

Mill Creek

an Ozarks heritage

summer 1990

\$4.00



☆ Jesse Witt— Miller County Civil War Veteran

☆ School Districts Of The Past

☆ The 1899 Home Of Jacob Catron

VERNA KEETH PEMBERTON
RT. 1 BOX 273
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— sit a spell —

I recall long, warm afternoons of childhood, hours spent dawdling along the creek bank, watching the sunlight flash off the tinkling water. Often its pleasant song was accompanied by the sigh of the wind as it quietly whispered through the oaks and sycamores, or perhaps joined by the lullaby of a meadowlark in the field across the way. Little stick boats were put to sail above the shallows and sent twisting and turning down the ripples of the stream, carried on a faraway journey by its flow.

My favorite places were the pools, areas where the creek turned deeper and wider. The gurgle of running water could be heard in the distance, but here, at the pool, all was peaceful and still, almost as if the water were resting from its travels. Small minnows, hovering in the water, only added to the illusion. The serenity of the moment offered a time of tranquility and refreshment. For a small space of time it would seem as if the whole world were created just for me and there was no one else in it.

Today, we thunder down the highways at breakneck speeds, rushing here and there in our efforts to make ends meet. We wake in the morning to a hectic pace and hardly slow down the entire day while evenings are spent trying to recuperate and prepare for the next day's onslaught. So much of our lives are controlled by the clock and those we are indebted to financially. Our struggles are so endless that seldom do we hear the wind in the trees, or the song of the meadowlark. No longer is there time to sit beside the brook and sail little stick boats. Time passes - but there never seems to be enough of it.

That's the reason for this magazine. Its purpose is to bring to you a moment away from the rest of the world. An afternoon along the creek bank. A summer evening on the porch. A twilight serenade of spring peepers coming from the pond. Watching a full moon rise above the ridge. Wherever your favorite place was or is, we want to take you there. Grab a cup of coffee and find a comfortable chair.

Welcome to **Mill Creek!**

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COVER - A Missouri Ozarks family from Miller County. Jesse Witt poses outside his rural Brumley home with the children of his son, James William (known as Tom). Standing, l. to r. Ruby, Nora, Belle, and Verdie. Seated, l. to r. Everett, Jesse, Orville, and Fred. Photo courtesy of Dorsie Witt Huddleston, daughter of Fred.

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This magazine is dedicated to the heritage that is ours and to those who gave it to us. Let them not be forgotten. Published at Rt. #1, Box 282, Brumley, Missouri 65017.

Verna - 1990

Windows of the past. Sad and gaunt, they search for those who left, those who once filled their rooms with joy, with laughter, with life. Tales they bear of lives now gone; memories of departed faces, lost voices; forgotten names and events fading quietly into the mists of time. Listen and you may hear



WHISPERS FROM YESTERDAY





Hidden away from casual eyes, the home Jacob Catron began building in 1899 still commands a stately presence.

the Catron place

In 1899, Manasseh Catron sold 100 acres of the family farm (located 4 miles northwest of Brumley) to his son, Jacob, for \$800. Jacob Catron, James Hickman, and Lem Payne began construction on a home that autumn. More than a year was to pass before their work was finished but what a grand house it was that stood there in the spring of 1901 when he moved his family into it.

The kitchen was situated over the root cellar, giving quick and easy access to the provisions stored there. The well was just outside the door, with the wellhead coming through the planks of the back porch. Drawing water was as simple as opening the door and dropping the well bucket while the porch roof provided relief from whatever elements of nature that might be occurring. But of all the careful design, of all the precise construction, there was nothing that held more attention than the walnut staircase that connected the two floors together. It wasn't an ordinary stairwell, made only to accommodate household traffic, but an elegant, ornate structure that traversed the height in two separate flights of steps with a landing between them. It didn't carry the distance in a single span as a ladder would, but wrapped itself around two walls, contouring itself to the room. Many who have walked through Jacob Catron's front door still bear impressions of the staircase in their memory.

Jacob supported his family by farming the land, feeding and clothing them from whatever bounty he could claim from it. A truck patch of assorted vegetables put food on the table and some money in

the pocket. A granddaughter of Jacob's, **Dorothy Catron Robinson**, remembers more than one time of being chased from the front porch by the bees that were kept in the nearby hives.

The home passed from one generation of Catrons to the next, owned for many years by Wilford and Dorothy Robinson. The old house was used as a weekend and vacation getaway, kept furnished and stocked for their frequent stays. Because of its significance as an ancestral home it was lovingly cared for by them until the mid-1970's, when they returned one day to a disaster. In their absence vandals had entered the house, doing extensive damage to both the interior and exterior. Financially incapable of repairing or replacing the destruction, the home had to be abandoned.

For the past decade it has stood alone against the ravages of time and weather, with devastating results. The broken windows and splintered roof left by the vandals contributed to a swift and irreparable deterioration.

Tens of thousands of sunrises have broken the Missouri skies since it first stood as a home. Nearly a century of Catrons were housed beneath its rafters. Most of those who once walked its floors and tread the walnut staircase have already gone. Proud to the last, it, too, shall soon follow. Tired and worn, it seems as though it knows the fight is over. The old Catron home waits now for the blade and torch to come and make it so.

This structure is owned by Troy and Debbie Plemons Stillwell. Debbie is an indirect descendant of Jacob.

This Indenture, Made on the 12th day of September A. D. One Thousand Eight hundred Ninety Nine, by and between Manasseh Catron and Susan V. Catron his wife of Brownley, Mo. parties of the first part, and

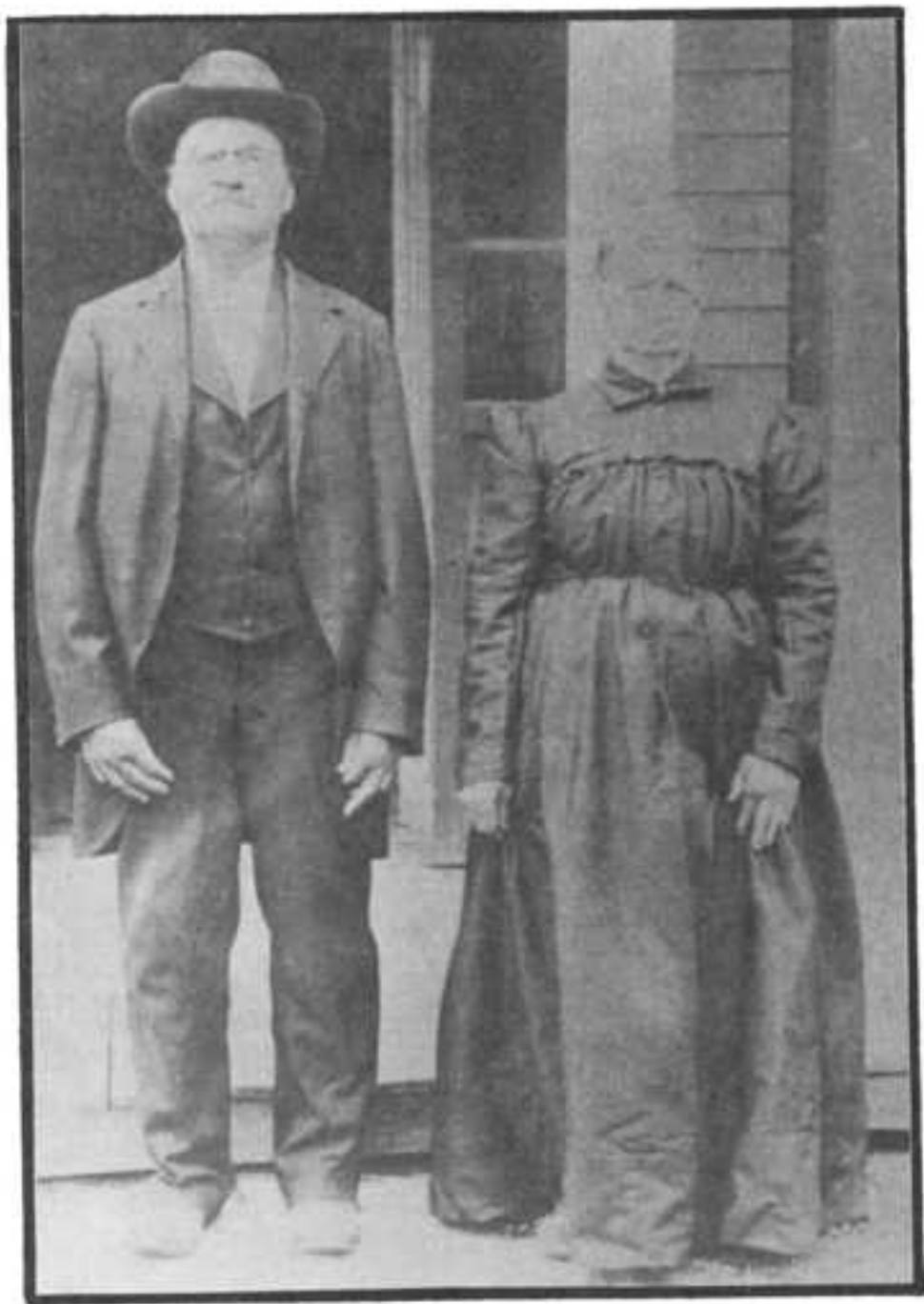
Jacob S. Catron of the County of Miller, in the State of Missouri, party of the Second Part;

WITNESSETH, That the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of Eight hundred DOLLARS to them paid by the said party of the second part, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, do let by these presents GRANT, BARGAIN AND SELL, CONVEY AND CONFIRM unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns, the following described lots, tracts or parcels of land, lying, being and situate in the County of Miller and State of Missouri, to wit:

South West quarter of the South west quarter (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$) section Fourteen (14) and the north west quarter of the north west quarter (N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$) of section Twenty-three (23) Township thirty-nine (39) Range fourteen (14) west containing 80 acres also Twenty acres (20) acres being the South east half (SE $\frac{1}{2}$) of North East quarter (NE $\frac{1}{4}$) of North east quarter (NE $\frac{1}{4}$) of section Twenty-two (22) Township thirty-nine (39) Range fourteen (14) containing in all One hundred acres (100)



(above) photocopy of the 1899 deed transferring ownership of property containing one hundred acres from Manasseh Catron to his son, Jacob and (left) a 1949 photograph of the home he built there. Note the wellhead through the porch and the well bucket hanging from the post.



The stern countenance of an old-time Baptist minister reflects the hardships of the day. **Manasseh and Susan Roberts Catron.**



Jacob Catron sits on the front porch of the home he completed in 1901. The casework above the windows still bear an elegance though nearly one hundred years have passed.

Schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged in this state.



1st Missouri Constitution Article VI Section I (1820)

Education for the pioneer children to this area was limited to the home, with the Holy Bible serving as the most common textbook to be used. With no judicial laws to inspire or mandate it, book-learning was not a priority in their lives. It was much more important to be able to plow a straight furrow or hew a notch that was square and true. Rendering lard, stripping cane, salting pork; this was the education that allowed survival. The rustle of turning pages was displaced by the whir of the spinning wheel and the clack of the weaver's loom. Learning to read the signs of the moon was more significant than learning to read the printed word. A person's knowledge wasn't gauged by the amount of education they had.

Wages of the day were more dependent on the strength of one's back rather than the depth of one's intellect. More than likely the wages earned weren't paid in coin

but rather in barter. With the barter system only a simple, basic understanding of numbers and value was needed to complete a transaction, minimizing the need for a proper education.

Settlement of these northern Ozark hills changed the monetary system from barter to that of currency. Suppliers and manufacturers of goods and merchandise to the area were somewhat reluctant to settle accounts by trading wares and services for eggs, or butter, or maybe a chicken or two. (Just try paying your electric bill with a dozen or so white leghorns and you'll see what I mean.) Suddenly, a more complex world required a more complex education, with a definite need for mathematics, as well as more extensive reading and writing skills.

Long available to only nobility and the wealthy, education was to undergo a metamorphosis in the fledgling United States of America. The young government recognized

the need with a remarkable degree of foresight, especially beyond the boundaries of the original thirteen colonial states; for it was not the wealthy elite who were moving westward but rather the common man, poor and uneducated, seeking new lands, new dreams, new lives

The foundation for public education was established in the Land Ordinance of 1785 when the United States Congress began marketing Federal lands by surveying and laying out townships in thirty six 640-acre sections. Monies received from section sixteen of each township were set aside for the support of public education.

Although originally written specifically for settlement of the Ohio Valley, precedence set by this ordinance is inherent in the formation of lands farther west. Clauses in Section 6 of the Missouri Enabling Act (legislation admitting Missouri into statehood) granted to the new state the section numbered sixteen of each township that had been under federal control "for the use of the inhabitants of such township, for the use of schools".

In 1825, the General Assembly of Missouri set in motion the mechanisms that would evolve into our current educational system. In essence, the Act of 1825 passed responsibility of public schooling from state government to the local level, working, of course, within parameters dictated by state legislation that was becoming more and more overwhelming. County courts were to appoint three commissioners in each township to manage the re-

served section sixteen. The commissioners were given the power to lease such lands, providing all contracts had to be approved by the county court. All rents, fines, penalties, etc. earned from section sixteen were placed in the county treasury in a school fund appropriated only for the use of the common schools within their jurisdiction.

As townships grew in population separate school districts could be organized and formed by petitioning the county court. If approved, a board of trustees (initially appointed by the county court thereafter elected annually by voters of the district) were given control and management of school lands and property belonging to the district. This board of trustees was accountable to the board of commissioners, who were accountable to the county court, who was accountable

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

Marketing of Federal lands was controlled by surveying townships containing 36 one-square-mile sections. Income from #16 was for education.

to a state superintendent (a position established in 1839 by the Geyer Act - a resolution consisting of six articles with no less than two hundred fifty sections).

As early as 1831, the General Assembly of Missouri permitted the sale of the sixteenth section of townships. Thus the inauspicious beginnings of a state school fund was formed, developing dramatically throughout the decade to include income from other sources to establish a permanent financial support for public education. After all, there wasn't an inexhaustible supply of sixteenth sections to be sold.

Armed with literally volumes of statutes and ordinances, government officials at all levels began to put those regulations to use. Provisions, however, were far, far ahead of facilities and organization. It wasn't until 1855 that statewide efforts were made to bring uniformity to the classroom concerning textbooks and a course of study. Laws regarding certification of teachers didn't appear until 1870. Despite all efforts to get the huge education machine rolling, it was late in the century before the system began to function with any appreciable results.

Organized education first appeared locally in the form of subscription schools while the area was still a territory. A village, a community, or even a family procured the services of an educator to teach their children in return for room and board and whatever salary was agreed upon. To help defray the cost basically an "open for busi-

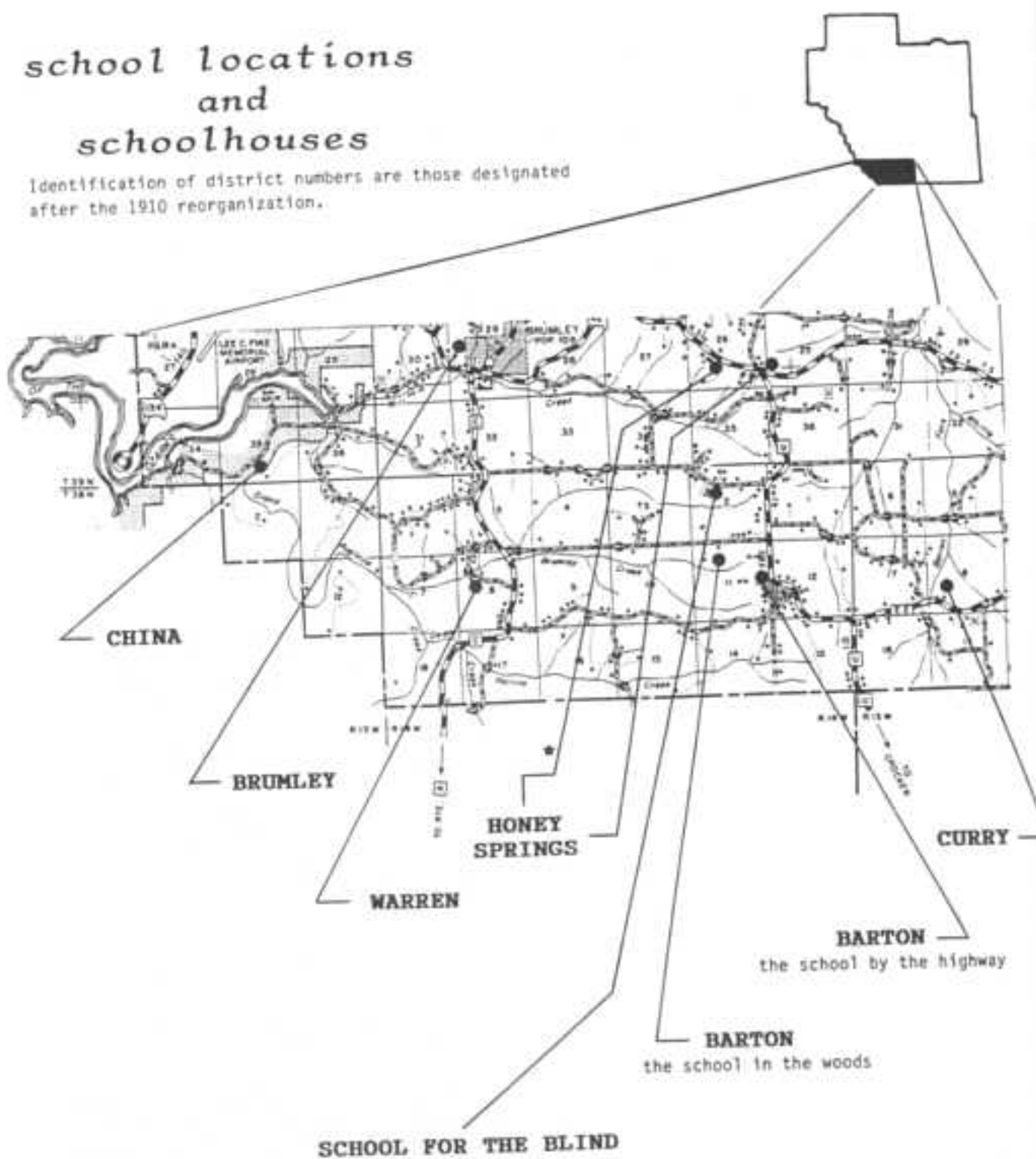
ness" announcement was made and those who desired could enroll or "subscribe" their children to the teachings of the schoolmaster, if they could pay the fee. There were instances where a schoolmaster would move into an area and simply "set up shop", so to speak, holding school in a church, a home, or whatever facilities were available to him. (Early educators were almost exclusively male.) When knowledge, books, and the supply of students were depleted, he picked up and moved on to repeat the process elsewhere.

The first building in Miller County raised expressly for educational purposes was of the subscription nature. According to research by Mr. Clyde Lee Jenkins, a noted local historian, this first schoolhouse was erected in 1834, prior to the formation of Miller County (1837). The log structure was located in present-day Miller County, near the Pulaski County line, in Section 17, Township 39N, Range 13W, within the boundaries of what would later become the ~~Quincy~~ school district (east of "U" highway).

In 1840, the Miller County court assumed responsibility for educating its children by forming fourteen township school districts that were to serve the needs of the entire populace. Just as at the state level of government, provisions for education far exceeded the facilities available. The distances between the established schools were so great that many children travelled a round trip of more than twenty miles in a day to attend school, with the usual mode of transporta-

school locations and schoolhouses

Identification of district numbers are those designated after the 1910 reorganization.



* Original location. Honey Springs was moved after it closed.

china



CHINA SCHOOL, District #68
final year of use: 1949
presently owned by Missouri Department of
Natural Resources
photographed January, 1990

brumley



BRUMLEY SCHOOL, District #69 boasted facilities that housed a complete high school, a gymnasium, and a state tournament basketball team. Once among the largest school districts in Miller County, all that remains of the three known Brumley school-houses is this crumbling wall west of town.
constructed: 1904
final year of use: 1919
presently owned by the descendants of Ray Graham
photographed March, 1990

warren



WARREN SCHOOL, District #86
final year of use: 1961
presently owned by Lester and Dorothy Davis Robinett
photographed February, 1990

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honey springs



HONEY SPRINGS SCHOOL, District #71
final year of use: 1960
presently owned by Ann Knofsinger Nixon
photographed February, 1990

Place
Stamp
Here

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

Name of school Easton District # _____

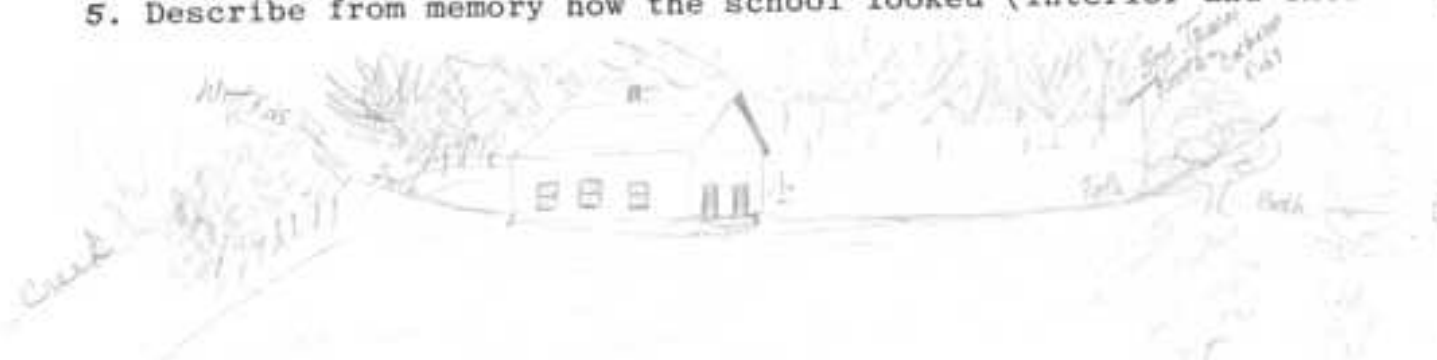
STUDENT FORM

1. How many years did you attend this school? 3 1/2
2. Grade levels completed here (please circle all that apply).
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3. As nearly as you can, date years attended (example: '47/'48).
- | | | | |
|-----------|------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1st grade | <u>1942</u> | 5th grade | _____ |
| 2nd grade | <u>1943</u> | 6th grade | _____ |
| 3rd grade | <u>1944</u> | 7th grade | _____ |
| 4th grade | <u>part of 5</u> | 8th grade | _____ |

4. Teacher's name (in full, where possible).
- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 1st grade | <u>Paul Meredith</u> | 5th grade | <u>Wynona Wa</u> |
| 2nd grade | <u>Thelma Wall</u> | 6th grade | <u>Wynona School</u> |
| 3rd grade | <u>Thelma Wall Meredith</u> | 7th grade | <u>Lesley Jones</u> |
| 4th grade | <u>Zeda Wall (Comm School)</u> | 8th grade | <u>Lesley Jones</u> |

5. Describe from memory how the school looked (interior and exterior).



6. Does the old building still stand? YES NO
7. Can you locate where it is or where it once stood? YES NO

8. Do you know
- the first year this school was used? _____
 - the last year this school was used? _____
 - the name of the last teacher(s) to teach here? _____
 - how this school got it's name? _____

9. Include any history or stories you may know about this school.
(use additional paper, if desired)

10. Do you own, or know of anyone who owns, photographs of this school? YES NO

11. Name of best friend(s) in school.
Noah Alfred Downport
Key Thomas

12. Were you and/or any of your friends ever punished at school?
Stay: in YES NO Stand with my nose in a ring on the wall.

13. Describe the punishment and the reason for it. (use back of page)
(some of you may need additional paper here!)

14. Did your parents or grandparents attend Miller County schools?

Mother's maiden name Mildred Allen School Burton - Brumley
Father's name Father Leath School Curry - Spencer
Grandmother Mrs Allen (Taught at School Burton Spencer
Grandfather Dixon Allen School _____

15. Your name, address and phone number.
Verna Lee

Return to: Mill Creek, Rt. #1 Box 282, Brumley, MO 65017

Going to Boston

Remember when I was 6 and my first teacher was
Miss Meredith. He had to go to the Army and Thelma Wall
took over. I think Miss Palmer was my next teacher.

At the picnic I remember was standing in the
corner or standing at the back seats with my nose
in a ring. The teacher had drawn. She'd draw a circle
in the back seat, just a little high so we'd have to
bent to reach it. Then make us stand there with our
nose in the ring.

Fold Here

school for the blind



SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

A regional affliction of trachoma brought state involvement into southern Miller County during the late 1920's in the form of a small clapboard building and a teacher. Instruction included the usual braille along with vocational skills such as weaving baskets, rugs, and blankets. Original school is now a part of the house owned by Doral and Gertie Rodden Witt.

barton

the school in the woods



BARTON SCHOOL, District #85
constructed: 1911
final year of use: 1953
presently owned by Lynn and Jessie Brumley Luttrell
photographed October, 1988

barton

the school by the highway



BARTON SCHOOL, District #85

constructed: 1953

final year of use: 1963

presently owned by Dorless and Frances Rodden Swofford

photographed October, 1988

Curry



CURRY SCHOOL, District #84
final year of use: 1959
presently owned by Juanita Vance Rowden
photographed February, 1990





Jesse Marion Witt was a Miller County Civil War veteran, serving in the Union army as a private of the 6th Regiment Missouri Cavalry Volunteers. Captured by the enemy, arrested for desertion, his is an extraordinary story of a Brumley, Missouri farmboy who went to war barely beyond his teenage years. He left as a youngster, but returned aged and worn, robbed of innocence. The scars would remain with him for the rest of his life.

PATCHQUILT SOLDIER

Jesse Marion Witt was born near Ulmon's Ridge (now known as Ulman) on August 22, 1841. A simple farm life was his lot and he quickly became accustomed to the rigors and discipline dictated by that existence. Slender and tall he grew, eventually reaching a height of six feet. With dark blue eyes he regarded the crops in his father's fields, running a strong hand through hair black as night. Being a farmer agreed with Jesse and that was the extent of his dreams; to follow in his father's footsteps, to till the Missouri soil, to

marry and start a family of his own. But those dreams would be altered by a tragedy beyond comprehension when the farmer would turn from his plow and take up arms against his own. The Civil War left no American unscarred - in one way or another.

As chaotic as war is there was none moreso than the Civil War, and across that broad theater of confusion, nowhere was it moreso than in Missouri. Rebel troopers, Federal regulars, guerrillas, bushwhackers, redleg raiders, abolitionists, southern sympathizers; all characters of a

dizzying drama of tragic proportion. One could lose life, limb, or possessions because of basic political views, who you associated with, or perhaps by the mere chance of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Emotional harassment, physical threats and abuse, even fatal violence could be experienced simply because of your surname, regardless of whom you actually supported, or didn't support.

During this period of time if you lived in New York you were surrounded by Yanks. If you were a native Georgian you dwelt among Rebs. Although historians record that Missouri was a Union state it arrived there precariously and, for the longest time, actually hung in the balance. Missouri was on the cutting edge, supplying sons to both causes. There were those who fought for the north; there were those who fought for the south; and perhaps the most dangerous were those who fought only for their own interests, using the war to satisfy personal greed, lust, or vengeance, contributing yet another aspect of horror to the destruction and confusion. It was indeed an age of lost innocence, especially to Missouri, and to her people.

The turmoil of that age was extremely complex and varied greatly from region to region. It was amidst this fury that Jesse reached adulthood. He observed his twentieth birthday while in the service of the Missouri Home Guards, Osage Valley (or Counties) Regiment, Company D Joseph W. McClurg commanding. The Home Guards was the Union answer to the Confederate

State Guards which had organized first and were using this advantage in attempts to threaten and cower the local population into supporting the southern push for secession. Even though this was taking place over the whole of Miller County, the State Guard was especially active south of the Osage River in Auglaize and Richwoods townships.

Near Brumley at Camp Union in May of 1861, the formation of these Home Guard companies was the first sign of Federal military strength in Miller County. It is important to note that these men were not organized by any influence of government. These were local farmers, merchants, and town-folk of every age, size, and description who banded together for survival and protection against the predatory tactics of the Confederate State Guards. Their mission was simply to protect their homes and families and to purge the area of the menace posed by the rebels. The weapons they intended to use were brought from home. The same for their uniforms, or lack of. I dare say a substantial number joined not because of pro-Union sentiment, but rather anti-State Guard feelings. They weren't necessarily fighting for the Union, but against the Confederacy - and particularly against what it seemed to symbolize in Miller County, which, at its worst, was nothing short of terrorism and murder.

In June, 1861, the various Home Guard companies joined together to form the Osage Counties (or Valley) Regiment and were officially recognized as a Federal military

unit shortly thereafter by Major General John Fremont, commander of the Western Department, Union armies. With more than 1,600 men at his disposal, McClurg established Home Guard camps and regular patrol routes in Miller and surrounding counties. Facing organized and determined resistance now, the Confederate State Guards went south to join regular Confederate forces or simply disbanded and dispersed, continuing the battle for secession in covert fashion as time and opportunity allowed.

Young Jesse joined the Home Guards at Brumley on June 22, 1861 and was assigned to Company D. Most enlistments were short term, with six months being the average length of duty, his included. By fall, though, the ranks became decimated as many of the patchquilt soldiers became bored with life in the military. Perceiving the danger and threat as having passed with the absence of the State Guard, they began to drift away to their homes and families. Crops needed to be harvested, preparations made for the coming winter, home and hearth had to be protected from the marauding bands of guerrillas still active in the area. Ma and the children needed them now worse than Old Abe did.

During the summer and fall of 1861 tales of rebel victories in Missouri began to flood through Miller County. In August, Missouri Confederate General Sterling Price defeated Union forces at Wilson's Creek, south of Springfield. The Federal troops fell back to positions at Rolla and Sedalia, protecting the arsenal located at St.

Louis and ready to move to the aid of the capital at Jefferson City should it be threatened. But the whole of western Missouri lay bare before Price and he pushed northward, routing all Home Guard units and Union forces that attempted to halt his progress.

Buoyed by the sight of the fleeing Federals, men flocked to his southern banner, certain now of Confederate control for Missouri. By mid September his swollen army passed to the east of Kansas City and continued northward to the Missouri River at Lexington, defeating Colonel James Mulligan's troops stationed there in a four day siege.

Far from reinforcements now and with persistent rumors of a coming Federal reprisal, Price decided to move his army south again, wintering in Springfield. But as he moved south his forces began to dwindle away. Just as his army had inflated on the march northward, it now began to deflate, the men, more or less, leaving Price's army wherever it had picked them up as it went by their homes.

Both contingents sent appeals across the state of Missouri for gallant, able-bodied men to come and fill their ranks. With convictions now against the Confederacy, Jesse stated he was going to "join up and fight for the side that was going to win". Completing his six months of duty as a Home Guard on December 22, 1861, he prepared to leave his native soil and quiet farm life; only to be fed to the ravenous creature of war.

After the new year, he

made his way east to Rolla and on February 10, 1862, enlisted for three years. At the age of twenty, he was now a private of Company E, Woods Battalion, Union Rangers, Missouri Volunteers (this organization would subsequently become Company K, 6th Regiment, Missouri Cavalry Volunteers). The company was mustered-in February 15 and sent west to Lebanon where the Union forces were gathering to move against Price's rebels in Springfield. Within thirty days Jesse Witt and the Sixth Missouri Cavalry would be at the Battle of Pea Ridge in Arkansas.

Although it isn't necessary to recount the struggle there, it may be of interest to note the Federals were outnumbered three to one, including a command of screaming, war-whooping Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole Indians under General Albert Pike from the Oklahoma Territories. The Indian involvement in the conflict was evident as the battlefield was being cleared of the fallen when it was discovered that a number of Union dead had been scalped.

After Pea Ridge the Confederates faded away to the southern recesses of Arkansas and to the east across the Mississippi River into the states of Tennessee and Mississippi to join forces with Lee's main armies. Missouri and Arkansas Federals began to strengthen their hold on the Ozarks in the absence of the rebels, protecting the Union's western flank while keeping the waterways under Union control. Though no major confrontations are recorded the war was still very near as frequent skirmishes

continued to make life hazardous.

On the 14th of December in 1862 twenty-four men of the 6th Missouri Cavalry were captured while on picket duty near Helena, Arkansas (a picket is a forward position used to warn against enemy movements). Jesse Witt was among those taken.

We can only imagine the terror and hardships endured by Jesse as a prisoner of war. Even the best of conditions were atrocious, and being a prisoner certainly couldn't be considered a favorable position. Fortunately for Jesse it wasn't a lengthy experience. He was part of a group released on December 23 in a prisoner of war exchange between the Union and Confederacy, and was back in camp at Helena by the 27th.

Special Order Number 439 issued from the Camp of Instruction at Benton Barracks in St. Charles, Missouri on January 15, 1863, established an organization formed from exchanged prisoners of war. On January 29, Jesse reported and was mustered into Company B, Exchanged Men at Benton Barracks, Missouri. (The Exchanged Men program was evidently a debriefing period used by the Union command to glean as much information as possible from these former prisoners about their captors and also to make certain the soldiers sympathies weren't influenced while being held prisoner.)

On February 6, 1863, Company B, Exchanged Men was discontinued under Special Order Number 1, directing all soldiers to immediately rejoin their respective regiments. Jesse, instead, went home to Brumley. We'll never

know the reasoning for his decision. Homesickness, no doubt, was a factor. Already weary of the war, perhaps being captured had reached the limit of his resolve. An illness at home may have existed and turned a quick visit into an extended stay. It is possible, while being held prisoner, he was forced to take an oath never again to take up arms against the enemy

(not an uncommon practice on both sides). Jesse may have feared risking capture again, along with the imminent execution it may have brought next time. In any case, Jesse Marion Witt was absent without leave from his duties with the 6th Missouri Cavalry and in March was listed as a deserter.

Jesse probably tried to resume his life and forget



The Civil War journey of Jesse Witt

Jesse Witt saw duty with Companies E, K, and D in the 6th Missouri Cavalry Volunteers. His travels would take him hundreds of miles from home, endless miles of agony and heartache that were shared by many but understood by few.

- [1] June 22, 1861. Brumley, MO. Enlists with Missouri Home Guards. Assigned to Company D.
- [2] February 10, 1862. Rolla, MO. Enlists with Union Army. Assigned to 6th Regiment, Missouri Cavalry Volunteers.
- [3] March 6-8, 1862. Involved in Battle of Pea Ridge in Arkansas.
- [4] December 14, 1862. Helena, AR. Captured by Confederate soldiers.
- [5] January 29, 1863. St. Charles, MO. Assigned to Company B Exchanged Men
- [6] February 23, 1865. Baton Rouge, LA. Transferred from Company K to Company D.
- [7] July, 1865. Duty in Sabine Parrish, LA.
- [8] August, 1865. Baton Rouge, LA. Becomes ill from exposure.
- [9] September 12, 1865. New Orleans, LA. Muster-out of Company D, 6th Regiment, Missouri Cavalry Volunteers.
- [10] September, 1865. St. Louis, MO. Discharged from active duty with Union Army. Returns to Brumley, MO. and never leaves Miller County again.



the war, but the war wasn't going to forget Jesse. On September 25, 1863 he was arrested for desertion and on the 29th was delivered to the military prison at Jefferson City by the provost marshal of District 5, Missouri (undoubtedly **Tolbird Bass** of Tusculumbia, although military records fail to identify the officer) who was paid \$13 for expenses incurred in apprehension of Jesse.

It is unclear where Jesse Witt spent the next year of his life. It is possible that he languished in a military prison, however, his name appears as being "present" on all company roll calls after October, 1863, with this notation: "In arrest for being absent without leave". It is more likely that he was under "house arrest", doing camp labor by day and confinement being limited to the regimental stockade at night.

Exactly one year after his arrest at Brumley, on September 25, 1864, Jesse appeared before a general court martial and by that court was returned to paid duty with a nine month extension on his enlistment, replacing all the time lost while he was home. Jesse was back in the war.

By 1865, the hopes of the Confederacy were waning as the Union closed in from all directions. Jesse was part of a brigade of seven companies attached to the District of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. One intriguing remark is noted on the July, 1865 roll call. It states Jesse is "absent on detached service in Sabine Parrish with Provost Marshal" (a parrish in Louisiana is comparable to what we call counties in Missouri, and Sabine Parrish is located a-

cross the state from Baton Rouge on the Texas border). There is no further explanation and one can only imagine what this duty entailed. (The 6th Missouri Cavalry had been involved at the Battle of the Sabine Cross Roads earlier on April 8-9 where the Union reported over 3,500 casualties, 1,772 of that number captured or missing. Perhaps the task was to account for some of those missing soldiers.) By July, however, the war was officially over. Lee had surrendered in April at Appomattox.

The service record of the 6th Missouri Cavalry is long and impressive, including major battles at Jackson and Vicksburg. Separate detachments of the 6th saw duty in the District of Eastern Arkansas, with the Army of the Tennessee, with the Department of the Gulf (in both Alabama and Louisiana), and also with the Department of Texas. The regiment lost 2 officers and 34 enlisted men killed and mortally wounded during service, while losing 6 officers and 273 enlisted men to disease. There was a total of 315 fatal casualties suffered by the 6th Missouri Cavalry during the Civil War.

Company D, 6th Regiment, Missouri Cavalry Volunteers, Captain **Thomas H. Henderson** as commanding officer, was mustered out of service on September 12, 1865 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Jesse was shipped to St. Louis for discharge where he drew \$100 in pay, was given an honorable discharge, and sent back home to Brumley (Jesse's discharge certificate was framed, hanging for many years above his bed.) But the war was to haunt him for the remainder

of his life.

In August of 1865, with less than a month to muster-out, Jesse contracted a devastating illness from exposure while on duty. The regimental doctor diagnosed Jesse as suffering "from kidney trouble and rheumatism due to fever". Considering the day, we can hardly be certain as to the extent of the ailment. At the very least it was probably pneumonia accompanied by its various respiratory infections, complicated by neglect and the inability to obtain proper medical treatment. Regardless of what it was, it would eventually disable him totally.

Jesse returned to Miller County in September, 1865. By spring he began to pursue the dreams he had left behind that cold February day three years earlier. On April 1, 1866, he and **Martha Ann Luttrell** were married by justice of the peace, **A. J. (Jack) Wilson**. That winter their first child arrived. Little Hamen was only the first, and six more children were to bless the marriage as the years went by.

His inability to perform prolonged manual labor only worsened with age, prompting him to seek medical aid as early as the fall of 1879. On January 29, 1890, Jesse filed for a disability pension. He was granted \$2 per month. What followed was a lifelong attempt at increasing that amount as he became more dependent upon it with failing health. His military record contains affidavits from medical doctors (**Walter**

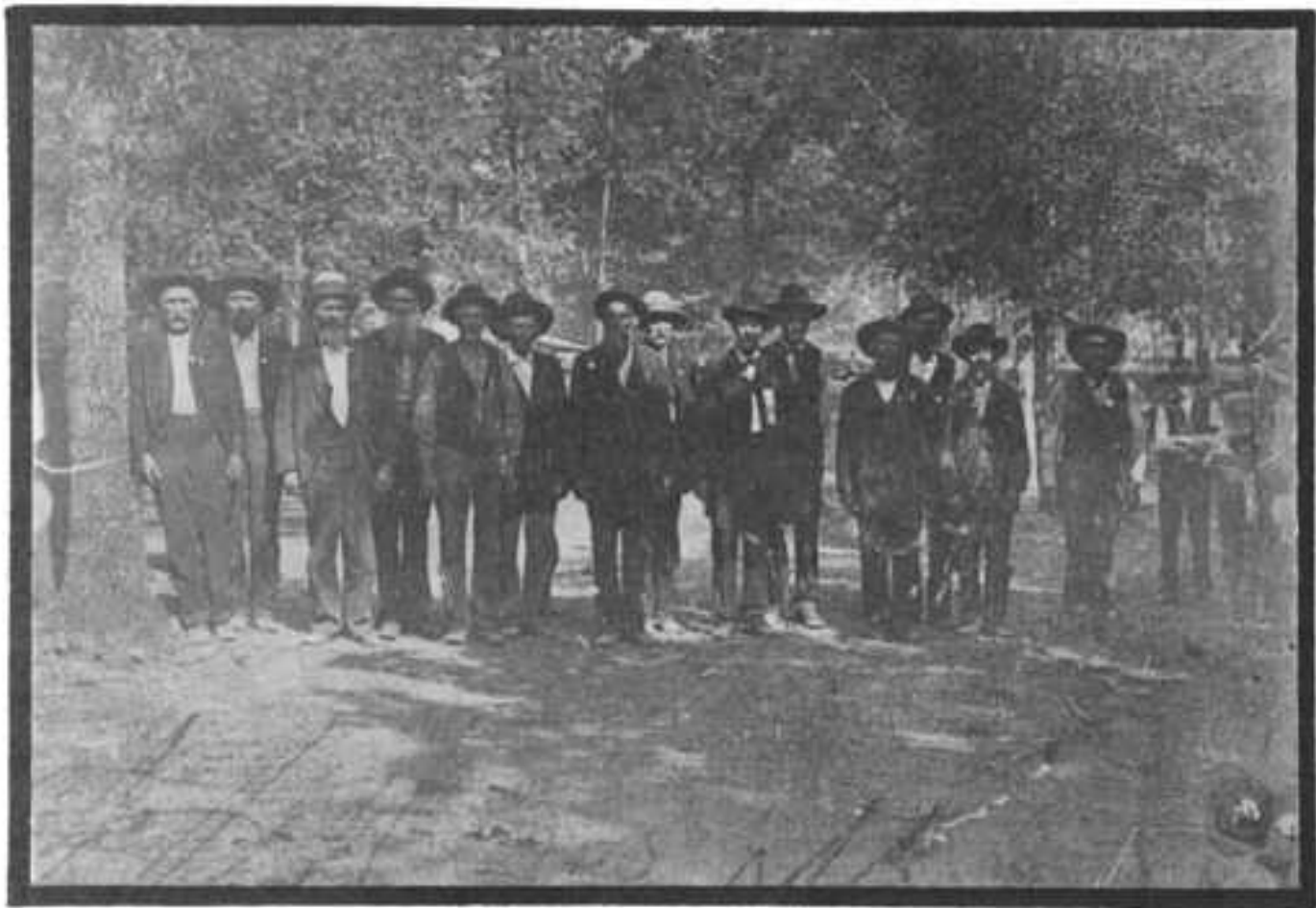
D. Dickson, J.L. Conner, S.P. Hickman; all from Brumley), former soldiers that served with Jesse in the 6th Missouri Cavalry (**Abraham M. Mayfield** - Co. D, **Benjamin F. Hensley** - Co. I; both from Iberia, **William L. Dial** - Co. H; from Brumley, **John Thornsberry** - Co. D; from Swedeborg **Presley M. Devore** - Co. A; from Toronto), and assorted friends and neighbors that were acquainted with his physical ailments (**Elijah Dyer, J.M. Hawkins, Zebedee Spearman**, to name a few). He also appeared before several physicians acting as a Board of U.S. Examining Surgeons (twice at Iberia, headed by **Dr. A.P. Nixdorf**). At the time of his death on May 31, 1932, Jesse was receiving \$72 per month from disability benefits and had required the constant attention of another person after his beloved Martha passed away on March 5, 1906. From stories told by his granddaughter, **Verdie Witt Shelton** I believe he spent most of the final years of his life with her family.

Jesse Witt now rests in the Mt. Union cemetery southeast of Brumley. One can stand at his gravestone and survey the land he knew so well and travelled so often, now owned by his great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Within sight of the cemetery is where his home once stood. The battles of the Civil War ended in 1865, but the war was never actually over for Jesse. Perhaps he has finally found the peace denied him in life.

One can only hope.

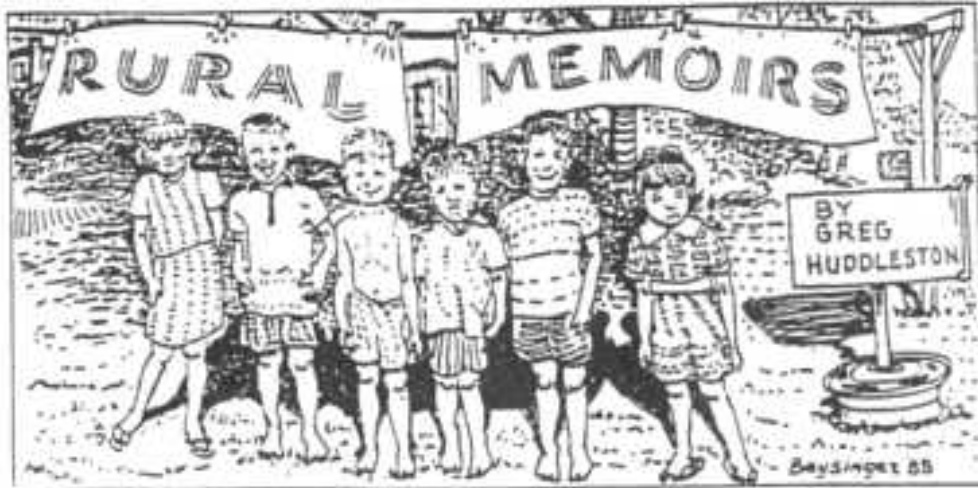


CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANYONE IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH?



Thought to be a reunion of Civil War veterans from Miller County. Location is believed to be Tuscumbia or possibly the old Civil War encampment near Brumley. Jesse Witt is the eighth person from the left (partially hidden from view). Sixth person to the right of Jesse is evidently the county sheriff. Please direct any information you may have to **Mill Creek**.

Do you have any old photographs you wish identified? Let us help!



In this modern world there are many rites of spring.

College students go to a tanning salon and get tanned, just so they'll look great in their new swimsuits when they lay out in the coming summer sun - getting tanned.

Stressed - out businessmen seek relaxation and freedom from tension by going out and getting ulcers while trying to whack a little white ball around in a pasture with a hole in it. (Where's the sport here, anyway? There's a stick with a little flag on it that tells ya where the hole is. I say take the stick out and hide the hole. Don't make this game so easy!)

Schoolteachers wander dazedly about, mumbling over and over the number of days left in the school year.

Parents note on their calendars when summer vacation will be over and the next school year begins.

Yes, there are many ways to mark the coming of summer.

When I was growing up, spring was welcomed in much

different manners than we see nowadays. Brumley has never had a need for a tanning salon. That was something that just sorta came natural, usually from working in the garden. (And to show off your tan line all you had to do was roll up your sleeve.) Brumley does not have a golf-course - although we do have a lot of pastures (and you've got to keep a sharp watch on the ground, too, but not for holes).

Around our house, spring was accompanied by a flurry of activity. The rite we observed was one called "spring cleaning". And it wasn't limited to only the house where Mom, Susan, and Karen kept matters well under control. Dad, Dave, and I had a much more important assignment - cleaning out the barn. I believe everyone, at least once in their life, should clean a barn. The experience is one you shall never forget as each sense is stimulated to capacity (one sense in particular may even demand self-

preservation). This little task has a way of making you know you're alive, though at that moment you may not be very happy at being so (and you may wonder how much longer you will be if you don't stop holding your breath). It also will do an extraordinary job of clearing your sinuses (but you'll wish it hadn't). Still, it was a necessity, a chore that had to be done.

In the spring of my seventh year, Dad deemed Dave and I eligible for the "barn decontamination squad". We hooked the wood-trailer to our McCormick Farmall Super C tractor and headed for the barn; shovels and clothespins at the ready. Working furiously, we had the trailer loaded in no time at all. Dad then stated that we were going to take our load and spread it on the garden, explaining how our homemade fertilizer would mix with the soil and be absorbed as food through the plant roots. I decided then and there that I would never eat another tater for as long as I lived. Dave and I climbed on the tractor while Dad cranked the handle that jutted from the front of it. It sputtered to life reluctantly, as if it, too, had been holding its breath. Dad joined us aboard the tractor, pulling us out and away from the barn and guiding us toward the garden.

Once there, Dad announced his game plan for the efficient and rapid dispersal of our payload. Simply put, I was to drive the tractor as Dad shoveled. He was going to place the tractor in gear and throttle it down. All I had to do, besides steer, was control the clutch. When Dad

yelled "OK!" I was to release the clutch - slowly. (He emphasized the word "slowly.") When he yelled "Whoa!" I was to push the clutch in, thus disengaging the transmission and stopping the tractor. Dad made it sound so simple. "OK" out; "Whoa!" in. I could handle that. No problem.

In theory, Dad's plan should have worked flawlessly but, as usual, there were certain intangibles working against him. One; I wasn't a very tall seven year old. Two; I had never driven a vehicle of any kind before. Three; Dad hadn't taken into consideration the typical Missouri terrain. Four; Dad forgot to show me where the brake was, and failed to explain why mechanized vehicles had need of one.

By leaning to one side around the steering wheel, I could manage to extend my leg far enough to disengage the clutch - barely. Dave watched my strained efforts at working the clutch with apprehension. A couple of practice rehearsals convinced him that this little project no longer had need of his services. He quickly disembarked; perhaps sensing the impending disaster.

Satisfied that I was capable of the task at hand, Dad throttled down the motor before getting in the trailer with his shovel. "OK!" he yelled, and we were underway.

We crept across the garden everything going as planned. Dave stood in the center, observing the entire process. We waved to each other as I passed by him. I successfully guided the tractor across the width of the garden and negotiated the turn that brought

us back around for our second course. Again I waved at Dave as we went by. This was easy. Everything seemed to be going quite well. But things were just about ready to go downhill - literally. I'm sure we would have had no problems whatsoever, if our garden had been completely flat; but it wasn't. The top half was reasonably so, but the lower half sloped off dramatically.

By now I had the hang of this driving bit, so with confidence I nosed the tractor over the crest. I immediately noticed a change in speed. So did Dad.

"Whoa!" he shouted.

Keeping my wits about me, I recalled what I was supposed to do when given this particular instruction. I pushed in the clutch. Something was wrong here! That only made us go faster!

"WHOA!" Dad repeated; only this time louder.

We rattled by Dave, still standing in the center of the garden. He waved to me as we went by but I was much too busy to wave back.

Dad's "whoa's" were more frequent and more frantic now as we accelerated down the hillside. He was also saying a bunch of other stuff, but I

couldn't hear him very well over the whine of the engine. (Although I can't be certain, I believe it was about the lake area because I heard the word "dam" mentioned several times.)

I continued to push in the clutch, and we continued to gain momentum. Dad was holding on for dear life as he attempted to shout instructions (none of which I could hear). As we approached the end of the garden, Dad decided to abandon ship. But in his scramble for safety he slipped and fell down, rolling in our cargo. He was still trying to recover himself when we ran completely out of garden and entered the woods.

My wild, evasive maneuvers around the trees did little except give Dad a more personal knowledge of the contents of our trailer. Finally where the clutch wouldn't stop me, there was a tree that did.

Dad was quite angry, to say the least. (I suppose it was because there was more fertilizer on him than there was on the garden.) But, undaunted, (and after a bath) we finished the job. And this time Dad made sure I knew where the brake was!





ROOTS AND BRANCHES

LUTTRELL - Mrs. Alma (Luttrell) Wiles is seeking the gravesite of her great-grandfather, Lewis Luttrell. Land records indicate he owned 120 acres of property in Sections 19 and 30, Township 38, Range 13 of Pulaski County, Missouri. Lewis died at some point between the 1860 and 1870 census and was buried, presumably, in that vicinity. His wife, Mahala, moved in with her daughter and son-in-law, (Sarah and James Luttrell of Camden County). If you have any information concerning Lewis Luttrell, please contact Alma at 51 New St. Sullivan, MO 63080.

MAHER - A family reunion is scheduled for Saturday, July 14 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church Center, 504 North Mill, Eldon MO. Those wishing to attend should contact Betty Maher at 3899 Green Valley Road, Suisun City, CA 94585.

LEWIS/DAVENPORT/PATTERSON - The descendants of Cora Davenport Patterson will be having a family reunion on Sunday, June 3 at the Ulman Community Center, Ulman, MO. Activities will begin during the noon hour with a carry-in luncheon. Bring a covered dish and silverware. A camera could also be put to good use as Everett Dake will be posing for free photographs!

"JOURNEY TO THE PAST" - Pioneer Families of Miller County MO, is a newly released book by Peggy Smith-Hake. Containing 200 pages of early county history, information vital to historians and genealogists alike, this book can be obtained only from the author herself. The price of \$13.50 includes postage and mailing costs. Write to Peggy at Whispering Hills Farm, Rt. 1 Box 52, St. Elizabeth, MO 65075.

current events

WARREN CEMETERY - Long-forgotten burial place south of Brumley is now being reclaimed from the encroachment of nature. Donations to aid this effort can be sent to Penny Allee, Rt. #1, Box 215, Brumley, MO 65017 or Lucille Crane, Rt. #1, Brumley, MO 65017 or mailed to Bank of Lake of the Ozarks. Checks should be made to "Warren Cemetery Fund". Volunteer help will also be accepted. For further information contact Penny Allee at 369-2294, or Bennie Kissinger at 793-2587.

ENDANGERED!

Perched on a typical Missouri hillside stands a tiny little structure. Frail it looks in its setting, dwarfed by the slope that rises behind it, oaks towering in the background. Children once played in the familiar yard where grasses and weeds have grown in their absence. A spectacular view of the Osage River bluffs command the eastern horizon.

Much history has passed its way and, like the river that flows in the distance, has been carried on. Yet it remains; solid, steadfast, marking the times and lives of those who have come and gone. Tar-paper shacks sprang up overnight to surround it during the construction of Bagnell Dam.

This is the Pleasant Grove School and, not two hundred feet distant, the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. Both buildings are in remarkable shape considering their age. The school is the most intact school building I have found to date. The chalkboard still exists. Clearly visible around the interior is the green trim of the windows and baseboard. A strip of wood remains along one wall, waiting for someone to hang coats or jackets or caps on the row of nails still protruding from it.

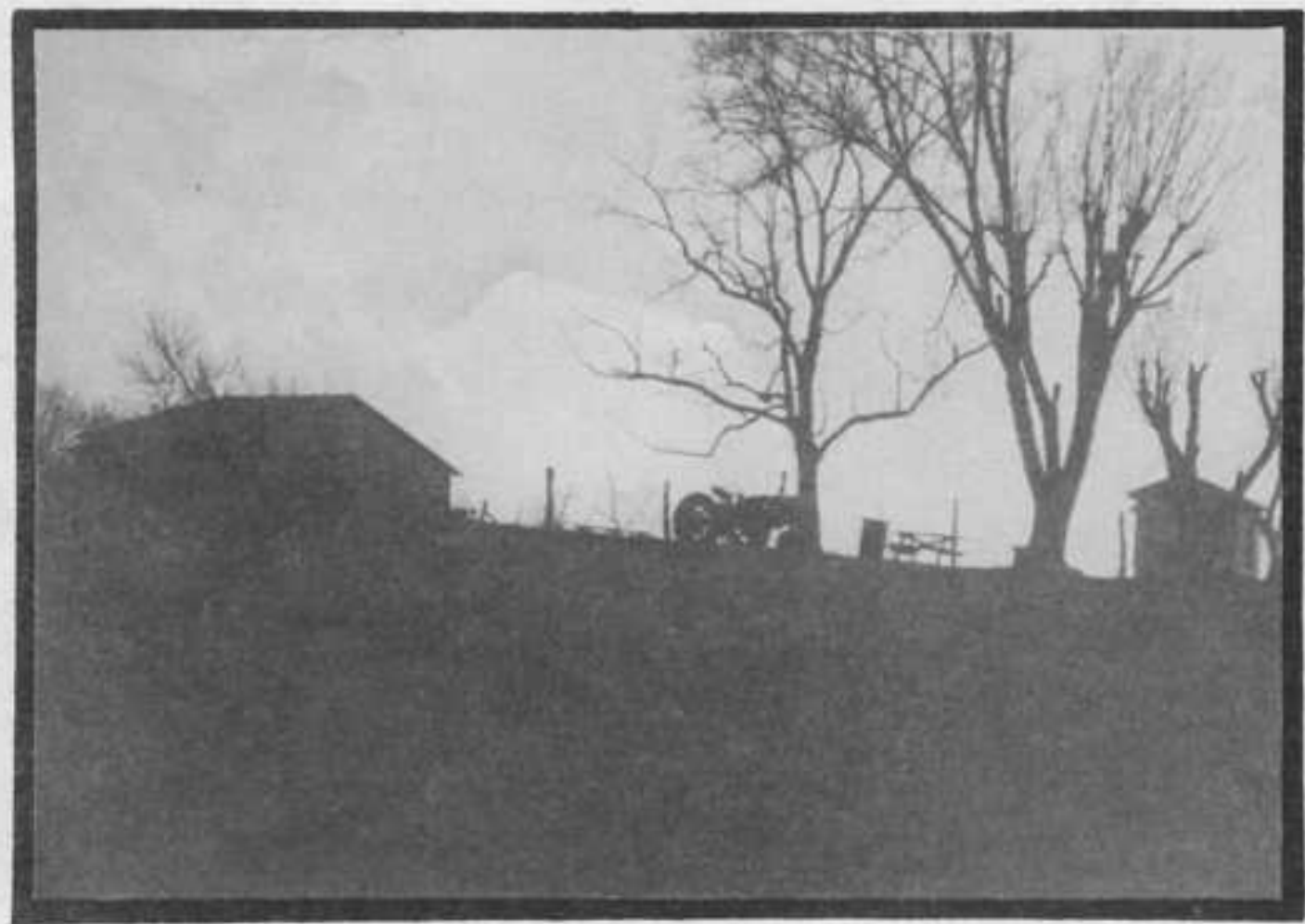
This building has passed into the care of a group of investors and developers known as North Port. Intentions concerning the aged structures are unknown at this time, pending a conference with North Port representatives that has been requested by the Miller County Historical Society. Perhaps you can influence the preservation of our history. Write and urge these buildings be saved.

North Port
c/o Mr. Robert Carron, pres.
P. O. Box 362
Lake Ozark, MO 65049

Historic structures now owned by North Port include the Pleasant Grove School (right), the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, and Willmore Lodge.



IMAGES FROM HOME



"Dusk at Rawl and Alma's"

VERNA KEETH PEMBERTON
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