

Verna Keeth

Mill Creek

an Ozarks heritage

autumn 1991

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- ☆ *Legend of the Heelstring*
Miller County's School for the Blind
- ☆ *Pioneer Memories*
the diary of James Harvey Vernon, part 1
- ☆ *School Days*
Julia Spearman recalls China School

VERNA KEETH PEMBERTON
RT. 1 BOX 273
IBERIA, MO. 65486

— sit a spell —

Things aren't always what they appear to be.

As I drove by a neighbor's house the other day I noticed a figure bent over in the yard. "Looks like Melva's put on some weight." I thought to myself. But then I saw bloomers a'showin'. "Why, that ain't Melva, that's Alma!" As I passed by and honked I realized it was neither one. It seems Junior had put up some of those yard decorations that's becoming so popular. You know the kind. Those that show the tallest point of someone pulling short weeds.

Things aren't always what they appear to be.

It's the same here at **Mill Creek**.

We advertise ourself as a magazine though by definition we don't qualify as such for we offer no advertisement.

I suppose you could say we're a newsletter, but our content isn't exactly current.

We're not a quarterly because we publish three times annually.

So what is **Mill Creek**? We're simply not sure. And not many of our readers are either. I can't say how many times I've been asked when the next "little book" was coming out. Well, here's the next one but what it is we can't exactly tell.

Basically our theme is the past though admittedly that past is very localized. Rather than a general history we concentrate on comprehensive, thorough research which usually limits our readers to only those who might be interested in that particular subject matter. Our approach to research is reaching beyond facts and dates and attempting to tap the human involvement, make people aware that it was our ancestors who made the history - not the history who made our ancestors. Instead of recording the passage of time we prefer recording the passage of the generations caught in it's flow.

Like the figure bent over in Junior and Melva's yard, **Mill Creek** may not be as it seems. Maybe we're not a magazine. Perhaps we're not a historical. So what are we? Until we find our niche let's just say we're a heritage publication.

Editor-In-Chief
Greg Huddleston

Associate Editor
Debby Huddleston

Art and Illustration
Mark Baysinger
David Huddleston

Technical Assistance
Wanda Hinshaw
Rachel Boatright
Larry Boatright

Distribution Assistant
Luke Huddleston

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Joseph Towns

BACK COVER

Marshall & Janice Hensley Humphries

COVER - The Miller County School for the Blind. 1. to r. are **Betsy Luttrell, Belle Witt, Ruby Witt, instructor Efmer Ragain, Dee Duncan, Bluford Luttrell, and Albert Luttrell.**

CONTENTS

School Days letters from students . . .	4
Legend of the Heelstring the story of the Miller County School for the Blind	9
School Locations school series continued	.27
Pioneer Memories the diary of James Harvey Vernon32
Rural Memoirs memories of the farm. . .	.37
Heritage Announcements.	.40

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school days

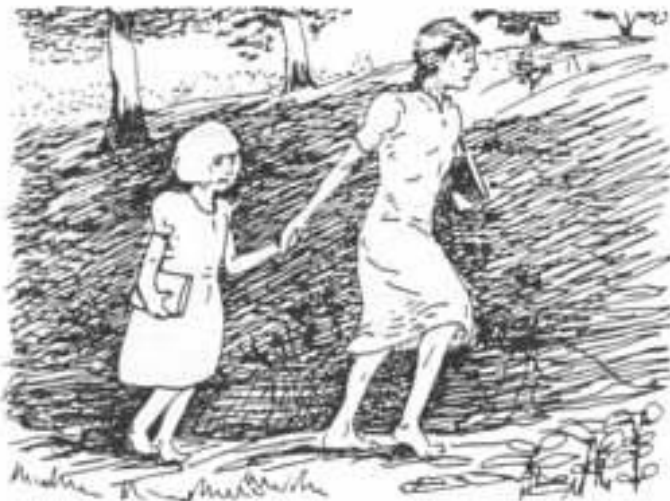
LETTERS
FROM
STUDENTS

In the spring of 1925 we moved from **Eldon** to 3 miles southwest of **Brumley** on the **Glaize Creek**. I started to school at **China** that fall. I have always been curious as to how **China** received it's name, but I have never found anyone who knew. I remember so well how it looked. It was a concrete building with two doors. I believe there were three windows on each side of the building. There was a rostrum at the front of the building and a blackboard across the front wall. We had double seats and desks, and there was a long recitation seat across the front. The school was heated with a wood heating stove. It had a large stove drum to make more heat. A big oak tree stood out by the woodpile. There was a well on one side of the house but someone had filled it up with large sticks of wood and we either had to take water



to school with us or carry it from a spring. A road ran in front of the schoolhouse.

My mother and her brothers and sisters attended school in what they called the "old schoolhouse", and I attended school in what they called the "new schoolhouse". My mother said they would stuff their coats in the broken windows to keep out the cold. Sometimes we wore our coats all day to keep warm. My mother's maiden name was **Nancy Maude Pope**. Her parents were **Greenberry** and **Nancy Pope**. My mother was born in 1885, and passed away in 1981 at age 96 years. She remembered much about her school-days and could recite poems she memorized in school. Her sisters were **Cora**, **Carrie**, and **Nellie Pope**. Her brothers were **John**, **Arthur**, and **Greenberry Pope Jr.** My mother's best friend was **Bertha Story**. They kept in touch as long as my mother lived. Mother's brother, **Arthur**, and **Bertha Story** were childhood sweethearts. He was a little older



school days

LETTERS
FROM
STUDENTS

and finished school before they did, so mother used to carry notes to them from each other. Mother and her sisters and brothers crossed the creek (Glaize) either on a footlog or on a horse. Mother was an excellent speller, and I have a New Testament given to her for receiving the most headmarks. It was given to her by her teacher, **Josie Buster**. I have a picture of those attending school with my mother.

I have vivid recollections of my schooldays at China. I would go to the home of my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. G. B. Pope and wait for my cousins, **Mabel, Mary, Lena,** and **Dorothy Pope** to come by. Every fall my stepfather, **L. B. Williams**, and my uncle, G. B. Pope Jr., would build a footlog for us to cross the creek on, and then when the fall rains started the creek would get up and wash it out. Then



my stepfather or my uncle or my grandfather would cross us in a boat or on a horse. We had some precarious crossings to say the least. Once we crossed coming home when drifts were running and would barely miss the boat. Once when the creek was rising real fast my uncle came after us in the wagon. He went around the road which was considerably farther than our usual way of going. We crossed the low water bridge near where the swinging bridges are now and the wagon and mule team was almost washed over the bridge. Except for the goodness of God we would have washed over the bridge and drowned.

My best friends were **Doxie Jeffries** and **Dorothy Thompson** also **Mabel Pope** and **Carlotta Percival**. **Dorothy** and **Mable** are deceased but I still correspond with **Doxie** and **Carlotta**. I think I remember the names of all those at China when I went to school there. They were **Mabel, Mary, Lena,** and **Dorothy Pope** (cousins of



school days

LETTERS
FROM
STUDENTS

mine); Maxine Blackburn (also a cousin); Lee, Joan, Doxie, Roma, and Pauline Jeffries; Cyril, Ray, Dorothy, Alleen, and Sarah Alice Thompson; Carlotta Percival; Bernice, Eulice, Alice, Arthur, Levi, Merrill, and Anna Albertson; Susie Wright; Lundy Bailey; Teddy and Edward Miller; Lola and Willard Rodden; Malcolm Emy; Lee and Wilma Wornell; Sidney Phillips; Sampson and Elmer Ash; and Edwin Johnson. Wassie Witt also went a short time.

Some of the games I played were "Ante-over", "Green Gravel", "Go In And Out The Window", "Going To New York", "Water Water Wildflower", "Drop The Handkerchief", "The Teakettle Is Boiling Over", "Flying Dutchman", "Tin Tin", and I think "Dare Bare". Some of these were games my mother and her schoolmates played when they went to school. One game I have heard her talk a-



bout was "Mumblety Peg". We had a level playground. There was a place to play basketball, also.

One of my favorite things was spelling contests and ciphering matches which we usually had on Friday afternoons.

I never received a whipping at school, but I have had to "stand on the floor", once because I didn't know the answer to a question in history class and another time because I hadn't studied my agriculture as I should have. Both times I had plenty of company to share my punishment. Once I had to stay in at recess because I hadn't memorized "The Star Spangled Banner". At that time it was not our national anthem. "My Country 'Tis Of Thee" was the national anthem then. One time Dorothy Thompson, Doxie Jeffries, and I got the "giggles" during class and the teacher sent us outside to laugh. I am not sure who the teacher was but I believe it was Opal Carnes. One Friday

school days

LETTERS
FROM
STUDENTS

afternoon all the boys except two, Sidney Phillips and Levi Albertson, skipped school and went to a basketball game at Brumley. Sidney was the oldest boy and Levi the youngest. On Monday morning, the teacher lined up all those boys in the front of the room and paddled them.

We had a United States map in the front of the room, and one weekend vandals desecrated it. There was a good deal of vandalism from time to time.

We always had a Christmas tree and a Christmas program. Sometimes the creek would get up and I couldn't go to the Christmas program or the last day of school. I remember one time my cousins and I could not attend our Christmas program because of high waters, so our teacher, **Mrs. Cleo Nixdorf** (we called her "Miss Cleo"), left our treats of Christmas candy at the Thomp-



son home where she boarded. The Thompson children ate some of it and Miss Cleo was afraid there wasn't enough for all of us, so she gave me a box of chocolates someone had given her. How thrilled I was! I had never received a box of chocolates before. I have many fond memories of Miss Cleo, but that box of chocolates was special. We always drew names at Christmas and we usually had to trade names to get the one we wanted. The usual gifts were handkerchiefs and pencils or tablets. I remember parts of the dialogues and speeches we had at these programs.

I had three teachers during the three years I attended school at China. They were Opal L. Carnes, 1925-26; Cleo G. Nixdorf, 1926-27; **Marjorie L. Gilleland**, 1927-28. They were all good teachers, but "Miss Cleo" was my favorite. She later married **Nile Carnes**

My aunt, **Nellie Pope Emery** taught one term at China when she was a young girl. She is no longer living. Her daugh-



school days

LETTERS
FROM
STUDENTS

ter, **Nan Emy Claiborn**, taught there around the mid 1930's.

I have a good picture of all us girls at China. It was taken by **Leota Miller** between 1925 and 1926 or 1927. It was given to me by **Doxie Jeffries Plemmons**. I can identify almost everyone in the picture.

We moved to **Barnett District** in the spring of 1928 and I started to school at Barnett that fall.

In the spring of 1930 after Barnett closed, I went to visit my grandparents for a few weeks. China School was still in session so I visited it almost every day. It was good to be back with my former schoolmates. **Lucian Mace** was the teacher and his wife, **Clare**, was in charge of the last day of school program. She called me to be in it. I was in a play entitled "Festival Of The Holidays" and I represented Memorial Day.



That was my final contact with China School. Timber was being cleared all along the Glaize that spring to make way for the **Lake of the Ozarks**.

Julia Spearman
326 Pioneer Drive
Fulton, MD 65251
China School - 1925-27

At the center of this publication you will find the questionnaire that provides us with basic information regarding the school or schools you attended. We more than welcome your school memories. Simply complete the form and remove it by straightening the staples that fasten it to your copy of **Mill Creek**. Once the questionnaire is removed bend the staples back into place. Fold the completed form on the dotted line, stamp it, then drop it in the mail. It's that easy! We encourage you to share all the memories you can. Do you remember that old school you went to? Future generations aren't, unless **YOU** make the effort to recall them now.

Legend of the Heelstring

The Miller County School for the Blind

Even on a map one can see the isolation of the Brumley Creek area, today sprawled between state highways "U" and "C" as they stretch southward from Missouri 42. The vicinity is further dissected by three county maintained roads, the asphalt and gravel of today replacing thoroughfares that were once nothing more than rutted hardpan wagon trails. In places the forest grew so near the roadway that the branches of trees from one side would reach across the lane touching those on the other to form a natural canopy overhead. At times travel would be similar to driving through a tunnel.

The majority of those who settled Brumley Creek came from the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Kentucky and Tennessee. They were a quiet God-fearing folk who stressed the importance of family and cherished the privacy the northern Ozarks hills so conveniently provided. While love and goodwill was abundant among kinfolk, it could be quite a different matter with strangers or those considered as "outsid-

ers".

Forested hills and narrow valleys provided the pioneers with the basic essentials necessary for subsistence, though it came with some difficulty. Census records describe these land owners as farmers, which interpreted means they relied on the strength of their hands, the sweat of their brows, and the providence of God to exist. Edibles were collected from the wild or cultivated in fields claimed from the forest, with survival largely dependent upon these endeavors - and to this end they toiled constantly, day after day after day.

They were a people who clung to the old ways of their heritage, seeing little need for change while regarding with suspicion those who preached progress and modernization. The residents of Brumley Creek were quite content to be left alone, the world beyond it's ridges and woods having little influence or authority over the area. Many who call it home claim the Depression years came and passed unnoticed there, the

impact of that great economic calamity hardly having bearing or significance upon their lifestyle.

The unfriendly terrain and the backwoods image of those inhabiting it's depths contributed to the development of a certain mystique shrouding those secluded hills. Even those who lived nearby referred to the Brumley Creek area as though it were another land. Some called it Booger County, a derogatory label indeed, but a name attesting to the isolation of the region.¹

There were other labels and other names, each a reference in some manner to the various conceptions people had of the Brumley Creek area regardless if those views were real or imagined. Though

real or imagined, each title usually reflected some degree of truth.

Heelstring Nation was the name **Phoebe Bibb Williams** heard when she moved to Miller County in 1950 to serve as a county health nurse.² According to rumor, there was a large concentration of blind people in the area around Brumley. When they travelled they did so in groups; single file, being led by a sighted person, holding the shoulders of whoever was walking before them. Beginning from the front a rope ran the length of the line, tied from the ankle of one person to the next immediately behind. It was tales such as this that gave Brumley the nickname of Stringtown.

1 **Samuel Brockman**, surveyor of the Tuscumbia to Springfield Road in 1841, described the land they crossed in his report to the commissioners: "In looking over the plat of this road, it may appear strange to those that are unacquainted with the geography of the Osage and Niangua country to see how far we have departed from the true course. To those who are acquainted with this country, the cause is obvious. The Osage, Glaize, and Niangua hills intervening compelled us to make those east bearings in order to get ground suitable, and by doing so, we have got an extraordinary route. From the end of the first mile we run across a high ridge to Dog Creek, the land owned by **Noah Hudson**. Thence through poor barrens to the Little Richwoods which is a settlement of fertile land; through the lands of **William Bilyeu, John R. Bilyeu, Simon T. Bilyeu, Emily Golden, Lydia Bilyeu**, a non-resident, to **Jesse Gott's**, to **James Gentry**. THEN OVER POOR LAND to the Dean's Fork of the Glaize. Up said creek the land is good, though not in market." (Editor's note: this route can basically be followed today by driving southeast from Tuscumbia on Highway 17, then turning south on Highway "C" through the villages of Ulman and Brumley and into Camden County. Using the properties described in Mr. Brockman's report as reference points we find a specific route from Ulman to Brumley, leaving the Little Richwoods while passing through the **Gott Plantation** and ending at a point near present-day Brumley at James Gentry's. The text highlighted between Gentry's and Dean's Creek is the perception viewed in 1841 of the Brumley Creek area. Even today, 150 years later, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources describes property it owns in southwest Miller County as "primitive".)

2 Phoebe moved to Miller County from Bowling Green, Missouri in Pike County and therefore unprejudiced toward gossip and rumor regarding the area. Though the blind school that once stood had been closed for over twenty years at Phoebe's arrival the legends still persisted. Phoebe would later spend 10 years as a nurse in the Eldon public school system.



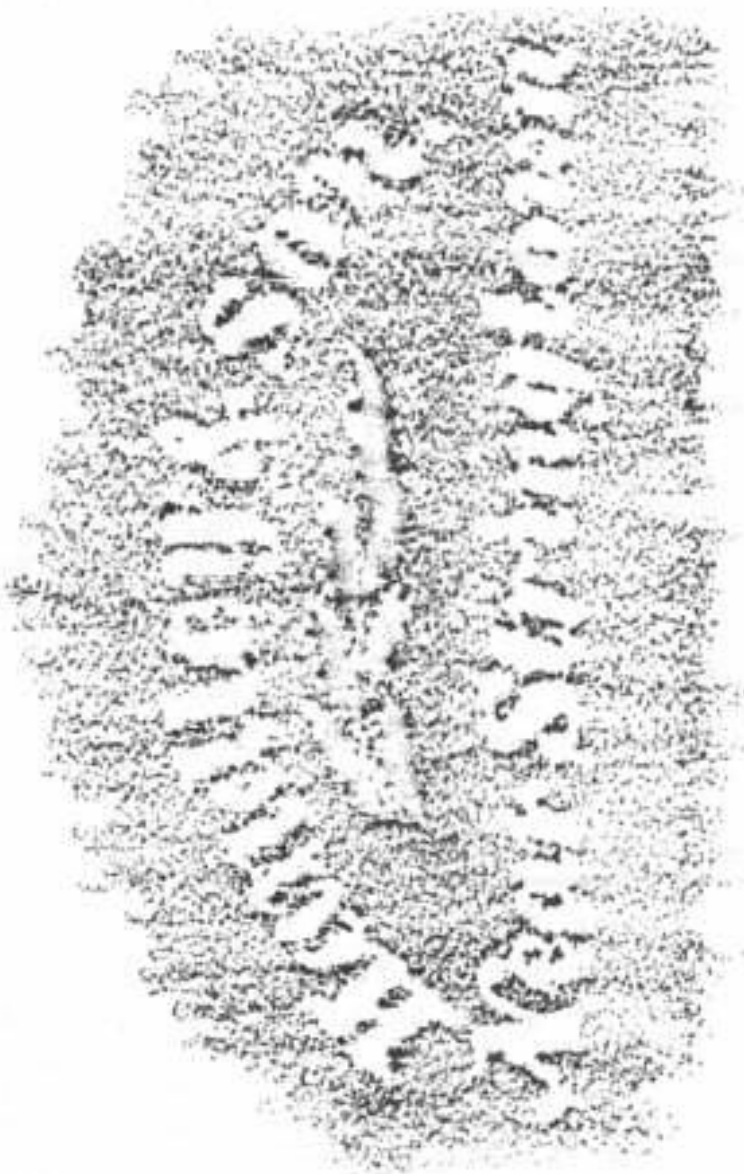
The isolated hill country of south-central and southwest Miller County helped to create a "backwoods" mystique for the people that resided there. Names such as Booger County only perpetuated the image of moonshine stills, double-barreled shotguns, and barefoot hillbillies. The Tuscumbia to Springfield Road which was surveyed in 1841 passed through the very heart of this region.



Recent memory verifies this particular story in part while research suggests the remainder as highly probable. Of the blind there is no doubt, but no one now recalls the "human trains" portrayed in the legend.³ Those who do remember say the blind used canes, either walking alone and using the cane for guidance or being led by a sighted person with each holding separate ends of the cane.

During the 19th century the unfortunate plight of the blind in Miller County had never been addressed collectively on either a local or state level. Most relied and were totally dependent upon the charity of family and friends, not only for livelihood but also for every basic need and care. This lack of attention from judicial and legislative agents wasn't an oversight. There simply were

³ The story regarding the "human trains" apparently reaches farther into the past - or is false altogether. Evidence indicates the malady of blindness also affected previous generations. Perhaps it was from this earlier age that the legend was born, and thus yet contains a hint of truth.



Evidence suggests the legend of the Heel-string came from a more distant past than first suspected. Though far from proving the legend of the Heelstring, this information provides a stronger argument in its favor and allows less room for dismissal.

(above) Rubbing from the gravestone of **Notly G. Warnell** in **Hawkins Cemetery**, northeast of Brunley, identifies the manufacturer and place of business, Stringtown. Warnell died 8 February, 1877.

(right) Letters published in the 3 June, 1886 issue of the **Miller County Autogram** promote the services of Dr. L.M. Burch, area oculist. **John Kinder**, **Ellen Luttrell**, and his wife **Elizabeth Thornton** (known as **Bets**) receive relief from a described illness whose symptoms match exactly the affliction identified 30 years later as trachoma, suggesting that earlier generations also suffered from it. (Several area letters were written in reference to Dr. Burch's treatment, including one from **Etta Maples of Aurora Springs**.)

A Thankful Man.

BRUNLEY, MO., May 24, 1886.

This is to certify that Dr. L. M. Burch, the skilled Oculist, Aurist and Catarrh Specialist has treated me for granulated eye-lids of 4 years standing. My eye-lids had become heavily granulated and caused me great pain. When I heard of the Doctor living at Tusculuma I concluded to once more try to get relief. I consulted him and he told me he thought he could cure me. I put myself under his treatment and I am truly glad that I did, for my eyes are wonderfully improved. The granulations I believe are all gone; my sight is growing better and I feel confident of a complete cure. I would advise all suffering with diseases of the eye to call and see the Doctor, as I believe he will give you an honest opinion in your case.

JOHN KINDER.

Once More a Happy Family.

BRUNLEY, MO., May 24, 1886.

This is to certify that Dr. L. M. Burch has treated myself, wife and three children for granulated eye-lids and inflammation of the eye-balls. My eyes have been very bad for 18 years and I have suffered unsold agony with them; and since last August I have been unable to do anything, and had almost given up hopes of ever getting relief. I heard Dr. Burch was coming to Brunley and I thought I would go and see him and have a trial made to gain my sight and alleviate the pain, if possible; as I knew the disease would soon terminate in total blindness to me. He told me he thought he could relieve me, but would make no flattering promises. I put myself and family under his treatment and I feel proud of the day I did so, for my eyes are now relieved of pain, the granulations are all gone, my sight is coming back slowly and I rest better at night than I have for several years. I feel confident of a complete cure. My wife's eyes have been sore for 9 years, and were nearly as bad as my own. The effect of the Doctor's treatment upon her has been equally as successful as upon myself; the pain has subsided, the granulations are gone and her sight is better than for eight years. The opacities or scum is coming off of her eyes and we feel proud of our recovery. Our three children are doing well and we are overjoyed at the wonderful improvement—in fact, we are a happy family once more. We were nearly all in darkness once; but now we can see. Dr. Burch gave us our sight and I want all who are suffering from diseases of the eye to call and see him, for he will give an honest opinion in your case and I can do you no good he will frankly tell you so.

(Signed)

ELLEN K. LUTTRELL.

no provisions, at any governmental level, to assist the blind.⁴

Individual efforts in Miller County met with some limited success near the turn of the century. **Dr. L.M. Burch**, an area oculist, treated many with satisfactory results. Medical science, though improving daily, could only impact the quality of life for those it could effectively treat. After all, once eyesight was gone what could realistically be done to restore it? So the concerns of the blind remained unchanged until well into the new century.

In 1911 a voluntary, charitable organization was formed in St. Louis. Known as The Missouri Association for the Blind, this group opened a Broom Shop employing blind people to make and sell straw brooms.⁵

Encouraged by the astounding success of the Broom Shop government legislators decided to follow the example of the Association. In 1915, by act of the General Assembly, The Missouri Commission for the Blind was established. It

was recommended that \$25,000 be provided annually for the care and maintenance of the blind. The General Assembly appropriated \$12,500 for the use of the Commission on condition that an equal sum be raised by individual subscription.⁶

One thing medical science did accomplish in this era was to identify the leading cause for blindness in adults. It was a rather insidious disease they called trachoma. They discovered that if diagnosed soon enough and with proper treatment the effects of the disease could be halted and usually reversed. They discovered it was contagious, with young children especially susceptible. Sadly enough, for all the generations who had suffered, they also discovered it was a disease that was totally preventable.

The Commission responded vigorously to this news. An aggressive campaign was launched to educate the general population. Health officials sought to locate all those qualified as vision-impaired. Health screenings and examinations began in the

4 The Missouri School for the Blind opened in 1851 but was not classified as a state educational institute until 1921. The school was developed to assist the education and training of blind children, however by 1915 the largest percentage of blind persons in Missouri were adults beyond school age - and that percentage was growing rapidly.

5 The Missouri Association for the Blind became the St. Louis Society for the Blind in 1930 to decrease the confusion between itself and the state-governed Missouri Commission for the Blind. After the Commission was established the Association confined it's work to the St. Louis area. The Broom Shop mentioned in the text began with thirteen blind employees, eventually there would be nearly one hundred blind workers employed there.

6 The law creating the Commission inhibited the use of funds appropriated by the State for purely charitable purposes. The theory and purpose of the law was for the Commission to develop and utilize the industrial capacity of the adult blind.

schools. No stone was left unturned in their efforts. Every possible avenue was pursued. Even the Missouri General Assembly came under pressure from the Commission to enact new statutes and revise old ones to improve awareness.⁷

On 20 November, 1916, the Central Missouri Association for the Blind was organized at Jefferson City.⁸ A shop was opened at 215 East Main Street for the purpose of training and employing the adult blind of the community. **Mr. Orlando Jones**, a former grocer in Jefferson City who had recently lost his sight, was appointed superintendent. Though created to assist the blind in the capital city, the CMAB was the beginning of work for the adult blind in rural Missouri - and would be the first agency to address the problems for nearby Miller County's blind population.⁹

In 1924, two Miller County residents enrolled in this Vocational School at Jeffer-

son City. **Arthur Small** of Tuscumbia and **Dee Duncan** of Brumley attended five months of training where they were taught to read Braille, weave mats and rugs, make baskets, and cane chairs. It was from the contact with these two students that the CMAB became aware of the numbers of blind in Miller County.

Mr. Jones began preliminary work immediately in the Brumley area. He succeeded in securing a local board to manage this new project in conjunction with the CMAB. The committee consisted of **Eleven Thompson**, **Squire James Martin Hawkins** and **Dr. Walter Dickson**. They met on Monday, 7 July, 1924 at the office of Dr. Dickson and enrolled the following as students in the new school: **Belle Witt**, **Ruby Witt**, **M.D. Duncan**, **Joe Duncan**, **Bluford Luttrell**, **Albert Luttrell** and **Jim Henry Luttrell**. Classes would be held in the G.A.R. Hall.¹⁰

After the first season of classes was completed it was quite evident to those re-

7 One such Statute, an addition to Section 8321 of Article II, Chapter 78 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri for 1909, reads as follows:

Section 8321. It shall be the duty of every midwife to cleanse the eyes of any infant born under her attendance and to place or drop into each eye of any such infant two drops of a one percent solution of silver nitrate within two hours after delivery of the child.

8 This organization operated as the Jefferson City Association for the Blind until 1923.

9 Statewide, prior to the organization of the Central Missouri Association for the Blind, all work for the adult blind had been only in the metropolitan areas of St. Louis, Kansas City, and St. Charles.

10 This building stood for many years between the Baptist and Christian Churches at Brumley. It was built as a lodge hall for area Civil War veterans. The structure was razed in the late 1970's.



Prevention of Blindness

Warning
 Almost every case of long standing sore eyes is
TRACHOMA
 (Granulated Eye—Ods)



THIS GIRL
 has trachoma
 If she had
 proper treatment
 she will get well



THIS GIRL
 had trachoma
 she did not have
 proper treatment
 she is now totally blind



THIS BOY
 had trachoma
 he had proper
 treatment and is
 cured



If you have granulated eye-lids
 and neglect them
 your eyes may become like this.

CURE REQUIRES TIME AND PATIENCE

TRACHOMA IS VERY CONTAGIOUS

Use your own towels, soap,
 wash basin, napkins, and handkerchiefs.

PHLYCTENULAR DISEASE



This child
 has Phlyctenular disease

A very
 common and damaging
 eye trouble
 among children

A child with inflamed
 and watering eyes
 who cannot stand the light
 generally has
 Phlyctenular disease



This eye
 helped by proper treatment

IMMEDIATE treatment by an **OCULIST**
 is necessary

SUNSHINE · FRESH AIR and GOOD FOOD

help to cure this disease

Warrent Association for the Blind
 2025 Warrenton Park, St. Louis

Bulletins, pamphlets, tracts, and flyers were only one of the tools used in the aggressive campaign mounted to educate Missourians about the causes and cures of trachoma. Their methods proved so successful that the Missouri Commission for the Blind confidently issued the following statement in 1928: "Trachoma, granulated eyelids, or "sore-eyes", is the greatest cause of blindness in the state. By co-operation with the State Board of Health and the United States Public Health Hospital at Rolla, Missouri it is gradually being wiped out, and competent authorities say that another ten years will see trachoma a disease of the past."

sponsible how important it was to continue the work. In September, 1925, the school was moved to a home near the Mt. Union Church.¹¹ Instruction now included the development of vocational skills and those attending proved so enterprising that a decision was made to construct a shop building where products could be made to sale commercially.

The necessary funds to meet the expenses of this new training center were supplied equally and jointly by the **Bank of Brumley** and the **State Rehabilitation Service**. A site was approved and **Virgil Smith** contracted to construct the building.¹² (Virgil was injured slightly during construction when he fell off the roof.)

Efmer Ragain, one of the more outstanding graduates of Mr. Jones' training school in

Jefferson City and also blind himself, was appointed as instructor and manager. While teaching at the school Mr. Ragain boarded with the family of **Virgil and Stella Thomas Smith**. Their two young sons, **Cecil and Wayne**, took turns leading Mr. Ragain from their home to school and back Mr. Ragain held one end of his cane while they held the other and in this manner picked their way along the trails through the hills and hollows.¹³ They were paid 5¢ per day for their trouble.

Wayne remembers Mr. Ragain as a kind man with a passion for Stella's lemon meringue pie, which she made as often as possible to accommodate his appetite. One such pie, set out to cool, was covered with a clean dish towel to keep flies and children away. Supper was soon ready and

11 The exact location was unspecified and still remains unknown. Many opinions and memories were sought to determine the place and a consensus of these point to the old **Bee and Bettie Luttrell Alexander** home. Fragmentary evidence exists to substantiate this belief, such as the photographs contained in this article.

12 The Blind Workshop at Mt. Union was located near the northeast corner of the cemetery as it exists today.

13 It was a common sight in the Brumley Creek area to see young cousins, nephews, nieces, or other family members leading around the adult blind as described in the text. Children will be children though and it was always a temptation to make a boring job more exciting by choosing a more treacherous route than the one available. Chugholes and ditches were always great fun but mudpuddles remained a favorite obstacle, much to the dismay of their helpless passenger who had no choice but to follow the path chosen. It wasn't necessarily done for mischief, just the acts of being children. As a youngster, Fred Witt had a habit of following Dee Duncan around (known to everyone as Uncle Dee). On one occasion Uncle Dee was moving along a pathway slowly and surely, feeling his way with his cane. Not knowing who was behind him Dee stopped and asked, "Who's there?" Fred, now realizing the chance for a wonderful game, said nothing. Uncle Dee walked on as Fred lay down and rolled along on the path behind him. This continued for some time. When Uncle Dee would stop walking, Fred would stop rolling, lying quiet and still. Suddenly, Uncle Dee whirled and lashed out with his cane, catching Fred across the bridge of his nose and bringing tears to his eyes. Uncle Dee never had anyone else roll along on the ground behind him after that.

ORGANIZE CLASS FOR BLIND AT BRUMLEY

County Blind Will Be Given Instructions in Weaving Mats and in Reading by Braille System.

O. E. Jones, superintendent of the Vocational School for the blind at Jefferson City, and his wife were in Tuscumbia Monday afternoon returning home from Brumley where they had been to organize a class for the instruction of Miller county's blind people.

Mr. Jones, who is himself blind and is doing a great work in bettering the condition of the blind in Central Missouri, is very enthusiastic about the possibilities in this kind of education.

A committee consisting of E. C. Thompson, Dr. W. D. Dickson and Judge J. M. Hawkins was named to work in conjunction with the Central Missouri Association for the Blind. The class met Monday at Dr. Dickson's office for the first time and hereafter the class will be held two days of each month at the G. A. R. hall.

Those attending the first class were Bulic and Ruby Witt, M. D. Duncan, Joe Duncan, "Jack" Luttrell, Albert Luttrell and Jas. Henry Luttrell.

M. D. Duncan attended the Vocational School at Jefferson City five months, during which time he learned to read by the Braille system (with the fingers on raised characters) and to make door mats, baskets and cane chairs.

Arthur Small of Tuscumbia also attended the school and learned to weave mats. He received a mat frame from the school Monday and will make mats. He has also been selling mats that were made at the Blind School at Jefferson City.

Mr. Jones tells of a case where one of the county's blind has been greatly benefited by the clinics which have been held in Central Missouri. This is Mrs. Betsy Luttrell. She was declared totally blind two years ago and a few days ago she was able to see a rabbit run across the yard for the first time in many years, thanks to the treatment she received at these clinics.

Brumley is the third place in Central Missouri to have a class for the blind and every blind person in the county should try to take the instruction. It will not only occupy their time but will soon give them a source of income that will aid in supporting them. Those who are interested should communicate with Mr. Jones or with the committee appointed at Brumley.

everyone called to dinner. After the meal it was time for dessert. When the towel was removed it accidentally trailed through the meringue. As the pie was delivered to the table the ever-observant Wayne noticed the blemished topping and brought it to the attention of his mother.

"Mom, I think a mouse ran across the pie."

Despite all fervent assurances to the contrary, Mr. Ragain, who of course could not see the pie for himself, refused his usual portion.

The workshop at Mt. Union continued, dividing time between education and filling orders sent to them from the CMAB who distributed their products to various merchants across the state. Mr. Jones worked tirelessly in support of the school, scheduling demonstrations and exhibits over the entire county.

In the 6th Biennial Report of the Missouri Commission for the Blind, period ending 31 December, 1926, Mr. Jones reported 45 cases of blindness in Miller County with 32 of those drawing a blind pension.¹⁴ No class rolls for the blind school have been discovered so it is uncertain as to the number that actually attended the school near Mt. Union over the years of its existence.

During August of 1928 the Commission established a

¹⁴ The Commission expanded into several different service departments - prevention of blindness, home teaching and instruction, and employment and social services. Legislation providing pensions for the deserving blind was approved 29 March, 1921.

TRAINING SCHOOL FOR BLIND AT MT. UNION

Two Months' Course Will Be Given
to the Blind of This County.

Mr. and Mrs. O. E. Jones of Jefferson City were in Miller county Thursday of last week making arrangements for conducting a training school for the Miller county blind people at Mt. Union church house, near Brumley, beginning the Tuesday following Labor Day and continuing two months. Any person in Miller county desiring to attend the school is privileged to do so.

Ethér B. Ragain, of Mt. Vernon, a graduate of a training school for the blind, will have charge of the school at Mt. Union and Judge J. M. Hawkins, Dr. W. D. Dickson and E. T. Thompson of Brumley will aid in furthering the objects of the school. The school will be held under the auspices of the Central Missouri Association for the Blind. Six applications have already been received from persons who wish to attend the school. They are: Belle and Ruby Witt, M. D. Duncan, Albert Luttrell, "Jack" Luttrell and Albert Shelton.

Every blind person in Miller county who is otherwise physically able to work should become interested in this school and make arrangements to attend this two months' school of free training. It will mean much to those attending, for it will not only occupy their time and give them physical exercise, but will aid, as well, toward their up-keep.

Visits Mt. Union School for Blind.

I want to tell the people what a treat mother and I had last Thursday. We visited the blind folks school near Mt. Union. We had heard so much about their work that we decided we would go and see. They have a blind teacher from Kansas City (I think that is his home) and they are doing a great work and learning very fast, he says. They have a loom and they make rugs on it. They make baskets and deer mats, and have made some saw case chair bottoms. I will say that it is worth any one's time to go and spend a few hours watching them work. They have lots of company. They are trying to make up money to build them a house somewhere near Mt. Union church house so they can do custom work for their neighbors. It just makes our hearts ache to see them groping around waiting for a chair or their different kinds of work. Just to think that all of their days are like night to us. None of us are thankful enough for the many blessings we have. There were 6 of the people present the day we were there and just one that could see any. I think all of us that can ought to help them out in building their work shop and all that can should go to see them in their work. The last day of their school will be on Wednesday before Christmas at Brumley. They have had a school going on there now for almost four months. They are also learning to read the Brail writing.—Pleasant Hill Correspondent.

(clockwise, from above) 6 August, 1925. The second season of classes finds the blind school moved from Brumley to the Mt. Union community and an instructor appointed.

10 December, 1925. The Pleasant Hill correspondent for the Miller County Autogram visits the school for the blind. The letter clearly indicates temporary housing is being used at the time of the visit as funds are sought "to build them a house".

17 December, 1925. Mr. Orlando Jones knew well the power of the press and the strength of public opinion. Using lessons learned from the Commission's own aggressive media campaign he never allowed an opportunity to advertise pass him by. Whether giving demonstrations and exhibits or merely stopping by the office of an editor to inform of progress, he made it a point to keep the plight of the blind before public scrutiny. It was he, above all others, who made a difference in Miller County.

BLIND TO GIVE DEMONSTRATION

Visitors Are Invited to Come and See
Work Being Done.

Mr. Jones of Jefferson City and Mr. Ragain, who has charge of the blind school at Mt. Union will hold a demonstration school at Brumley on Wednesday, December 23, during the entire day.

Work done by the people and the implements with which they work will be shown. These blind people who have been studying mat-making and basket-weaving at the Mt. Union school have been doing some good work and are attracting considerable attention. It is interesting to note the cheerfulness of these unfortunate people when taking up this work. They have been taught that they can do something of value to themselves and are much better contented.

Every one should give their encouragement to the school in its work as it will be of much service to the blind people of the county.

Placement Department responsible for employing blind workers outside the shops under the Commission's control. Mr. Orlando Jones was promoted to placement agent within the system while Mr. Efmer Ragain succeeded him as superintendent of the workshop in Jefferson City.

Temporary supervision was supplied to replace Mr. Ragain, however his position as manager of the facility in Miller County was never permanently filled. Without his constant presence, and with Mr. Jones occupied elsewhere, interest in the project began to wane. The school operated for nearly a year more before finally closing.

Once abandoned the little frame building that stood next to the Mt. Union Church was purchased by **Fred Witt**, probably in preparation of his upcoming marriage. The building was moved over a quarter mile to the northeast to be used as a home by Fred and his wife-to-be, **Parthena Luttrell**.¹⁵

The move was a big event in the Brumley Creek area. **Kenneth Shelton** made plans to be there but his mother said there was no need for him to be in the way. He sneaked

away though and remembers the day clearly. The stones used as a foundation were removed and replaced with logs that spanned the width of the building. A hitch was rigged and three horses put into harness, led by **Old Jim**, a big gray with red speckles owned by **Jesse Witt**, Fred's grandfather. The reins were slapped and Old Jim strained forward. The younger horses joined the pull and the house moved forward, rolling on the logs that had been placed beneath it. Shouts of glee and delight rose from the loft inside the building where several children were along for the ride, **Eva Davenport Kaiser** among them. The structure was pulled a short distance, then stopped to relocate the logs. They were placed in front of the building again, making a roadway of logs, so to speak, and the procedure repeated. A few hours later the school for the blind was in place and began a new life as a residence. It exists today within the walls of the home of **Dorlis and Gertie Rodden Witt**¹⁶ **Mt. Union Church of Christ** and it's original setting in view in the distance.

¹⁵ Parthena's father and uncle, Bluford and Albert Luttrell, had both attended the school for the blind at Mt. Union. Bluford has always been known as "Jack", the reason for the nickname still remains a mystery.

¹⁶ Doral is the eldest son of Fred Witt.

The 6th Biennial Report of the Missouri Commission for the Blind introduces Miller County's new facility near Brumley. Note the physical description of the region contained in the report. Brumley's rugged hills seems to have impressed many flatlanders over the years. This report covers the time period of 1 Jan. 1925 - 31 Dec. 1926.

The Jefferson City Shop is under the management of our Home Teacher, O. E. Jones. The main occupation is weaving, and we are of the opinion that some of the best weaving in the country is done here. Colonial patterns are employed in the weaving of rugs and counterpanes. In the last year the Commission has discontinued weaving in its other shops, believing that the best results would be obtained by centering all the weaving of the state at Jefferson City. The shop workers are all paid by piece work, and the articles made are sold by a blind salesman. During the past two years Mr. Jones has equipped and supervised two small shops, one in the mountains at Brumley in Miller County, and one in Sedalia. These shops are under his direct supervision and are a great tribute to his organizing ability. The Community Fund of Jefferson City contributes to the support of the central shop. Below appears a list of the shop workers for Central Missouri for the past period showing the county from which they came.

JEFFERSON CITY SHOP.

Rose Struttman.....	Montgomery	Ben Bolton	Cole
Veronica Twehus.....	Maries	Charlie Greenaway.....	Cole
Belle Witt.....	Miller	Katie Kolb.....	Cole
Ruby Luttrell.....	Miller	Teresa Hellan.....	Cole
Elmer Regan.....	Lawrence	America Moore.....	Cole
Clarence Wiles.....	Clark	John F. Sharr.....	Pettis
James Sexton.....	Lawrence	Mitchel Hawkins.....	Pettis
Olen Shain.....	Harrison	Clarence Gravitt.....	Pettis
Watson Johns.....	Lafayette	Mason Jones.....	Pettis
Frank Baker.....	Callaway	Albert Luttrell.....	Miller
George Warburton.....	Cole	Betsy Luttrell.....	Miller
N. J. Power.....	Cole	M. D. Duncan.....	Miller
Lulu Ousley.....	Cole	B. M. Luttrell.....	Miller
Daisy Oster.....	Cole	Albert Shelton.....	Miller
Marie Busch.....	Cole		

JEFFERSON CITY SHOP

This shop has undergone change of management during the last few months. Mr. O. E. Jones, former superintendent, was transferred to a more responsible position as Placement Agent for the Commission and Mr. E. B. Ragain appointed superintendent. The main occupation here is weaving of rugs, scarfs and bed spreads. These articles are of such beautiful design and good quality that they have a ready sale. New designs, sizes and combination of colors are being constantly made so as to fill the orders sent in from salesmen.

The small shop at Brumley, under this management, is progressing and fills orders for plain woven rugs. Additional supervision has been provided temporarily to encourage and train new workers.

The Sedalia Shop is about to be expanded to provide work for more applicants in nearby counties who need training, as well as to provide for additional blind workers living in Sedalia. If local support can be secured this shop will be enlarged.

The following are employees of the Jefferson City Shop:

- *Veronica Twehus
- *Rose Struttman
- *Daisy Oster
- *Virginia Potter
- *Frank Baker
- *N. J. Powers
- *Jeff Wilder
- *Watson Johns

The 7th Biennial Report of the Missouri Commission for the Blind shows the reappointments of Mr. Jones and Mr. Ragain within the organization. Without their support and presence the school for the blind they helped to establish in Miller County would not survive. This report covers the time period of 1 Jan. 1927 - 31 Dec. 1928.



(above) The second season of classes at the school for the blind was moved from Brumley to the Mt. Union community. standing, l. to r. **Efner Ragain**, **Betsy Luttrell**, **Belle Witt**, **Ruby Witt**, **Albert Luttrell**. seated, l. to r. **Bluford "Jack" Luttrell**, **Dee Duncan**. Person in doorway remains unidentified. On display are examples of products made by the students - baskets, caned chair seats, rugs and mats. Note the lap looms held by Bluford and Dee. The structure in the background is thought to be the old **Bee Alexander** place. It was used as a barn after being vacated by the blind school.

(right) The small frame structure built by **Virgil Smith** in 1926 was used as a school for the blind scarcely two years before it closed. Purchased by **Fred Witt** it was moved to this location to serve as a residence. The lean-to on the rear side of the building was an addition made later by Fred and housed a kitchen. The lovely subject of this photo was Fred's daughter, **Daisy Witt Duncan**.



(right) circa 1950. The school for the blind remains fairly well intact twenty years after becoming a residence.

Pictured is the eldest child of **Fred and Parthena Luttrell Witt.**

Dorsie Witt Huddleston

would later become famous for being the mother of world reknown author, Greg Huddleston.

The extra-wide door shown behind

Dorsie was made to allow easier access with some of the larger pieces of equipment, such as floor looms, that were used during the blind workshop years.

(below) 1991. The home of **Doral and Gertie Rodden Witt** still retains the original roof line of the school for the blind.

The structure once used as a blind school and later the home where Fred and Parthena reared five children now serves as a living room.



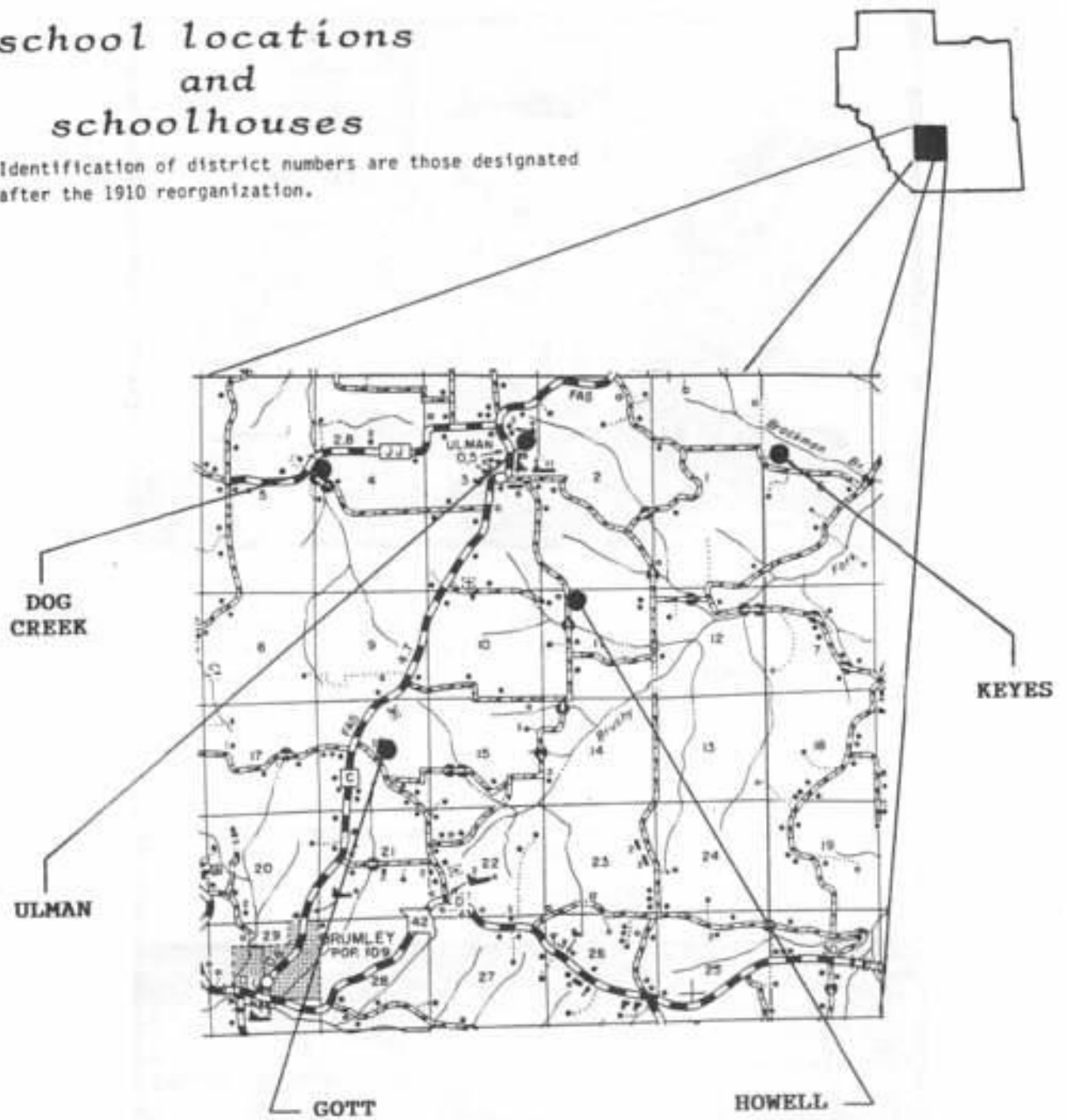


(above) seated from left: **M.D. Duncan, Albert Luttrell**
standing from left: Instructor **Efmer Ragain, Belle Witt, Ruby Witt, Betsy Luttrell, Bluford "Jack" Luttrell**. All are now deceased save **Betsy Luttrell George** who resides in a nursing facility at Cameron, Missouri. Memories and a handful of photographs are all that's left as reminders of the school. The courage and lives of those who attended there impacted greatly upon a younger generation who today recalls with affection the gentleness and patience of their vision-impaired elders. (below) **Ruth Witt Rodden** still treasures the basket made and given to her by her aunt **Belle Witt**, a student at the blind school. This basket is perhaps the only surviving article of the Miller County School for the Blind.



school locations and schoolhouses

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



Background map furnished by Missouri State Department of Highway and Transportation.

gott **(old ulman)**



GOTT SCHOOL, District #70 is now used for storage and stands skirted by a shed. The higher-pitched roof and chimney identifies the old school.
final year of use: 1951
presently owned by Lloyd and Juanita Allison Reed
photographed June, 1991

dog creek



DOG CREEK, District #89
final year of use: 1952
presently owned by Glenn and Juanita Scott Robinett.
photographed February, 1990

ulman



ULMAN SCHOOL, District #90 owns the distinction of being the last sub-district school to operate in Miller County.

final year of use: 1964

presently owned by the Village of Ulman (Tennyson Patterson, Joshua McGowin Jr., Jimmy Joe Myers, James Myers; trustees)

photographed February, 1990

keyes



KEYES SCHOOL, District #91 suffered two fires in the last decade of it's existence. The fire of 21 October, 1941 closed it's doors forever. All that remains is a foundation and the pump to remind the casual observer that a school once stood here. The pump has stood undisturbed for years until recently when worthless criminals stole the handle. final year of use: 1941
presently owned by Marshall and Janice Hensley Humphreys
photographed June, 1991

howell



HOWELL SCHOOL, District #92 barely exists today. A jumble of fieldstones now is all that marks it's location. The old schoolbell that hung in the belfry pealing the start of each schoolday now welcomes worshipers to Mt. Zion Christian Church near Tuscumbia.
final year of use: 1941
presently owned by Gene and Helen Martin Edwards
photographed June, 1991

James Harvey Vernon



13 June, 1853 - 2 May, 1941

PIONEER MEMORIES

the diary of James Harvey Vernon

GRANDPA HENDERSON'S FAMILY

William Henderson was born in Tennessee. He married **Sarah Bradford**. They had ten children. They moved to Miller County and homesteaded a farm on the Little Saline. They settled there when my mother was 10 years old. My mother's name was **Sarah**. The other children's names are **Allen, John, Edd, Harvey, Isaac, Eli, Betty, Eliza, and Tilda**. Grandmother died on that farm and was buried at **Salem Cemetery** near **Eldon**. She was born 11 September, 1791, and died 10 October, 1856. Grandfather lived with his children, died in Kansas, and was brought back here and buried in Salem Cemetery.

Allen married and lived across the river south of **Bagnell**. He had five children, **Edd, Jim, Allen, Laura, and Caroline**. He died years ago. Laura lives close to Bagnell. Jim and Edd live on the old homestead.

Betty married **Dave Stepp**. They had several children. **Jim, John, Bill, Wayne, Ike, Edd, George, Joe, Eliza, Jul-**

ia, and Nancy.

Eliza married a **Bradford**. Harvey married **Sally Vernon**, a sister to my father.

Sarah Henderson married **Wilburn Vernon**, my father.

Eli married a girl by the name of **Lucy Bailey**. He was not a very good citizen, did some things that in that day were considered terrible, and had to go away.

GRANDPA VERNON'S FAMILY

Jeremiah Vernon was born in Kentucky in the year 1805. He was married to **Betsy Stark**. Their two oldest children were born in Kentucky. They moved to Missouri and homesteaded a farm where **Olean** is now. The house he built was a large log house with a fire place in each end, considered a mansion in those days. **Fourteen** children were born there making 16 in all. Their names are **Nancy, Polly, Wilburn, Becky, Sally, Sarena, Martha, Carolina, Leah, Missouri, George, Lark, Tom, Ann, Maniza, and Charity**.

Nancy married **Jim Long** and

lived close to **Mt. Pleasant**. They had one daughter, **Mary Jane**. Nancy died young not long after the birth of her child. Mary Jane married **Hardy Shadrick**.

Polly married **John Hannah**. They lived near **High Point** and didn't have any children. Aunt Polly was a large woman and lived to be about sixty.

→ **Wilburn** married **Sarah Henderson** and lived in different places, all in Miller County, not far from Mt. Pleasant, Eldon, and Olean. The names of their children are **Mary Eliza**, **William**, **James Harvey**, **Issac Thomas**, **Elizabeth**, **Adaline**, **Lydia**, **George**, **John**, and **Frank**. One baby died in infancy.

Vaughn
Terrain
Wilburn Vaughn
Ray E. Vaughn
Ben Allen
Charley Allen
Logan
My great Aunt

Mary Eliza married **Ben Allen** and lived east of Olean, raised their children on a farm, and gave land for the **Allen Cemetery**. Their children's names are **Billy**, **Emma**, **Charley**, **Estella**, and **Ernest**. Emma married **John Clay**, had one child (**Edgar**). Charley married (**Stella Allee**) had several children, **Ollie**, **Priest**, **Ray**, **Isma**, **Raymond** and **Logan**. Estella married **Tom Giddeons**. Their children are **Clarence**, **Nevada**, **Hilger**, and **Erma**. Ernest and Billy have never married.

John Allee
Thomas
Arthur
Swells

Brother Billy married **Anna Hunsucker** and they had one child, **Forrest**. Anna died and he later married **Theodosia Jordon**. They lived east of Olean, near **Enon**, for several years then moved to near High Point. Forrest married **Anna McGill**. Brother Billy died at their home at the age of 84.

Harvey married **Sarah Jones** and had six children, **Eliza**, **Fanny**, **William Allen**, **Lou**, **Walter**, and an infant baby. Sarah died 10 December, 1881.

Harvey later married **Rachel Salina Cox**. Their children's names are **May**, **Ollie**, **Roy**, **Amy**, **Ray**, **Gertie**, **Minnie**, **Aubra**, **Edna**, **Rella**, **Cecil**, **Effie**, **Virgie**, **Versie**, and 3 infant babies.

Issac Thomas married **Mattie White** and lived east of **Aurora Springs**. Their children are **Arthur**, **Pearl**, **Blanche**, **Maude**, **Clyde**, an infant who died in infancy, **Opal**, **Edgar**, **Carl**, **Bessie**, **Truman**, and **Dolly Zola**.

Adaline married **John Evans** and had one child. She and the baby died when she was real young.

Elizabeth married **Thomas Smith**. He had two children, **Mamie** and **Willie**, but Elizabeth didn't have any children. After Tom died she married **Joe Merriott** and lived near **Latham**.

George married **Alice White** and lived on the ridge south of Saline Creek. Their children are **Nora**, **Daisy**, **Gracie**, **Nellie**, **Laura**, **Bertie**, **Georgie**, **Ira**, **Harley**, and **Willie**. He later married **Mollie Grand staff**. Their children are **Jewel**, **Louis**, and **Sylvia**. He later married **Maude Adcock Chetister**. They have several children and are now living in Chaney, Kansas.

John married **Rosa McKinney**. They lived on a farm and my father, **Wilburn Vernon**, spent his last years at their house. He received a pension and paid his way, but Rosy was good to him. Their children are **Louis**, **Claude**, **Carolie**, **Chester**, and **Mildred**. Brother John died 14 June at the age of 69 years, 11 months, and 4 days.

Frank married **Sarah Kelsay** and they lived on a farm north of the Saline Creek.

For years Brother Frank ran a saw mill and sawed lumber for a lot of people. Their children are **Fred, Otto, Ruth, Corney, Dora,** and **Lester.** Otto, Ruth, Corney, and another baby are dead. Ruth was 16, Otto was 8, and Corney 3.

Becky married **Calvin Starling** and had about seven children. Their names are **Tom, Henry, Jim, Mary Emiline Jane, Manda, Reena,** and one baby that died. Aunt Becky and Uncle Calvin both lived to be old. They lived near **Mt. Herman.** Uncle Calvin died first.

Sally married **Harvey Henderson** and for several years they lived east of Olean then moved out west to Kansas in the year 1865. Aunt Sally died in northern Kansas and he married again and moved to Blackwell, Kansas, and died there when he was old. Their children are **Will, Nancy, Elizabeth, Tom, John, George, L.B.,** and **Fannie.**

Sarena married **Joel McKinney.** They lived close to **Spring Garden** for years, then moved to Arkansas. Uncle Joel was out hunting and was killed by Indians. They found him with two arrows in his

body. He was frozen and they had to leave the arrows in his body. Aunt Sarena died the next June. Their children are **Tom, Martha, Georgeann,** and **Joe Ann** (twins). Their Grandpa McKinney went after the children and mother and father kept the twins and Tom

Martha married **Tom Shelton** Their four children are **Tom, Joel, Martha,** and **Mary.** They lived near **Rocky Mount** and both lived to be old. Uncle Tom always went to the Soldiers Encampment each year and wore his soldier's uniform. Aunt Martha died two weeks before Grandpa Vernon (her father) died.

Caroline married **Dan Atkinson.** They lived one mile east of **Mt. Herman Church.** They had two children, **Jim** and **Oma Jane.** She died when the children were small.

Leah married **Yancy Roark.** They lived in Aurora Springs. Their children are **Nolan, Johnny,** and **Sis** (Martha). Nolan had one daughter, **Nellie,** and Johnny's children are **Arthur** and **Horace.** Uncle Yancy was killed in the time of the war.¹ About 30 August, 1864, seven men were killed down on the Osage River. They

¹ The account given by James Harvey Vernon of his Uncle Yancy is in reference to what local historians call the Curtman Island Massacre. A force of sixteen militiamen under the command of 1st Lieutenant John Starling of rural Olean were surprised while on patrol by a band of Confederate guerrillas. Upon their capture the sixteen citizen-soldiers were lined up. The seven mentioned by Mr. Vernon were singled out and the others released. (The name not remembered was **William Gibson.**) As the seven stood, helpless and unarmed, a firing squad was formed. Without ceremony the quiet of the Osage River Valley was horrendously violated as the Confederate rifles barked. Uncle Yancy Roark fell there among his comrades, far from the eyes of family and loved ones. In a further act of obscenity the murderers left the bodies of their victims to rot or be eaten by scavengers. Fortunately, they were claimed before either could happen, being returned home for burial. Six of those men were laid to rest in Allen Cemetery, east of Olean. Crisp (who apparently survived the fatal volley and crawled away to die in the brush) was buried at Spring Garden.

were taken prisoner and marched out on the sandbar and shot down. The other men were **Sam McClure, Fair Long, John Starling, Dick Crisp, Nat Hicks,** and one other. *Wm. Gibson*

Missouri married **Ed Farris** They lived near Spring Garden and had several children. I don't know all of their names Billy was one, and he lived west of Eldon for a while.

Uncle George married **Mary Norman.** They lived near **California** (MO) on a farm. They had six children, **Dell, Ray, Henry, Jessie, Joe, Lilly, Myrtle,** and **Barbara.** One son was born dead, no name. Aunt Mary died in February, 1904, and Uncle George moved into California and died in February, 1912.

Ann married **Bill Woolkit.** They had one child that lived to be two years old. Her husband died, and in later years she married Ed Farris, her brother-in-law.

Charity married **Joel Simmons** and lived and raised their family near Rocky Mount Maniza died when just a girl, about 16 or 17.

Lark died when he was 21. He had TB.

Tom, the youngest in the family, died with spotted fever when he was 17 years old.

These are the names of my Grandfather Vernon's family and who they married and their children and also some of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

(continued next issue)



James Harvey Vernon was born 13 June, 1853, in a log home that would stand today inside the city limits of Eldon, Missouri. At the time of his birth there was no hint of the thriving metropolis that now exists, only open prairie and wooded rolling hills. There comes a time and place in each life when we realize the race is nearly run and we become reflective of our past. Memories of childhood are revisited. We give an accounting of ourself, hoping our life and those who touched it won't be forgotten. It is fortunate for us that James Harvey Vernon had such powerful sentiments that he sought to preserve those memories by writing them down. Through his words we will catch glimpses of the very birth of Miller County and the lives of those early pioneers. We will see images of the turmoil suffered during the Civil War. One can only imagine the emotions he felt as he stood in Allen Cemetery and watched the burial of those six men, his Uncle Yancy among them. Indeed the impression was so great that he could recall it to the very day of his death. Though only mentioned in passing, Vernon's telling of the 1894 diphtheria epidemic is truly heart-rending, a moment in time when Miller County nearly lost an entire generation. In some families a few children died, in others all were lost. Parents had to bury their own children because neighbors were afraid of contracting the disease and carrying it home. The diary of James Harvey Vernon centers, of course, around the Vernon family, yet has much historical significance. Be certain to watch future issues of **Mill Creek** for the continuance of this unique journal. Perhaps it will encourage others to begin one of their own.



Have you ever stopped to ponder some of life's most baffling questions? Why is the sky blue? What keeps our hearts beating? How does gravity work? And the most haunting question ever - why were outhouses always built down by the chickenhouse?

Now perhaps the last question has never been an important one to you, and perhaps the location of your outhouse was never an issue. But for those of us who endured childhood with a fighting rooster around, let me assure you that the last place you wanted the outhouse to be was down by the chickenhouse!

A fighting rooster. Barnyard bully. Terrorizer of small children and unsuspecting city cousins. I can still recall the chill in my blood when I'd hear those spurs clicking up the path behind me. Many battles were fought on the well-trodden pathway leading from the back gate to the outhouse. I seem to recall most of those skirmishes happening on the way back to the house. Maybe we had a sympathetic rooster.

My earliest encounter with a fighting rooster was with a big white leghorn that belonged to a neighbor. At the time we didn't own a tractor, but our neighbors had one. George and Gertie ran a dairy operation and they seemed to have it all. A windmill, a large barn, indoor plumbing, everything. Why they even had a creek that ran water year round! With all this stuff it was more fun to go to the neighbor's house and play.

Dave and I went over one day to play on George's tractor. Now, there's one thing you've got to understand about little brothers. If you don't abuse them they don't feel needed. God made little brothers and sisters just so parents wouldn't have to buy pets. Sure, we had dogs, but you couldn't always catch the dog. And cats scratched too much. Sort of like trying to play with a porcupine. Little brothers are just right - and mine was a perfect age, fourteen months my junior. Just old enough to try everything I did, but just young enough not to be able to do it.

As I was saying, we were over at George's playing on his tractor. We whiled away some time before deciding to go ask Gertie for some cookies. Gertie was always baking cookies and we knew she kept a big supply on hand. When you're five years old, eating cookies is almost as good as playing on the tractor anyway so we climbed off the tractor and headed for Gertie's kitchen. But waiting just outside the barn door was the rooster.

AMBUSH!

We beat a hasty retreat back inside the barn, with the rooster in close pursuit. Past the tractor, past the bales of hay, back into the barn as far as we could go. Now we were trapped, searching desperately for some means of defense. I found a stick and used it to ward off the rooster's attack. But the rooster seemed to know exactly how long the stick was, staying just beyond my reach. On the third or fourth swing the dumb stick broke in two. The rooster had probably put it there to begin with.

Sunlight streamed through the cracks in the wall, highlighting the dust sent airborne by the battle. The smell of old hay filled our nostrils as the rooster began strutting back and forth in front of us, bock - bock - bocking his intentions, and we were believing every threat he made. Each strut brought him a little closer as he edged his way toward us. Time was running out, when I was suddenly inspired by a cunning plan.

I told Dave to run when I gave the signal. He was to run in one direction and I'd

run in the other, hopefully confusing the conceited fowl. The rooster lowered his head to the ground and began dancing sideways toward us. It was now or never.

"Run, Dave!" I didn't run of course. I knew the rooster would go for the first thing that moved. Dave shot along the wall, the rooster right behind him, myself running along the opposite wall. I must say I was impressed by Dave's speed. We raced for the door, me on one side of the barn, Dave and the rooster on the other. We all got to the door about the same time but I was there first by an eyelash. We burst out of the barn at full speed; me, Dave, and the rooster in rapid succession.

It was all open ground now, so I turned for home, Dave huffing and puffing just behind me and the rooster immediately behind him. Forget the cookies! It was life or death now!

This was a sly rooster. He ran silently, making no sound. Each time I thought I could slow down, I'd glance back only to find his sinister form still there.

My longer legs started to make a difference as I began to pull away, outdistancing Dave and the rooster. Though Dave was running faster than I had ever seen him run, he knew he was going to be left behind. In a final attempt to stay with me, Dave made a wild grab. Just before I got out of reach he managed to hook his fingers in the back belt loop of my britches. It felt like somebody threw an anchor overboard!

Now I was the one running faster than I had ever run

before. I knew I could outrun that old rooster by myself, but I had my doubts about it with my four-year old brother being towed behind.

But safety lay just ahead. There was a hedge around our house with just two gaps in it for entry. Neither one was close by. I took one last look behind me. Sure enough, the rooster was gaining. We'd never make the gap. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and plunged through the hedge. That was where I lost Dave, and where the rooster found him. Half of him made it

through with me. The other half didn't. I know I should have pulled Dave on through, but someone had to be the hero and go get help. Besides, from the look on Dave's face and from the horrible noises coming from beyond the hedge, the last thing I wanted was to pull the rooster in with him.

We played at our house the remainder of the day. Without a tractor. Without a windmill. Even without a creek that ran water year round. But most importantly, without a danged old killer rooster.



The grave of
SUSAN WINFREY,

wife of William Greenberry,
daughter of Thomas and Lucinda Winfrey,
has been found.

At her death Greenberry lay her at
the side of her mother in Warren
Cemetery, with every intention of one
day joining her there.

Marked by a simple fieldstone,
her children later purchased a temporary
funeral marker to signify
her place of rest.

Many of the family then moved to Kansas
and her grave lay unknown to
younger generations.

Greenberry became ill while on a
visit from Miller County to his
daughters in Pretty Prarie, Kansas.

He died there and was buried
at Lebanon Cemetery,
surrounded by Kansas wheatfields,
hundreds of miles from his home
and his wife.

Donations are being sought to
provide a permanent tombstone
for Susan. Descendants, friends, or
interested parties are asked to
send their contributions to the
following address:

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

please identify check and/or
envelope with the following:

Winfrey Stone

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN AREA HISTORY?

Become aware. Become involved. Join the
Miller County Historical Society.
For more information contact this publication.

150 years ago, south of Ulmon's Ridge,
lay a fertile region known as
the Little Richwoods.

The pride of this land was a homestead called
Gott Plantation.

It's sphere of influence was such that it's name
was passed on to a school, a church, and a cemetery.

Now, in 1991,

GOTT CHURCH

stands threatened by the ravages of time.
Unless funds are raised for repair and maintenance,
this structure so familiar to so many for so long
will probably have to be torn down. One historic
structure in Brumley (Brumley Christian Church)
has already suffered that fate this year.

Your involvement is necessary to save
Gott Church.

Send donations and contributions to:

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

please identify check and/or envelope
with the following:

Gott Preservation Fund

WARREN CEMETERY

is maintained entirely
by donations and
contributions.

Send yours to:

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

please identify check
and/or envelope with
the following:

Warren Cemetery

GOTT CEMETERY

is maintained entirely
by donations and
contributions.

Send yours to:

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

please identify check
and/or envelope with
the following:

Gott Cemetery

OWN A PIECE OF HISTORY!

Receive three square nails for your donation of \$10 or more
to the **Gott Preservation Fund**. These nails were saved from
the Brumley Christian Church building and date back nearly
110 years. Limited quantity, so act quickly.

Laura Livingston Casey

lies in an unmarked grave at the side of her husband, Simeon Casey, in the Livingston Cemetery. Donations are being sought to provide a permanent tombstone for Laura.

Descendants, friends, or those who think it sad that someone should disappear with no memory or memorial to say they once walked this earth are asked to send contributions to the following address:

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

please identify check and/or envelope with the following:

Casey Stone

VERNA KEETH PEMBERTON
RT. 1 BOX 273
IBERIA, MO. 65486

HAWKINS CEMETERY

is maintained entirely by donations and contributions. Send yours to:

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

please identify check and/or envelope with the following:

Hawkins Cemetery

FREE! FREE! FREE! FREE! FREE! FREE! FREE!

Do you have a worthwhile project of historic or heritage significance? We realize most of these are accomplished only with donations and volunteer labor. Advertise yours **FREE** here in Mill Creek.

FOOTBALL
Iberia Academy
vs.
Bolivar High School

AT

Iberia, Saturday, October 31

GAME STARTS AT 2:00 P. M.

The Bolivar High School team played the Academy last year and the game was pronounced one of the best of the season. Next Saturday's game is expected to be as good.

Come and You'll See a Thrilling Game



Win

A ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO *Mill Creek*!

GUESS THE SCORE OF THE GAME ADVERTISED ABOVE. ENTER AS OFTEN AS YOU WISH BUT ONLY ONE ENTRY PER ENVELOPE, PLEASE.

THE NEAREST GUESS TO THE ACTUAL SCORE WINS! IN CASE OF A TIE INCLUDE THE YEAR YOU BELIEVE THIS GAME WAS PLAYED.

USE THE EXAMPLE BELOW AS A GUIDE.
ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN
DECEMBER 31, 1991.

IBERIA ACADEMY 100

BOLIVAR HIGH 99½

YEAR 1991

No, you didn't miss our summer 1991 issue. Because of injuries suffered by Debby in an automobile accident we were unable to publish one, and since we do not print a winter issue this is the final *Mill Creek* this year. See you next spring!

IMAGES FROM HOME



"Where Have All The Children Gone"

Keyes School Pump

VERNA KEETH PEMBERTON
RT. 1 BOX 273
IBERIA, MO. 65486

— *Seventy of*
Miller Co. Historical Society
Fusscumbia, Mo. 65032

Place
Stamp
Here

Mill Creek

Route #1 Box 282
Brumley, MO 65017

Name of school _____ District # _____

STUDENT FORM

1. How many years did you attend this school? _____
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 _____ 5th grade _____
2nd grade _____ 6th grade _____
3rd grade _____ 7th grade _____
4th grade _____ 8th grade _____
4. Teacher's name (in full, where possible).
1st grade _____ 5th grade _____
2nd grade _____ 6th grade _____
3rd grade _____ 7th grade _____
4th grade _____ 8th grade _____
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? _____

Fold Here