gerald prefers to use his slate call in the fall season.

"I use this slate call. It's better for making the re-grouping call that young turkeys use. See, when a young group of turkeys are broken up, they make a 'pert, pert, pert' sound. This is called a re-grouping call. They all return to the place from where they scattered." Emery tells of how he used this method to kill his turkey one fall season.

"I was walking in the woods and saw a bunch of turkeys on a ridge over from me, so I just shot over there to scatter them. I sat down and I started using the re-grouping call and pretty soon some started coming back and I shot one."

Most hunters feel the spring season is more challenging than the fall because one is calling the mature gobblers in search of mates. In the spring the male turkey is extremely aware of the female's mating call and her location. The male turkey will answer her call with a gobble, trying to lure her to him. With a hunter this is not possible. The male will become suspicious and may circle around for long periods of time, investigating and waiting for the right moment to make his move. If there is any disturbance in her call it may spook him and you may never see him again.

On the other hand if the call sounds genuine he will slowly approach the call and he'll start to strut. The gobbler will ruffle up his feathers to show himself off. All during this time he is moving closer and closer. This is when delicate calling is an absolute necessity. A series of clucks and yelps are made to excite him. Sometimes a hunter will scratch the dead leaves to imitate the sound of an interested or feeding hen. If all of this is done right, a lucky and skillful hunter will get his turkey.

"I remember the first year I went a huntin'," Emery said. "I didn't know too much about it then. It snowed that day and it was pretty cold. I went up on top of this ridge. I was just a standing around; I didn't know what to do. And then about a quarter down that ridge one gobbled. I just hid and started callin' and he gobbled again, and boy he was a lot closer. I called and every time he gobbled. Pretty soon I could see him through the bush, but I couldn't shoot, cause you can't



Art by Martha Kuchera

kill one through the bush. So I let out a little call and he'd just strut. Directly he went to going in the woods off this little road, toward this little opening. He got in the opening and I gave a little call and he just fluffed up big as a balloon. I had my shotgun loaded with Number 2's and I filled him full, 17 pellets in the body. I was about the proudest guy there ever was with my first turkey.

These are only a couple of Emery's and Gerald's hunting stories, but they show how unpredictable a tom turkey can be. Sometimes he will call, and sometimes he will just saunter up to you. If you are not paying attention, he will see you before you see him.

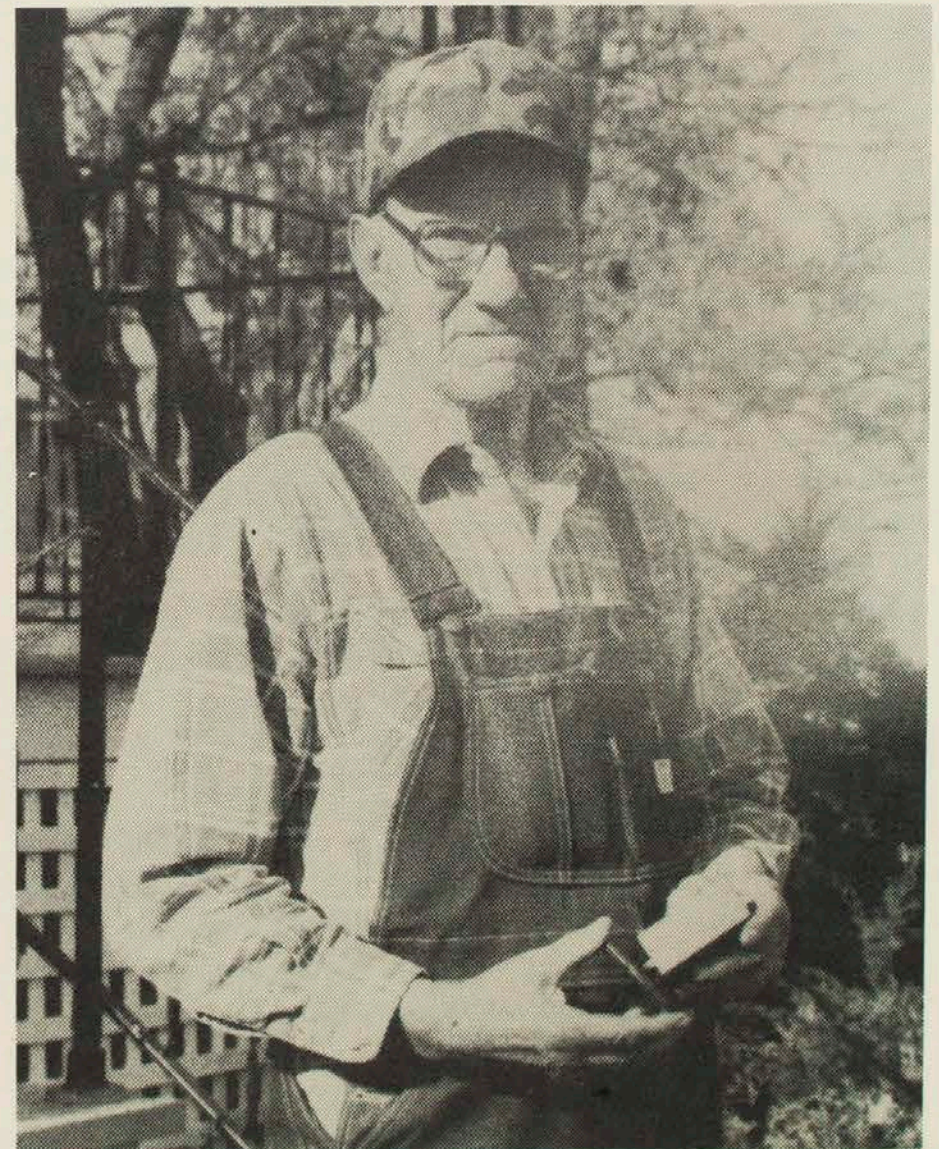
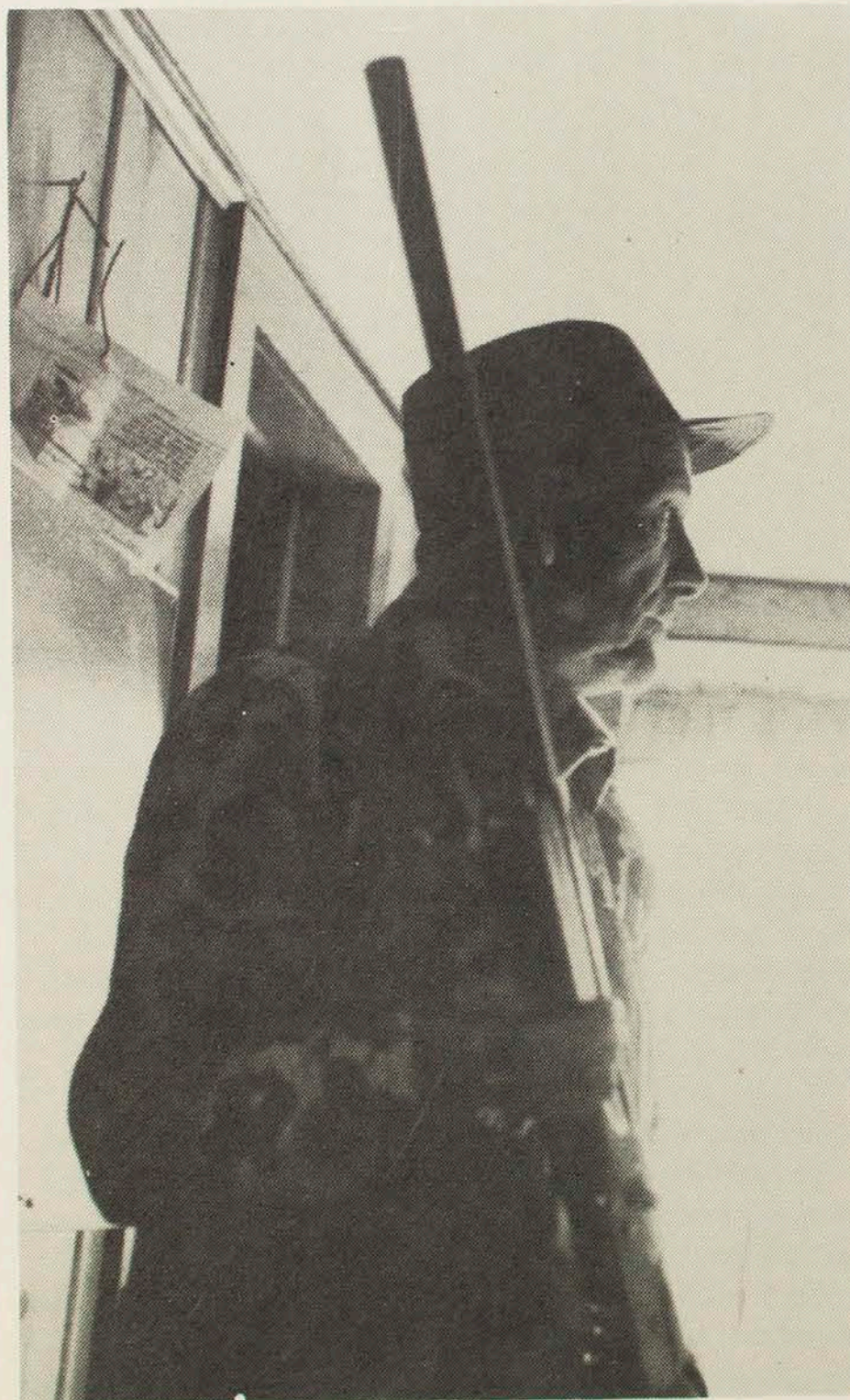
People will tell you that you can't kill a turkey in the rain, but Gerald discounts this. "You can kill them in the rain, don't let nobody tell you you can't. They'll get out in the rain; I killed one four years ago. I crawled up on it, up this ol' possum path, about 20 or 22 yards. When it took out and flew on a bluff I shot it. I seen it fall. I went down and couldn't see it. It fell in a hole full of water and Emery carried it up for me. That made it weigh a pound more, it weighed 22 pounds."

Thanks to Shag Grossnickle, W.O. Mackey, and the Missouri Conservation Department, northeast Missouri has made great progress in its turkey population. Next time you are out in the woods calling in that giant tom turkey, remember those people who made all of this possible.

Number of Turkeys Killed in Adair Co. Since 1967

Year	Spring	Fall
67	35	---
68	34	---
69	39	---
70	70	---
71	112	---
72	141	---
73	173	---
74	150	---
75	175	---
76	241	---
77	282	---
78	286	---
79	413	394
80	416	398
81	582	366

Adair County ranked in the top 10 for the past few years.



Emery poses with the prize turkey he killed in 1976 (top photo), and (left) with one of the rifles he's used for many years. Above, Gerald demonstrates the use of the slate call.

