1985

Missouri Challenges

Patsy J. Lilienkamp

MISSOURI CHALLENGES

Patsy J. Lilienkamp, B.A.

A Digest Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the Lindenwood Colleges in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Education

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DIGEST

This work was written to present selected portions of Missouri history, using the approach of anecdotal records interspersed with factual material. It focuses on the lives of the common people rather than the usual heroes of history books. It concentrates on their daily lives, their feelings, their beliefs, and their questions and fears.

The information was gathered from books, magazines, newspapers, and personal conversations. Some of the information is factual; some is a collection of happenings and customs which undoubtedly have been altered and amended as they were handed down through generations.

It is the author's hope that a format of this kind will make the study of history more interesting and genuine.

MISSOURI CHALLENGES

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A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the Lindenwood Colleges in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

1985

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

Rebecca Glenn, Ph.D.

Nancy Mueller

Hal Zimmerman

This creation is dedicated

to my family, without whose

love, support, and encouragement

its completion would not have been achieved

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INTRODUCTION

This work is not written chronologically, but rather in a cyclical form. It is divided into three parts.

Part One explains the early days of Missouri, with Chapter One giving the reasons for settlement. Chapter Two explains what the people experienced when they arrived, and how this land differed from their expectations. Chapter Three covers the building of homes and the formation of communities.

Part Two focuses on the daily lives of the early settlers. Its chapters emphasize family life, the particularly difficult role of the German immigrant women, the entertainment, the religion, the education, the medical practices, and the people's dependence on witchcraft in their lives.

The final section includes some of the mysteries and legends of the people as well as a collection of anecdotes and tall tales which have survived (and expanded) through the years, mainly by oral repetition.

PART ONE

THE CHALLENGE OF THE LAND

CHAPTER ONE

AND THE STREETS ARE PAVED WITH GOLD, TOO!

In it's infancy, Missouri populated itself in much the same way as other states, namely through promotional literature. There were, of course, the usual offers of free and/or inexpensive lands, but printed matter detailing the joys and serenity of life in Missouri was the most successful.

Many nineteenth-century European notions of the promises of American life owed their origin and longevity to a host of American promoters. The German people seemed most susceptible to promotional literature, so German accounts attracted a large readership and exerted a great influence upon their writers' countrymen.

Enter Missouri's first documented con-artist; Gottfried Duden. Duden's Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America, published in 1829, was one of the most influential of these books. Its timing, format, coverage, and literacy, along with its idyllic descriptions of pioneer farming in Missouri combined to make it an instant success. It attracted thousands of Germans to the Midwest, and particularly to Missouri.

Gottfried Duden, born in 1785, grew up in a home of assured status and social prestige, for his parents belonged to Remscheid's professional class. If children born into such a social environment declined to follow their father's calling, (the elder Duden owned the town's government-sanctioned apothecary), they either entered a related profession or sought employment in government. Gottfried Duden chose the latter, and, as was customary, received the traditional classical education and the preparation for government service, choosing the field of jurisprudence.

Goodwin's account of Duden's life states that in his youth, the region of his birth was a mosaic of duchies and princely domains. Duden's home town of Remscheid was located in the forests along the western hills of the Bergian Lans. The Rhine River, Germany's main north-south artery of trade and communication was a few miles to the west. Larger cities of the Ruhr and Lippe Rivers toward the north, and others of great industrial promise to the south surrounded Remscheid. Later, the industrial boom transformed the area into the heart of manufacturing and military importance. As a bureaucrat, Duden was mobile in his profession, serving several town government positions. In the Napoleonic War, he served in the army, but afterward returned to his legal position.

Local citizens were severely affected by rapid changes brought about by the Napoleonic Wars, Napoleonic codes, Prussian rule, unprecedented population growth, and corresponding decline in economic opportunities. Distressed by their immediate lot and fearful of the future, they were, consequently, easily influenced to board ships for distant lands. Others flocked to already crowded towns

and cities along the Rhine in search of employment, but the economy was already plagued by postwar depression and crop failures. They were forced into overcrowded housing, and these unemployed Germans swelled the ranks of those already in poverty and overburdened the existing relief agencies. This condition, according to Goodwin, following the usual sociological pattern, resulted in a significant increase of robberies and other crimes.

These problems caused chaos for the German authorities. Some issued decrees prohibiting people without visas and adequate financial means from emigrating. A few states created courts of inquest and took depositions from emigrants as to the reasons for their departure. Others, taking a more imaginative and resourceful approach, established bureaus of emigration. Finally Hans C. Gagern, a liberal nationalist, presented the idea that since overpopulation and the rapidly changing economic order of the Rhineland was the chief reason for emigration and the spread of social discontent, the solution was

simple: learn from the history of Greece and Rome, and seriously entertain the concept of planned colonization.

By 1822 Duden also concluded that the major problems of the German people in his region stemmed from political, social, and economic consequences of overpopulation. Emigration seemed one viable solution to the situation of his countrymen. He read the available accounts of conditions in America, but none of them satisfied his concern of whether the American area was suitable for Germans in regard to climate, soil fertility, cost of land, and arteries of transportation; how an actual settlement could be made in either a plains or forest environment; and what expenses, inconveniences, and dangers awaited prospective settlers. Since none of the available sources suited his desire for thoroughness and detail, he concluded that he should make a personal appraisal of the place.

Then, reports Goodwin, in the fall of 1823, ill health plus his decision to visit America to investigate the prospects for German settlement there

led Duden to request royal release from his civil service duties. Given the release, he left for America.

For three years Duden lived and described his experiences in Montgomery (now Warren) County Missouri. Duden's style of writing was in the form of personal letters, a style that made his information believable. The Mississippi/Missouri Valley reminded him of his native Rhineland, where rivers were utilized for trade and transportation, and the fertile bottom land offered the perfect environment for farming. Duden included references to his personal experiences in descriptions of clearing, fencing, planting, and harvesting.

Duden's creative and optimistic mind wove reality with poetry, experience with dreams, and contrasted the freedom of the forests and democratic political institutions in America with social narrowness and political confusion in Germany. He glorified the routine of pioneer existence, praised Missouri's favorable geographical location, and emphasized its mild and healthy climate. He dwelt on

the kindnesses of nature, its abundance of fish and wildlife, and contrasted Germany's hunger with America's plenty. Fearing the down-to-earth Germans would not believe his glowing reports, he wrote, "It appears too strange, too fabulous." His personal letter format describing his experiences in setting up a pioneer farm made the accounts believable, personable, and informative, causing his readers to think of Missouri as a veritable paradise, awaiting the arrival of a German Adam and Eve. (1)

In his writings, Duden emphasized the absence of thieves because of the abundance of everything needed for life.

> We met a German stablehand at our inn who recommended that we watch our possessions because in this country one encounters all kinds of people. We had been in the United States too long for such talk not to seem strange to us. At our departure we actually missed some things, such as a whip, traveling flasks, and so forth. The innkeeper immediately instigated a thorough search, and the result was that our countryman had wanted to furnish proof of how necessary his warning had been. (2)

Goodwin explains that Duden focused on the stability of American democracy. He tried to blunt adverse German reaction to the repression of Negro

slavery by centering only on recognition of the slavery problem, minimizing its undesirable ramifications, and emphasizing its potential benefits for German emigrants. He admitted slavery existed in Missouri, called it a moral evil, and thought it might be a problem for Germans, but he never visualized it as a major problem because slaves were few in Missouri, and would not impede progress. He asserted that Missouri slaves behaved well, would not be emancipated suddenly, and would never be allowed to intermarry with whites. He saw their condition in America economically equal to that of the oppressed German day laborer, and even better than that of the European servant. He even hinted that German settlers should consider buying two slaves to perform all necessary labor on a farm.

Duden was delighted with the region, and had purchased over 270 acres of land. Thusly, Goodwin points out that even though Duden went through the motions, he personally performed few of the difficult tasks required in pioneer farming, because he actually lived as a gentleman farmer. Convinced the area was well suited for German settlement, he returned to

Germany and, in 1829, published fifteen hundred copies of his observations. Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America supplied Germans with their most comprehensive study of Missouri. This publication marked the beginning of German mass interest in American colonization.

Duden's editorial bias and his advantage of being able to hire help on his own Missouri farm made his view of Missouri farm life more idyllic than practical. Consequently, many who were lured by Duden's accounts found their lives much more strenuous than that of the anticipated gentleman farmer role. (3)

> They envisioned a place where the German heritage, culture, and language could be kept alive, while, at the same time, the advantages of America could be enjoyed. (4)

Other European visitors were not as complimentary to the area as was Duden. English author Charles Dickens came to Missouri in 1842, and Missouri went into his writings. He wrote, "They are by nature, frank, brave, cordial, hospitable and affectionate." In spite of the praise and honor heaped upon him here,

Dickens described Missourians as rough, intolerable, conceited, "tobacco spitting, slaveholding (and) vulgar."

Bob Priddy recounts Dickens' opinion of St. Louis.

> The town bids fair in a few years to improve considerably; though it is not likely ever to vie, in point of elegance or beauty, with Cincinnati. It is very hot, lies among great rivers, and has vast tracts of undrained swampy land around it.

Dickens complained of the mud, which he said, "had no variety but in depth. The air resounds with the loud chirping of frogs, who, with the pigs (a coarse, ugly breed, as unwholesome-looking as though they were a spontaneous growth of the country), had the whole scene to themselves."

According to Priddy, Dickens marvelled at the practice of giving horses huge quantities of water when they became lathered, until the horses were swollen to about twice their natural dimensions. He spoke of stopping a second time that day "to inflate the horses again."

Of slavery here Dickens wrote:

> Shall we whimper over legends of torture practiced on each other by the pagan Indians, and smile upon the cruelties of Christian men? Shall we, so long as these unique things last, exult above the scattered remnants of the race, and triumph in the white enjoyment of possessions? Rather, for me, restore the forest and the Indian village, in lieu of stars and stripes, let some poor feather flutter in the breeze. (5)

But the Europeans came in the great migration to a new land. They left behind them all that they knew, all that they hated, all that they loved. Their journey began with dreams. Some would be realized; some would remain unfulfilled. But, in either case, the courage of these pioneers remains unsurpassed, before or since. It takes a special courage to make a journey into the unknown.

CHAPTER ONE ENDNOTES

(1) James W. Goodwin, Foreword to Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America, by Gottfried Duden (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1980), pp. i-ix.

(2) Gottfried Duden, Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America, trans. James W. Goodwin (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1980), Thirtieth Letter, p. 102.

(3) Goodwin, p. x.

(4) Anna Hesse, "Still a Morning Town", Missouri Life, Volume 4, Number 1, quoted in William R. Nunn, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: Centerre Bancorporation, 1982), p. 34.

(5) Bob Priddy, Across Our Wide Missouri (Independence, Missouri: Independence Press, 1982), p. 215.

CHAPTER TWO

OVER THE RIVERS AND THROUGH THE WOODS

> At the Mississippi River, I like to think, God said, "Now, I think I'll make something different, just for the Hell of it." So He put a little of all He'd made on His way west with the sun, then added a few extra pinches of special things. Then He looked at what He'd made....and He laughed like the devil. And that place came to be called Missouri. (1)

Many descriptions of the Missouri River have been coined since its discovery by DeSoto in the sixteenth century. The Sioux called it "furious" and "mad." Pere Marquette wrote, "I have never seen anything more frightful." Grace Taylor reports that someone said of it, "Of all the variable things in creation, the most uncertain of all are the action of a jury, the state of a woman's mind, and the condition of the Missouri River." And still another, "She has a deceptive beauty, a quiet enchantment, and like some gals, she won't stay in the same bed one night." (2)

There are tales of river travelers who stopped on a sandbar to spend the night, but discovered the next morning that the sandbar was disappearing under them. Referred to as "Old Muddy", the river is reported to have a suspension of 120 tons of mud to every million gallons of water. Mark Twain commented, "The Missouri River is too thick to drink, and too thin to plow."

Duden wrote:

> Winter rarely comes early, and toward the middle of February, navigation of the streams is already possible and no ice is seen in the rivers then. Occasionally the Missouri freezes over with such a firm layer of ice that large loaded wagons can be driven across them. This would not be true if it were not for the large masses of ice that float down the rivers from far northern regions. The ice layer, they say, remains for scarcely eight days.
>
> In the summer of 1824 the river had left its banks and flooded the largest part of the valley plain. Such a flood is said to occur only once in about thirty years. I cannot advise strongly enough against settling in the Missouri Valley itself. If one lives close to the riverbed, one has nothing to fear from the bad air. But there are few places where the bank is firm and safe enough for the construction of good buildings. Just where the soil is richest, it furnishes little resistance to the floods, the ice, and especially the masses of wood and permanent protection. (3)

When it came to riverboat pilots, old Cap'n Bill Heckman of Hermann used to say that they

separated the men from the boys at the mouth of the Missouri: the boys went up the Mississippi and the men went up the Missouri. (4)

> The steamboat Mechanic, which was conveying General Lafayette to Louisville, ran against a snag and sunk. It was about midnight, and the General and those on board had only ten minutes to save themselves from the wreck. The General lost part of his baggage, as well as a carriage, formerly the property of General Washington, which had lately been presented to him by the nephew of General W. Next morning, two steamboats with full freight hove to, and upon ascertaining that General Lafayette was among those in distress magnanimously tendered to the General their boats to enable him to proceed on his journey, one of which was accepted. (Printed in the Missouri Intelligencer, June 4, 1825). (5)

Berenice Morrison-Fuller recalls her life in early Missouri:

> There was a richness in Missouri's virgin forests, a great variety of growth- oaks, hickory, buckeye, elms, alders, hackberry, splendid walnut, and others such as Osage orange, which made beautiful hedges and bore a curious fruit like an orange in size and color, but unfit to eat; they made beautiful hedges with their glossy foliage and prohibitive thorns. Then, the hawthorn, pink and white; dogwood, red bud, persimmons which were gathered after Jack Frost had stamped them with his cold seal. There were wild cherries, plums and grapes, and many a swing was enjoyed on those strong, twisting vines, while inhaling the delicious scent of the blossom. Then there were such lovely wild flowers: tiger lilies, sweet william, jack-in-the-pulpit, snow drops, may apples, primrose, morning glories festooning every

> fence. Milk weed seed were for dollies' pillows, and star of Bethlehem made into wreaths were tenderly laid upon the graves of our small pets. (6)

> Never can I forget those locust thorn trees with delicate leaves and long pods. We called the fruit, "St. John's bread" and liked the green, soft substance in which the seeds were imbedded. There were tall hackberry trees and we filled our pockets with their tiny fruit, and ate the sweet coating covering the hard seed. We called them "Skin and Bones." Another fine tree was the coffee bean. We roasted the beans in hot coals; often they would pop out of the fire and hit the wall or ceiling, much to our delight. I cannot omit the catalpa trees with their showy blossoms and, later, their long dangling pods that we smoked with the glow of secrecy; and the mulberry trees with their sweet, sticky fruit. But the trees above all that we loved best, were the beautiful silver poplars. The leaves turned with the slightest breeze on their delicate stems, trembling, fluttering, green-silver, silver-green. (7)

In Duden's Thirteenth Letter he described a certain beneficial tree.

> There are ash trees, sassafras trees, ironwood trees, elms, and especially the red elm. The inner bark can be eaten without any preparation and turns quickly into slime when chewed. It is often placed in fresh wounds and is said to promote the healing of gunshot wounds. One seldom sees an undamaged trunk. Tame and wild animals know this nutritious substance. (8)

His Twenty-Fourth Letter cites a specific experience he had using his knowledge of the elm:

On a walk through the forest, I got into an impenetrable thicket, and, after searching a long time for an exit, I finally became confused as to the directions. The position of the sun told me that it was only one and one-half hours to sunset, and after a vain effort of over four hours, I was preparing myself to spend the night in the open. I was tired and hungry. I sat down and looked around for an open place where I could build a fire for the night in order to ward off beasts of prey without setting the whole woods on fire. At the same time I was thinking of finding some kind of fruit to satisfy my hunger, when my eyes fell upon a group of elms. Without delay I took out my pocketknife and began to peel off a handful of the inner bark. This was accomplished quickly and the food, just as nature offered it to me, tasted very good. A second and third helping followed and, together with some water from a nearby brook, it so thoroughly restored my strength that I had nothing to complain about except the short time left before nightfall. With the increasing darkness I could have resorted to attracting the attention of a neighboring farmer to my plight by repeated shots. This signal is understood very well here. But I thought that human habitations were rather distant. I therefore made another attempt to find my way out and had spent perhaps a quarter of an hour at it when the scarcely audible sound of barking dogs gave me a direction, which I then pursued steadfastly. At sunset I came upon a familiar path. I was about two English miles from my house, and now had no more difficulty in making my way toward it. (9)

Duden's homestead was visited by wild turkeys,

Every day turkeys with flocks of their young appear on my homestead. They often sit so trustingly on the fences that it is difficult for me to shoot at them. Nothing is easier than taming them. One frequently comes upon nests with twenty or more eggs, which one only needs to place under a domestic hen. The brood will become tamer the more often the hen brings them to human dwellings. (10)

In the early times a youth named Jim Stewart of Montgomery County decided he would try a new method for hunting wild turkeys. He dug a trench near his father's house and baited it with corn. Then he put a tremendous load of shot and powder into his gun and seated himself at one end of the trench to wait. With the breaking of early morning light, Jim discovered the trench filled with wild turkeys, squirrels, and hogs. Jim blazed away, bringing down sixteen turkeys, one squirrel and an old sow. (11)

Other wildlife also visited the Duden farm.

> One can almost always see deer at a distance of several hundred paces from my cultivated field. Sometimes one finds young ones that can be tamed. They become so tame that they, like the cattle and horses, return from time to time from the woods to the homestead and, not infrequently, bring along wild ones. It is strange that the deer like to mingle with the grazing cattle so much.
>
> Several weeks ago a cougar was shot about four miles from here. It was a male, about five feet long from the mouth to the beginning of the tail, and weighed about ninety pounds. There are few of these beasts of prey near the farms. It is unusual for them to attack a human being. (12)

Duden also referred to more unpleasant creatures, but, like a true salesman, he belittled their negative aspects.

> I have encountered vipers and copperheads. Neither is much more than a foot long but just as poisonous as the rattlesnake. Indeed the copperheads are considered more poisonous. At any rate, I believe that they are more dangerous. If the rattlesnake is not attacked, either it crawls away from people or it reveals its presence by rattling. But the copperhead lies still and, as soon as a person approaches on foot too closely, tries to bite. The viper also retreats a little, emitting hisses through its jaws like an angry cat. All these creatures cause less worry than mad dogs in Europe. They usually appear only on hot days. Areas where many snakes live together are rare and soon become well known. Stories are told of snakes crawling into houses, and even into beds. Several weeks ago one of my neighbors found a snake sleeping quietly in a sugar barrel. It was an innocent, beautiful creature called a garter snake. There are many black snakes here, some of which are eight to nine feet long. Their bite is not poisonous. (13)

When Mr. Samuel Cobb settled in Montgomery county, rattlesnakes were numerous, and he claimed they gathered around his house and "sang" all night. One morning he found a large rattlesnake coiled up in his oven. To give him a trial, Cobb quickly placed the lid on the oven, built a fire, and roasted him brown. (14)

More troublesome than the snakes writes Duden, are the ticks, a species of mite. In Germany they are found on hunting dogs, but in the American forests both wild and tame animals are full of them. If one wanders afoot through forests in summer, he has to make a thorough examination of himself before returning if interested in sleeping peacefully. If they remain long on the skin, they dig into it so deeply that they can be torn to pieces as they are removed. And, although no species is as large as a bedbug, their abdomens become distended with sucked-in blood to the size of a hazelnut. As soon as the nights become cold, they disappear, and if one has rubbed his clothes with tobacco leaves, one will never be bothered. (15)

Describing skunks, Duden says:

> A curiosity of a different kind is the skunk. It is called polecat here. It has black and white stripes and is about twice as large as a squirrel. If you try to injure the animal, it will take flight and while fleeing will direct a spray of liquid at you. If the liquid strikes you it will make the clothes unwearable for a long time. The disgreeable odor is so strong that a single small animal can pollute the air for a quarter of a German mile. Dogs that have pursued a skunk often must be kept away from the dwellings for several days. At first this phenomenon was puzzling to me

and I could scarcely believe that it could be attributed to such a small creature. The odor is pungent and easily causes headaches. (16)

Duden continues:

I could tell about the poisonous plants, the mere touching of which causes a kind of leprosy in the case of some people. Beside the most beautiful flowering trees stand the poisonous varieties of sumac, oak, ivy, and nettles. As with many other things, the danger here is also exaggerated to a ridiculous degree. The inhabitants are familiar with the injurious effects of these plants, but no one lives in fear or worries on their account. (17)

Some people suffer from a rash that is very similar to the itch. It attacks the lower extremities. There are never any inner disturbances connected with it, neither is there any disagreeable odor noticeable, and sulfur has absolutely no effect on it. In healthy persons, the rash is limited to the feet. It induces scratching until the affected area bleeds. After the discharge of lymph and blood the itching ceases until the next day. This affliction does not occur before the hot season and disappears with the coming of cold weather. (Duden was describing chiggers). (18)

Mosquitoes were recognized as a major problem by Duden.

Now I can tell you about the mosquito plague too. At times there appear everywhere, in valleys and on elevations, such swarms of mosquitoes that in shady places it was difficult to keep them away from one's mouth and nose. I would never have expected them in such numbers, only near swamps, never on hills and mountains. (19)

Charles van Ravensway also notes the mosquito problem:

> Nature itself was the primary enemy of men. Along the rivers, mosquitoes hung in such clouds that voyageurs poling their boats were often covered with blood. Hunters, sent into the forests for game, fled back again, unable to endure the attacks of the insects, often unable to aim their rifles. (20)

Life in Missouri in the early days was not easy, but the people accepted it for what it was. They made the best of any conditions, and found themselves equal to the challenges.

CHAPTER TWO ENDNOTES

(1) William R. Nunn, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: Centerre Bancorporation, 1982), p. 19.

(2) Grace Elizabeth Taylor, A Peculiar Heritage (Peculiar, Missouri: Peculiar Lions Club, 1968), p. 19.

(3) Gottfried Duden, Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America, trans. James W. Goodwin (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1980), Thirteenth Letter, p. 58.

(4) Nunn, p. 54.

(5) Francis A. Sampson, Ed., Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume VII, Number 1, October, 1912, pp. 35-36.

(6) Berenice Morrison-Fuller, Glimpses of the Past (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society, 1935), pp. 2-3.

(7) Morrison-Fuller, p. 2.

(8) Duden, Thirteenth Letter, p. 56.

(9) Duden, Twenty-fourth Letter, pp. 123-124.

(10) Duden, Twenty-seventh Letter, p. 125.

(11) William S. Bryan, and Robert Rose, A History of Pioneer Families of Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: Bryan, Brand, and Company, 1876), p. 521.

(12) Duden, Twenty-seventh Letter, p. 125.

(13) Duden, Fifteenth Letter, pp. 76-77.

(14) Bryan and Rose, p. 525.

(15) Duden, Fifteenth Letter, p. 77.

(16) Duden, Sixteenth Letter, p. 80.

(17) Duden, Twenty-fourth Letter, p. 123.

(18) Duden, Twenty-eighth Letter, p. 133.

(19) Duden, Twenty-third Letter, pp. 121-122.

(20) Charles van Ravensway, "Pioneer Medicine in Missouri," Paper presented at the 48th annual meeting of the Southern Medical Association, 8 November 1954.

CHAPTER THREE

HOME IS WHERE THE CABIN IS

The experience of the early settlers goes far to confirm the theory that, after all, happiness is pretty evenly balanced in this world. Oh, they had their hardships all right, but they also had their special joys. So, what if they were poor? They were free from the burden of pride and vanity, and also free from the responsibilities and anxieties that can accompany the possession of wealth. What if they had few neighbors? They were usually on the best of terms with those they did have. They had to be. A common interest and sympathy, the most endurable of ties, bound them together. They were a little world unto themselves, and the good feelings that prevailed were all the stronger because they were so far removed from the worlds of their past. Here, there were no castes, except in the aristocracy of kindness, and no nobility

except the nobility of generosity. They were bound together with such a strong bond of sympathy inspired by the consciousness of common hardship, some believe that they were practically Communists. Neighbors waited for no request to help one another. No sooner was the fact of a neighbor's cabin having blown down or burned spread throughout the neighborhood, than the settlers assembled to assist the unfortunate one to rebuild. They came without hesitation, as though they were all members of the same family; the interest of one was the interest of all. The very nature of existence taught them the necessity of living together in the spirit of cooperation. They had come from the past and had entered a new place, finding the authority of government too weak to afford protection and care. Each family's protection was in the good will and friendship of those about him, and the one thing no one wanted was the ill will of the community. (1)

Newcomers were treated as old friends, and everyone worked together to make the transitions as smooth as possible. As soon as enough men could be gotten together for a "cabin raising," a rustic

shelter, a homely but comfortable cabin was built. Everyone turned out, and while the men piled up the logs for the dwelling, the women prepared the dinner and, at the proper hour, carried it to the men at work. If one man in the neighborhood killed a beef, a pig or a deer, every other family in the neighborhood was sure to receive a piece. One early settler recorded:

> We were all on an equality. Aristocratic feelings were unknown, and would not have been tolerated. What one had, we all had, and that was the happiest period of my life. (2)

The secret was that they lived within their means, however limited, not desiring more of luxury and comfort than their income would afford. The natural result was prosperity and contentment, with always room for one more stranger at the fireside, and a cordial welcome to a place at their table for even the most hungry guest.

A window with glass was a rarity. Usually they were made with greased paper put over the opening to admit light. More often, though, there was nothing whatever over it or the cracks between the logs, in

order to allow the entrance of light and air. The doors, fashioned with wooden latches had the fastening string always hung out, for these folks were hospitable, and entertained to the best of their ability. They always spoke with affection of their beloved home cabin. Following is a description of such a place:

> These were of round logs, notched together at the corners, ringed with poles and covered with boards split from a tree. A puncheon floor was then laid down, a hole cut in the end, and a stick chimney run up. A clapboard door is made, a window opened by cutting out a hole in the side or end two feet square and fitted with transparency. The house is then 'chinked' and 'daubed' with mud. The household furniture is now adjusted, and life on the frontier begun.
>
> The one-legged bedstead was made by cutting a stick the proper length, boring holes at one end one and a half inches in diameter, at right angles, and the same sized holes, corresponding with those, in the logs of the cabin the length and breadth desired for the bed, in which are inserted poles.
>
> Upon these poles the clapboards are laid, or linn bark is interwoven consecutively from pole to pole. Upon this the bed is laid.
>
> The convenience of a cook stove was not thought of, but instead, the cooking was done by the faithful housewife in pots, kettles or skillets, on and about the big fireplace (and frequently over and around the extended pedal extremities of the legal sovereign of the household, while the latter indulged in the luxury of a cob pipe, and discussed the probable results of a coming deer hunt on the river.) (3)

Crude fireplaces were built with chimneys composed of mud and sticks, or at best, undressed stone. These served for heating and cooking purposes as well as for ventilation. The meals created there may not have tempted an epicure, but they provided healthful nourishment for a race of people who were forced into exposure and hardship. An advantage of these cooking arrangements was that there was no stovepipe to fall down, and the pioneer was thus spared being subjected to one of the most trying of ordeals, one more productive of profanity than many others.

Cabin roofs were composed of from three to five logs, laid longitudinally, and extending from end to end of the building; on these were laid the shingles, four or five feet in length; over these were three or four heavy logs, called weigh poles, secured at the ends by withes, and, by their own weight, taking the place of nails. (4)

"Music" was not wanting. Each night the pioneers were lulled to rest by the screeching of panthers and the howling of wolves. A peculiar

circumstance that surrounded the early life of pioneers was a strange loneliness. The solitude seemed to oppress them, especially when months would pass during which they would scarcely see a human face outside their own families.

Duden, however, chose to gloss over this common problem in his usual "rose- colored glasses" report:

> One should dismiss from his mind the idea that the settler, in the accomplishment of his purpose, experiences a great degree of isolation from neighbors. A distance of two or three English miles here is negligible, even for the female sex. No family is so poor that it does not own at least two horses. Women and girls, old and young, ride (sidesaddle in the English manner) at a rapid or slow pace without any difficulty, and they last in the saddle as long as the men. Not a week passes in which the housewife does not visit her neighbors on horseback either alone or with a companion. On Sundays, only the weather can be a hinderance. Often the whole family leaves the house without the slightest worry about thieves. Some houses are not even provided with locks, although the kitchen utensils alone are worth more than twenty dollars. Horse racing, cock fights, and target shooting are here, as in North America in general, the most frequent occasions for the gathering of men. (5)

The usual rail fence, unlike modern stock and wildlife barriers, provided a picturesque charm to communities. Rail splitting was an arduous form of

outdoor exercise. An eleven foot log had to be split by driving in a wedge with a maul fashioned out of an oak limb seven or eight inches in diameter. Legends say that these handles were never smoothed, except with the callouses on the splitter's hands. The favorite wood for rails in Missouri was oak, but sometimes sassafras, walnut, hickory, or ash were used.

The first step in fence construction was the laying of the "worm," or the zig zagged, cross-end pattern. A rock or chink of wood was placed at each corner to keep the bottom rail off the ground. Great care had to be taken, though, to ensure that this was not high enough for pigs to crawl under. The minimum height was usually seven rails, but a height of ten or eleven was guaranteed to turn away any reasonable animal. Unfortunately, not all were reasonable.

The top rails remained in place entirely by virtue of their own weight. This sometimes required the use of stakes and riders to provide an added stability. These were created with a rail leaned with one end on the ground, and the other fitting tightly

into the angle formed by the crossing of the top rails. These crossed just above each corner of the fences, and formed the stakes. A rider was placed with the ends in the angles thus formed.

After a few months, when the fence settled into its pattern, clumps of goldenrod growing well up toward the top rail, and an occasional trumpet vine or morning glory seemed to hold it close to the earth. (6)

Duden's Twentieth Letter included a farmer's chore that seemed like fun.

> Among the necessary tasks of the local farmer, which the European immigrant at first is inclined to regard as mere sport, is that of shooting squirrels. Shooting or catching squirrels is considered work here. As soon as corn seedlings appear above ground, whole hordes of these little animals attack them. If they are not prevented from digging up the sprouting kernels they will surely eat them all. For about two weeks the farmer must walk the fields in the morning at sunrise and in the evening at sunset and shoot as many as he can until the crop is sufficiently developed. He must repeat this work several weeks before the grain ripens. At this time raccoons may also appear. These, however, must be hunted with dogs, which drive the game into trees. Some farmers use shotguns, but the majority use rifles. (7)

Other animals caused difficulties which required an extra protection for the settlers.

> Squirrels are not the only problem. Because of predatory animals, one could not live here without dogs. Tame fowl would be killed within a few nights, and the dogs are just as necessary for the protection of the calves and lambs at night. The wolves, to be sure, are certain of so much game that they never expose themselves to obvious danger. But if a homestead is not guarded, they will pay it a visit very soon. They immediately know where there are dogs, and as little as they fear them in the open woods far from mankind, near the houses even the voice of a weak pug or a Pomerainian will keep them outside of the fences. (8)

Duden lists some abilities necessary in order to be a successful farmer in America:

> Every American farmer: (1) knows how to judge the soil and can distinguish the organic fertilizer from the various types of soil-proper very well. He can quickly determine this from the plants and trees growing in it. (2) He knows the various kinds of wood suitable for buildings, furniture, field implements, fences, and firewood. (3) He can build houses and barns, break stones, and calcine lime, so that he has no need of a carpenter nor of a cabinetmaker, and a mason only for the finer work in his dwelling. (4) He has a good knowledge of everything pertaining to the transformation of a forest into arable land as well as to the tilling of the fields for grain, for garden plants, for tobacco, for cotton, hemp, flax, and several other products. (5) He can manage everything pertaining to the breeding of cattle by himself, and performs all the tasks of the butcher. (6) He can make shoes and prepare potash soap and maple sugar. (7) He is a good hunter and

> the best tanner. The housewife knows how to sew and knit, spin, weave, dye, and make clothes. (9)

According to Duden, there was not a pressing need for a farmer to possess vast quantities of cash.

> On the whole, the American farmer tries to spend no money for food or drink or clothes (with the exception of real finery). Therefore, cotton, flax and hemp are cultivated, and a small herd of sheep is kept. The products are all made at home. The spinning wheel is found everywhere, and it there is no loom, the housewife or one of the daughters goes from time to time to a neighbor who owns one. Just as most men are skilled at making shoes, few women find it difficult to make not only their own clothes, but also those of the men. The demand of changing fashions is not ignored. The whole family lives a carefree and happy life without any cash. And this is the real reason small sums are less important here than in Europe. There, when the husband brings home a little ready money, the wife immediately needs something, and usually there is no peace and quiet in the home until it has all been spent in the nearest store. Cash is needed here only for taxes. These are so low that scarcely any thought is given to them. Land acquired from the government is not taxable during the first five years. (10)

Before the country became supplied with mills which were of easy access, hominy blocks were used. These exist now only in the records of the early settlers. A tree of suitable size, say from eighteen inches to two feet in diameter was selected and felled. If a cross-cut saw was available, the tree was "butted" so it would stand steady for use. Otherwise,

the work was done with strong arms and sharp axes. Then four to five feet was measured and sawed or cut square. Next the block was raised on end, and the work of cutting out a hollow in one of the ends was commenced, usually with a common chopping ax. When the cavity was judged large enough, a fire was built in it, and carefully watched till the ragged edges were burned away. When completed, the hominy block resembled a druggist's mortar. A pestle to crush the corn was necessary, and usually made from a piece of timber, with an iron wedge attached. Sometimes one hominy block would accommodate an entire neighborhood. (11)

Even where there were mills, going to them in the early days was no small task. Many times many rivers and treacherous streams, swollen beyond their banks had to be crossed. Some of these perils and hardships of forced travel to mills for provisions equal stories of forced marches in military campaigns, and the heroic, daring conduct of the hardy pioneers in procuring bread for their loved ones are reminiscent of stories of valiant soldiers of ancient and modern times. At first, mills only ground corn,

and that had to be sifted after the grinding, for there were no bolts in the mill. But people came from far and near with their grists, and waited with other hungry and patient men that they might return with their meal to supply their families and those of their neighbors. (12)

In 1801, Jonathan Bryan built the first water mill in Missouri on a small spring branch that empties into Femme Osage Creek in St. Charles County. Mr. Bryan would fill the hopper with grain in the morning, and the mill would grind on that until noon, when the hopper would again be filled. The meal ran into a large pewter basin which sat on the floor at the bottom of the stones. Daniel Boone was living at that time with his son Nathan, about a mile from the mill, and he had an old dog named Cuff that used to go to the mill in Mr. Bryan's absence and lick the meal out of the basin as fast as it ran from the spout. When it did not run fast enough to suit him, he would sit down an growl and bark. One day, Mr. Bryan heard him and hastened to the mill to see what was the matter. He soon discovered where his meal had been going, and after that he exchanged the pewter basin for a coffee

pot, which was too small at the top for Cuff to get his head into. But Cuff made the attempt one day, and got the coffee pot stuck fast to his head and ran away with it. (13)

Another colorful character in the area was Isaac VanBibber, who built an early tavern/inn for Missouri travelers.

> The Vanbibber Tavern just now is often mentioned, having been a well known tavern on the Boon's Lick Trail, I will tell you what I know about it, I being a grandson of Isaac Vanbibber, and now in my 85th year. Major Vanbibber married a daughter of William Hays, her mother being a daughter of Col. Daniel Boone, the marriage having taken place in Kentucky. He came to St. Charles, Missouri, I think, in 1798, and after preparing a home returned to Kentucky, and brought his family to his new home in 1800. The first child born there was Matilda, and the Major claimed that this was the first white child born west of the Mississippi River.
>
> Some time after he moved to Montgomery county, to a place known as Loutre Lick, a name derived from the stream Loutre, and a marshy, shallow salt pond on the north side of the spring branch, and close to its mouth where it fell into Loutre creek. This pond was some sixty yards wide, but went almost dry in the summer season. Deer resorted to it in great numbers to lick the salty soil, from which it was called a lick, and the combination of the two things gave the name Loutre Lick. (This is now Mineola.) (14)

The Major also built some log cabins to accommodate travelers and movers as well as possible; but because it was a popular stopping place, he desired better buildings, but no carpenter was available. A carpenter named Cyrenus Cox happened into the area later, and with a fellow-traveler, McFarlane, a blacksmith, they, working together, made a set of blacksmith tools and a set of carpenter tools. When they reached Loutre Lick, they stopped for the night, and when it was learned that Cox was a carpenter, Major Vanbibber persuaded him to stay and build the tavern. (15)

> There was no saw mill within reach, so they had to cut down trees, and with broadaxes dress the sills, sleepers, corner posts, rafters, etc., and rive out shingles and weather boarding, dressing all with drawing knives. The floor boards were sawed by building a platform so one man could stand above it, and one under it, and with cross cut saw, make the boards.
>
> Before the building was finished, Cox had fallen in love with Major Vanbibber's daughter, Fanny, and they agreed to marry. By the time the building was finished, the clothes of the two men were worn to rags, and they walked to St. Louis, ninety miles away, and bought suits of clothes appropriate for the wedding. (16)

Washington Irving, the author, once visited the Loutre Lick "health resort," and was so pleased

with the surroundings that he told VanBibber, "When I get rich I am coming back to buy this place and build a nice residence here." But Irving spent so much time abroad, he never carried out his plan to become a Missourian. (17)

Old Isaac VanBibber believed in the transmigration of souls. He advocated the belief that there was a complete revolution of nature every six thousand years, and at the end of each of these periods everything returned to the way it had been six thousand years before. In his tavern at Loutre Lick he took great pleasure in explaining this doctrine to his guests. One night some Kentuckians stopped with him, and, as they sat around the fire after dinner, Isaac sermonized his beliefs. They seemed interested as well as attentive, and he felt that he had truly converted them. The next morning, when they were preparing to leave, one of them said, "We were impressed with your argument last night, and believing that there may be some truth in your doctrine, and being short of cash just now, we have decided to wait until we come around again at the end of six thousand years to settle our bills." The old Major saw the point at once, and was

considerably confused as to how he could get over it without losing the value of their night's lodging or exhibiting a practical unbelief in his own doctrine. But a happy thought struck him. "No," said he, "you are the same damned rascals who were here six thousand years ago, and went away without paying your bills, and now you have got to pay before you leave." They laughed, paid their bills, and left, but the old Major was never again heard to brag about his converting powers. (18)

> When the English incited the Indians during the war year of 1814, settlers along the Missouri suffered severely. According to an old custom, the Indians scalped every human being they could get hold of. Not even a child in its cradle was spared. Usually individual Indians crept stealthily up to farms at a time when the men were absent. Now such occurrences are no longer to be feared. The white population has increased too much. Small forts afforded effective protection. If the Indians were not stirred up and given considerable assistance by another power (as formerly by the French and later by the English), their great fear of the United States easily kept them within bounds. The inhuman behavior of the Indians, moreover, was by no means based on hatred toward the white man. It their feuds they did not treat their red brothers any better. The Indians were by no means stupid. Their religious legends and tales contained not only beautiful poetic characteristics of a mind sensitive to the glory of God but also repelling traces of brutalilty and moral distortion. (19)

Early settlers built forts as a protection from the Indians. They had almost no labor-saving machines, and those they had were inefficient. (20) Luckily, by 1816, most of the problems with the Indians died down.

During the Indian war, three men, Morgan Bryan, Towning and Bays, were detailed to guard the horses left grazing on the prairie. As their shift ended and they were returning to the fort, they were fired upon at a distance of not over ten feet by a party of Indians who were concealed behind a large log. None were hit and they began to run for the fort. Bryan and Towning wore heavy boots, but Bays had on a pair of buckskin moccasins and could run with the fleetness of a deer. Noticing his companions falling behind, he hid behind a tree and aimed his rifle at the pursuing Indians. They at once took shelter behind trees and began to reload their own guns. (All Indian fighters were aware that Indians will never run toward a loaded gun). Bays held the Indians in check until his companions had passed him for some distance. Then he ran ahead again, hid behind another tree, and repeated the same maneuver. He kept this up, never

allowing the Indians time enough to reload their guns. Finally, Bryan and Towning threw off their heavy boots, and ran stocking-footed the rest of the way to the fort, easily keeping up with Bays. The Indians followed them for a while, but, when within a half-mile of the fort, they fled. (21)

Captain James Callaway, who was killed by the Indians at Loutre Creek in 1915, had his county named in his honor. He raised a company of rangers to fight Indians in 1913. Leading a group of fifteen of the men, Callaway pursued a party of Sac and Fox Indians who had stolen some horses. Callaway was an experienced Indian fighter, usually wary and brave, but on this occasion he did not allow himself to be governed by better judgment. After seeming to lose the group they pursued, Callaway declared that he did not believe there were even a half dozen Indians in the vicinity, and that he intended to return to the fort by the same route they had come. Upon reaching a suitable place, they decided to rest the horses, and a lieutenant spoke to the captain about the danger they were incurring. He anticipated an attack at the crossing of the creek, and believed that the place

should be avoided. Callaway did not heed the advice, but took the lieutenant for a coward. He declared that he would return the way he had come, even if he had to do so alone. At the crossing, the advance scouts were killed, Callaway's horse was shot and Callaway received a minor wound in his arm, thanks to the fact that the bullet lodged in his watch. He sprang from his dead horse to the bank, and, throwing his gun into the creek, muzzle down, he ran down the stream a short distance, plunged into the water and started swimming. He was shot in the back of the head. His body sank immediately, and thus was not scalped or mutilated by the Indians. (22)

William Strode was a scout and Indian fighter who was once captured by a large party of Indians. Because his identity and reputation was known to them, he expected immediate death or future torture at the stake. Determined to make the best of the situation and show his captors he was not afraid, he jumped onto a log and crowed like a chicken, at the same time moving his arms like a chicken flapping its wings. The Indians were so amused, they laughed heartily, and forever afterward treated him as a friend. (23)

Nearly opposite the mouth of the Osage was the French village of Cote sans Dessein, signifying "a hill without design", and containing about thirty families, mostly French. The name was derived from an isolated hill that is standing, as if by accident, on the river bank in an extensive bottom. At the time of the Indian troubles, the inhabitants of this settlement, relying on mutual protection, did not retire, but erected two stockades and block houses for their defense. The French style homes there were described as follows:

> The dwellings usually have the form of double cabins, or two distinct houses, each containing a single room, and connected to each other by a roof. The intermediate space, often equal in area to one of the cabins, was left open at the sides and had the naked earth for a floor. This arrangement afforded a cool and airy retreat, where the family could usually be found in the heat of the day. (24)

Another easily identified feature of the French cabins was that the logs were placed vertically rather than the more common horizontal placement.

Settled about 1800, this little village of Cote sans Dessein had its share in the Indian wars and

offered a resistance probably unsurpassed in any other place. The main character in this resistance was Baptiste Louis Roi, who happened to be in the blockhouse with two other men and two women when the Indian attack came. One of the men became panic stricken when he observed the great number of Indians, and gave no assistance in the conflict, but spent the entire time on his knees in prayer and confession. The others, Roi's brother and their wives, attempted to defend the ill-supplied blockhouse with the meager ammunition available.

As the men fired, the women cast balls and cut patches to keep up the defense in an uninterrupted fashion. As a result, the riflemen killed fourteen Indians, and wounded an undetermined number. In their frustration, the attackers became desperate in their attempts to destroy the blockhouse, but they were driven back repeatedly, each time with reduced numbers. After repeated failures, the Indians attached flaming combustibles to their arrows and shot them to the blockhouse roof, but each time, the women used the meager supply of water available to extinguish the flames. Even though the place was near the river bank,

the tiny group of defenders could not reach the place to procure more water. They watched with great concern as their supply of liquid diminished, even though the women were careful not to waste a drop.

With each fiery arrow it seemed the warwhoops redoubled, and, finally, the last bucket was drained to the last drop. As the roof was ignited yet again, one of the women produced a gallon of milk which again postponed the inevitable. When that source was depleted, it seemed for a while that the Indians had been discouraged. But just as the four began to breathe freely, a mighty shout arose from a hundred wild and startling voices. Even Baptiste Roi himself displayed a feeling of remorse. Suddenly, with an angelic smile on her face, his wife triumphantly produced, from the urinal, just then replenished, the fluid that proved to be the salvation of the garrison. The fire was again extinguished. Three times the women replenished the supply of liquid, and at last the Indians retreated with a bitter howl of resentment and frustration.

When the news of the gallant defense spread abroad, some of the leaders in St. Louis joined together to purchase a rifle of fine finish for Baptiste Louis Roi. While the rifle was being prepared, it was also playfully suggested that Madame Roi be presented a silver urinal for the spirited share of the women in the conflict. Unfortunately, this last remark was reported to her husband, so, when the committee was to present the rifle to him, M. Roi explained in his indignation:

> Gentlemen--It is a fuzee of beautiful proportions--containing very much gold in the pan, and silver on his breeches; he is a very gentleman gun for kill de game. I tank you. I shall not take him. Some gentlemen have consider to give ma chere amie one urinal silvare! I tell you, sare, I take care of demm tings myself--go to hell avec votre dam long gun! I shall not take him!! Go to hell, any body, by damn sight!!! (25)

Once the Indian problem had died down, the settlers became friendly with the Native Americans. The first missionary school in Missouri, the Harmony Mission, was established in 1821 for the Osage Indians, the first "real" Missourians. Osage chiefs and tribal council saw the advantages of education for their children. With the help of the Osages, who helped cut down trees, build cabins and other

buildings, plant crops and raise cattle, the ministers, teachers, mechanics and farmers developed the settlement. Historians generally agree that the Harmony Mission pointed the way for the races to live and prosper peacefully together. (26)

CHAPTER THREE ENDNOTES

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PART TWO

THE CHALLENGE OF THE LIFE

CHAPTER FOUR

MISSOURI HOMESTEADERS: JACKS OF ALL TRADES, MASTERS OF EVERYTHING

Life in the early days of Missouri was far from easy, but most of the settlers accepted it and made the best of it. Somehow they were equal to every task, and willing to face any challenge given them by the land, the wildlife, the climate, or each other.

In the first part of the nineteenth century there were no conveniences to make the life of the pioneers easy. Water was usually obtained from a well with a bucket attached to a rope. The bucket was lowered by unwinding the rope with a crank-type handle; when filled with water, it was cranked up. The well served a double purpose, being also used as a

refrigerator by the lowering of a container of butter or cream, which was left to hang in the cool recesses of the well.

Members of the family would take baths in washtubs. In warmer weather, the tubs were placed in the sunlight during the day to warm the water. In the winter, they placed it near the fire, and warmed it with hot water from the kettle, which was a constant fireplace accessory.

Every home had a slop bucket for the disposal of waste water from bathing and dishwashing, and the trimmings from garden vegetables. This was fed daily to the waiting hogs.

Light was supplied by kerosene lamps, and fireplaces furnished heat for both warmth and cooking. Later settlers enjoyed the luxury of wood stoves. The wood box had to be refilled each day, and that was usually a daily chore for boys and girls of the family.

Vegetables and fruits were taken from gardens, orchards, and berry patches; meat was provided by cattle, hogs, and poultry. Eggs, chickens and other home- grown foodstuffs were used also as items of barter. (1)

The lack of conveniences extended to their agricultural implements. The only plows they had at first were called "bull plows." The mold-boards were usually wood, although some lucky farmers were fortunate enough to have plows made of wood and iron. Those tillers of the soil were considered somewhat aristocratic. The "bull-plows" performed a valuable service, and can be awarded the honor of first stirring most of the soil of rural Missouri.

Unlike the farmer of today, the pioneer invested little money in his agricultural tools, mainly because he had little. Today's machinery would not have been suitable for pioneer farming anyway. The "bull plow" was perfectly suited for use in fields containing an abundance of stumps and roots, and likewise, the old wheat cradle was better adapted to such a situation than today's harvesters. Indeed, if

these stalwart pioneers had not cleared the dense forests for farming, today's farmer would have been hard-pressed to resort to the primitive tools of yesterday, which alone were capable of such a project. (2)

In later years, when communities became more populated, the farmers in an area would form what they called a "Threshing Ring." The group would hire a machine to thresh their wheat. The threshing machinery consisted of a steam engine to provide power for a separator to thresh the wheat, and a water wagon to haul the water needed to run the engine. The machine's crew would accompany the machine, and it was required that they be fed and housed by the participating farmers.

On threshing day, each member of the ring brought a team and wagon to do his share of the work. Some of them worked in the fields with pitchforks, pitching bundles of wheat into the wagons. These wagons were equipped with hay frames that extended over the wheels and allowed the wagon to hold more than the usual wagon bed. The loads were then taken to

the separator, where the wheat was fed into the machine.

As the wheat grains poured from the separator, one man would catch them in a sack. Another man removed the sacks when full, and loaded them onto a wagon which hauled them to the granary. There they were emptied for drying.

Women of the "Threshing Ring" families did the cooking. Usually two meals were served each day: a dinner at noon, and a lunch in the mid-afternoon. The dinner was served in the house on a long table. It consisted of chicken and baked ham or roast beef, and several kinds of garden vegetables and fruits. Because there were several "seatings" of men, one group of women was kept busy washing dishes. The women and children ate after the men had finished.

The afternoon lunch was served outdoors under a shade tree. It included several kinds of cakes and pies. The men were not seated for this meal, but took the food and drink they preferred, and stood around in groups to eat.

After the day's work was completed came "washing up." Near the well or cistern was a platform with several tubs of water and a piece of lye soap for each. Nearby was a supply of towels, combs, and a mirror or two. (3)

A "bran dance" was the evening's entertainment. The dancers cleared and trampled down a space of level ground, sprinkled it with wheat bran, and thereby created an instant dance floor. (4)

After the threshing for every member of the ring had been completed, the "settlement" took place at the home of the farmer who had had the largest crop. There the farmers again came together, this time to pay the owner of the machine. This meeting also called for refreshments which were served on a table in the yard. (5)

The cattle raised were both of the meat and dairy varieties. A flock of sheep would furnish both meat and wool. Hogs, though, were the primary meat for family use, and some were sold for added income.

"Hog-Killin'" time came during the winter, when the newly butchered meat would best cool and keep. On butchering day, the family arose before the sun, and had a fire burning under several iron kettles outside to heat water for scalding the hogs. When day dawned, the selected hogs were killed one at a time.

> When I knew it was time for them to kill the pigs, I would run up to my bed, get under the pillows, and hold my ears shut. But, no matter what I did, I could still hear each one scream. I hated that, because I had played with most of them when they were tiny. They were like pets to me, and I just couldn't stand knowing that my family was so mean as that. I still ate the meat though. (6)

As each hog was killed, a butcher knife was thrust into a blood vessel in its neck. From this opening, the warm blood spurted out and was caught in a pan, whipped with an egg beater to cool it, and set aside to be used later in the making of blood sausage.

The hog carcass was then dragged to a platform about eighteen inches high. This had to be large enough to hold the hog and two men. At one end was a barrel, set into the ground at an angle, with the open end on a level with the platform. This was filled with

hot water from the kettles. An iron hook was placed into the hog's nose. The men held onto the hook to dunk the hog into the boiling water. When scalded in this manner, the hair could be removed with iron scrapers.

The dressed carcass was hung on a scaffold by a sharpened stick which was inserted between the tendon and bone of the hog's hind legs, just above the hoof. This held the hog so that its snout was off the ground. Then the head was removed, and the carcass split down the middle. The entrails were removed and caught in a dishpan. The hearts and livers were cleaned and cooked, and the intestines cleaned for sausage casings. The stomach was cleaned for use as a container for a special sausage called "head cheese." The lungs were hung in trees as a treat for the birds. On each side of the hog's body was a sheet of fat. This was cut into cubes by the housewife to be rendered as lard, which was stored in stone jars.

The cuts of meat from each hog consisted of two hams, two shoulders, and two sides of bacon. Some of the meat was trimmed off for sausage. Summer

sausage was made of the lean meat, which was ground raw, usually by the children, flavored with salt, spices, and pepper. This mixture was packed into beef casings with a hand-operated machine called a "sausage stuffer." These sausages were tied at each end and hung up to dry. The other sausages, including liver sausage and blood sausage, were packed into the hog intestines, cooked, and then hung up. All of the meat and the sausages were hung in the smokehouse on poles that rested on the rafters. By the time spring came, these were cured, and supplied enough meat to last until the next butchering. (7)

Each farmer had, or longed to have, a team of mules and one of horses for hauling, plowing and other field work. Dogs for hunting and cats for catching mice and rats were customarily members of the household also. The poultry raised often included chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, and sometimes guineas. (8)

On winter evenings, hunting and trapping occupied much of the time of the men. Many fine furs were obtained in this way. This required skill and

patience, especially in skinning and preparing the hides. When the difficult task of removing the skin from a raccoon, opossum, mink, or muskrat was completed, it had to be stretched for drying in as square a shape as possible. These were tacked to boards for that purpose. When dry, they were sold to fur buyers who passed through from time to time. The prices varied according to quality. By this occupation, some men added to their meager incomes, so because of this activity, 'coon dogs were a great asset.

Of all the fur bearing animals hunted, the most objectionable to the pioneer wife who did the laundry, was the skunk. Not even his beautiful fur, nor the gracefulness of his plumelike tail were influential enough to make him acceptable. (9)

Gottfried Duden included a description of a chore that was observed as an enjoyable activity for the whole family (at least in the eyes of Duden).

> Everyone becomes occupied with sugar making. Old and young are involved in the activity as if it were a continuous family celebration. The sugar maple is so common in Missouri that almost every

settler owns his sugar grove. Even the forests, which are usually government property, can be used by rich and poor alike. The first occupant has the right of priority. Toward the middle of February the favorable weather begins, that is, when warm days follow rather cold nights. This change causes the sap of the trees to rise in such a way that it often does not drip, but actually flows out of a damaged place in the wood.

The entire family moves into the woods, where there is a spacious hut with a fireplace large enough for four or five iron kettles. Holes are bored into the trees several feet above the ground, and tubes of elder wood are inserted in the holes, and troughs placed under them. One preserves these utensils from year to year. One person collects the content of the troughs in barrels and takes it to the fire by means of a sled drawn by horses, and there another person, usually the housewife, is occupied with the boiling down of the sap. While the children play around in the grass, she transfers the sap from the first kettle to the last, where it remains until it attains the consistency of melted sugar. It is then poured out for cooling.

When carefully prepared, the sugar is preferred in color and taste to the best light-yellow cane sugar, and requires no purification for household use. Two persons can easily prepare two to three hundred pounds in one week. The price of maple sugar is ten cents per pound. Almost every household uses about a hundred pounds. I should add that the whites learned the uses of the maple tree from the Indians. While I watched the boiling syrup, I noticed a piece of fat on the liquid, which is said to prevent the syrup from boiling over, and evidently it does so. (10)

Common "Characters" of Early Settlements

No written account of early Missouri would be complete without mention of some of the inevitable

"characters" that were present in nearly every community. Their names vary, but their descriptions remain static. They could have been pressed from the same molds, and scattered across the countryside, for counterparts of each were found nearly everywhere.

First, there was the circuit rider, or preacher, who traveled over his territory for the purpose of spreading the Gospel to those who longed to hear the messages he brought. He spent little time in one place, but with his Bible and a few necessities traveled the countryside on his appointed rounds.

The country doctor which blessed only a few fortunate communities, was a special friend when one was needed. In case of serious illness, someone would ride to the doctor's home to fetch him. He would go, traveling in all sorts of weather on muddy, crude roads, by night or day. His knowledge was partially from book-larnin', and mostly from experience. Many country doctors obtained most of their sleep while driving, relying on a faithful horse to return safely home after a late night call.

Rendering a livelihood from serving the farmers was the blacksmith, one of the hardest workers anywhere. He repaired machinery, shoed horses, and was the general repairman for the entire community, which was lucky indeed to have such a person in residence. He owed his success to two factors: he knew his trade, and he owned the necessary tools.

Peddlers carrying packs on their backs walked from farm to farm in the hope of displaying wares and making sales. The peddler would carry laces, towels, "pillar shams, table clots, h'ar pins, combs, and lots of goods fer sewin'." Most of his items were not necessities, and more than likely, most people bought from him out of sympathy. Often he gained a meal out of the day's work, for then the pioneer family could benefit from the latest gossip.

The outstanding ability of a water witch (or wizard, depending on the sex) was to locate veins of water beneath the earth's surface. They would carry forked peach rods, holding one of the forks in each hand, the point upward. When a vein of water was passed over, the rod would miraculously turn down,

showing where the water was located. The number of times it dipped implied the number of feet below the surface the water lay. (11)

As the communities of settlers grew larger and included more individuals, they seemed more like one big family than a collection of families. Their cooperative spirit enabled them to make their work fun, and, in so doing, their difficult existence was made bearable and, for the most part, even enjoyable for all.

CHAPTER FOUR ENDNOTES

(1) Lillian Nothdurft, Folklore and Early Customs of Southeast Missouri (New York, New York: Exposition Press, 1972), p. 11.

(2) History of St. Charles, Montgomery, and Warren Counties, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: St. Louis National Historical Company, [1884]; reprint ed., [1969]), pp. 114-115.

(3) Nothdurft, pp. 42-44.

(4) Evelyn Milligan Jones, Tales About Joplin...Short and Tall (Joplin, Missouri: Harrigan House, 1962), pp. 39- 40.

(5) Nothdurft, p. 25.

(6) Interview with Helen Boening Buchanan, St. Louis, Missouri, May 14, 1985.

(7) Nothdurft, pp. 45-47.

(8) Nothdurft, p. 12.

(9) Nothdurft, p. 47-48.

(10) Gottfried Duden, Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America, trans. James W. Goodwin (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1980), Thirteenth Letter, pp. 59- 60.

(11) Nothdurft, pp. 20-27.

CHAPTER FIVE

HAUSFRAU WITH A DIRT FLOOR

Although the settlers of Missouri came from a wide variety of ethnic roots, the predominant nationality of those who settled in the Missouri River Valley were German, probably because of the influence of Gottfried Duden.

Adaptation to a primitive existence was difficult at best, especially for women. Because of their cultural mores and expectations, the settlers that experienced the most difficulty of all were the German women.

Most female German immigrants to Missouri tried to conform to the stereotype of efficient, exemplary, undemanding "Hausfrau." They endeavored to be the best homemakers in America, and never demand

more than their husbands could provide. As a result, they were even willing to perform work which had been considered demeaning in their former land. They claimed superiority to other frontier wives and homemakers, implying that their inate reasoning powers made them better able to adapt to frontier conditions. (1)

However, fulfilling the image of industrious homemaker was difficult on the frontier, where they had the added challenge of adjusting to primitive housekeeping conditions: cooking over an open fire, where pots set upon burning logs were easily and often spilled, learning to deal with new foodstuffs such as corn, which to most seemed totally inedible at first. The feelings of the German homemakers about these difficulties remains obscure, probably because they bowed to the inevitable without undue complaining. Therefore, there can be only supposition.

Linda Pickle recognizes that these stalwart women played a major role in native German cultural and language retention. Having little contact with people outside the home, they often did not learn

English, or at least, did not learn it well. Folk customs, food habits, and other everyday manifestations of cultural identity depended on the efforts of the women. They also spent great amounts of energy supporting church, school and German club activities. (2)

Among his reminiscences of German immigrants in Missouri in 1834, Gert Goebel recounts the story of an old bachelor who lived in Washington, Missouri:

> My sister was to be married to a neighbor she had known since her youth. The day for the wedding was set, and the nearest Justice of the Peace, Squire McDonald, was notified. He queried, "Do you, Thomas Bailey, promise to love and protect the person whom you hold by your right hand as your lawfully wedded wife, and be faithful to her till Providence may separate you?" The answer was affirmative, and a similar, equally brief question was asked the bride. When her answer was given, the Squire announced, "And so I declare you herewith to be husband and wife." The Squire considered the event only an interruption in the smoking of his pipe. When the bride's mother, who neither spoke nor understood English, was told she had just witnessed the marriage ceremony, of which she had not understood one word, she wept bitterly, not conprehending how such a short ceremony could be legal. (3)

The informality of frontier life and the other frontier people caused difficulties in adjustment for some of the German women. They found the casual

behavior of tobacco-chewing male Americans offensive. Those "ruffians" spread their belongings about and in general behaved in what these German gentlewomen considered as rude manners.

Pickle also asserts that homesickness was a common malady among all frontier women, but for these immigrants, whose mother and father were very far away and the opportunity of ever returning to see then was remote, the problem was acute. The isolation of lone cabins in the woods made even the meanest of homes in Germany blur into places of beauty and happy memories. Many unsympathetic husbands considered such negative views inspired by Satan. Some families did indeed return to Germany when the women were unable to adjust to the new life. But for most, return was a economic impossibility. (4)

"Good, laborious, submissive, and silent housewives" was the general description of the German women in Missouri in the 1820s. This view was in evidence to outsiders as well as in the German community itself. Women were well aware of the kind of behavior expected of them. Before leaving the church

at the time of their wedding, a poem was read to brides by a groomsman ordering them to maintain "Reinlichkeit" (cleanliness) and "Ordnung" (order) in their houses, and to show their husbands' parents love and respect. The women were expected to subordinate their wishes to those that would promote the good of the family, and understood that they must participate in the attempt of realizing the fondest dreams of their men. One of these dreams was evidently to obey God's command to multiply. If a woman was not carrying a child it was because she had just given birth to one. Large families gave the already exhausted women still more work.

Because there was a scarcity of white sugar, and even of brown sugar in the early days, every settler's cabin had a barrel of sorghum in one corner. A story is told that one day a small child climbed onto the sorghum barrel, perhaps to sample a taste of the sweetness, and, when putting his weight on the rotating lid, it tilted and the child fell into the barrel. When hearing his shrieks, his overworked, exasperated mother went to his rescue, and when observing her screaming, sticky offspring, she is

reported to have said, "I should just put you back in the barrel. It's much easier to get a new child than it will be to clean this one up!" (6)

Within their own homes, however, German women apparently had great influence. The love and care they gave their families earned them love and respect, but they were not always the angels they appeared in many account. They did not rule only through the gentler virtues at all times. Being only human, they sometimes let their tempers rule. Many were known for their short tempers as well as their cheerfulness, good-heartedness and good sense.

In a conversation with the granddaughter of a Missouri German housewife, the following anecdote was related:

> My grandmother had three young sons, Ewald, Walter, and Waldemar, who had all been born within a three year period. The three were normal, mischievous youngsters who were always together, and often into things that should have been avoided. The conscientious but busy mother would check on their activities periodically by calling, "Ewaltermar!" The boys each thought that was his own name, and that each of the brothers shared it. (7)

There are few documented indications of disagreements between German men and their "submissive" wives. By instruction in childhood, they found it necessary to exercise self-control in subordinating their own wishes and behave in the expected manner. No German women joined the ranks of the suffrage movement in Missouri. If they were religious women, they accepted the dictates of Scripture interpreted to prohibit a public role for women. If they lived among Latin farmers, they accepted the "natural order of things," that woman's greatest perfections can only be manifested in Domestic life, and her nature is love, innocence, tact, fineness, delicacy, in short, amiability. (8)

The nineteenth century German women immigrants to Missouri were individuals, not stereotypical representatives of their culture's image of femininity. They did not always behave in ways appropriate to their abstract image. Many appeared to be good, laborious, submissive and silent, but in the privacy of their homes were cantankerous, complaining and unwilling to subordinate their own wishes and happiness to the expectations of others. Their

influence on the wider community, through their influence on family members and public activities may never be fully realized. (9)

The general praise of the time and of future generations for these German immigrant women tends to diminish the human, individual element that made up much of the reality of frontier women's existence. Little personal information exists from these women, probably because most had neither the time or the inclination to write it down. Researchers must rely predominantly on the hints and clues scattered among the writings of the men around them, and this must be read cautiously as to completeness and reliability.

CHAPTER FIVE ENDNOTES

(1) Linda S. Pickle, "Stereotypes and Reality: Nineteenth Century German Women in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume LXXIX, Number 3, April, 1985, pp. 291-292.

(2) Pickle, pp. 293-295.

(3) William G. Bek, "The Followers of Duden," Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume XVI, Number 2, January, 1922, p. 335.

(4) Pickle, p. 298.

(5) Pickle, pp. 300-301.

(6) History of Howard and Chariton Counties, (St. Louis, Missouri: St. Louis National Historical Company, [1883]), pp. 226.

(7) Interview with Elizabeth Hinck Schluemer, St. Louis, Missouri, October 13, 1984.

(8) Pickle, pp. 308-310.

(9) Pickle, p. 311.

CHAPTER SIX

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A DULL SETTLER

It is sometimes remarked that there were no places for public entertainment until later years. Actually, there were many; every cabin was a place of entertainment, and these "hotels" were sometimes crowded to capacity. On such occasions, when bedtime came, the first family would take the back part of the cabin, and so continue filling it up with families until its limit was reached. The young men slept in the wagon outside. In the morning, those nearest the door arose first and went outside to dress. Meals of cornbread, buttermilk and fat pork were served on the back of a wagon. On Sundays they had bread made of wheat "tramped out" on the ground by horses, cleaned with a sheet, and pounded by hand. This was the best the most fastidious could obtain, and then only once a week, but no one seemed to worry, for it was common

knowledge at the time, that "you have to eat a peck of dirt before you die" anyway. They brought with them enough corn to give the horses an occasional feed, but for the most part, they had to live on prairie grass. The cattle got grass only. (1)

"Having a ball" was not the term for a good time among the early settlers. They "had a bee." Bees of every kind were planned and carried out as traditions. One favorite was the corn-husking bee. Everyone gathered to help with the chore of husking, but while they worked, they told stories, sang songs, and told jokes until everyone was in high spirits. The greatest fun was when someone found a red ear, for as a reward, he had the privilege of kissing the girl of his choice. Even if the girl was not shy, she would pretend to be, and would lead her pursuer a merry chase before allowing him to claim his prize. (2)

Another popular event was the quilting bee, which was often timed in conjunction with a barn-raising or cabin-raising, or even a day of work in the fields for the men. Every housewife pieced quilts. These were patchwork quilts made of scraps

left from their home dressmaking. The quilts held fond memories of "Catherine's wedding dress," or "Emilie"s Sunday finery." They were of very elaborate design, such as neck-tie, log- cabin, ninepatch, and various star patterns, all done with tiny, careful stitches.

At the quilting bee, the neighborhood women helped each other quilt. This served two purposes: it made an interesting social affair, which, of course, included a rapid-fire exchange of gossip ("Her tongue's tied in the middle and wags at both ends."), and it helped get a big job done. A lining of solid-colored material was fastened into a quilting frame and was covered with cotton batting. The quilt top was fitted over it, and was tacked around all the sides. The women sat at all four sides until one row was finished, then rolled the two sides, and so on, until the entire quilt was completed.

When a single girl had a quilting, the young men of the community came during the evening, each in hopes of escorting his "special" young lady home. This was commonly referred to as "seein Nellie home." (3)

"Airing the quilts" was a favorite show among the ladies. They draped the quilts over clotheslines and fences during the first days of spring. If someone displayed what was considered to be a super-abundance of quilts for their family, it was considered by the others as "putting on airs". (4)

Apple bees were another form of work-combined-with-fun, in which the neighbors gathered to peel, slice, and otherwise prepare apples for drying or canning. As a result of the passing-around (and around) of a gourd filled with some extremely well fermented apple juice, the apple bee oftentimes switched from peeling to reeling. Someone always brought a fiddle or harmonica, and after several rounds of the gourd, everyone thought he could dance. (5)

There were other recreations, such as shooting matches, which were enjoyed to the fullest extent. The established rule was to pay either one dollar in money to the host family, or split one hundred rails during the course of the day. The men would split the rails before their contests, and the women would remain in

the house and do the quilting. After the day's activities were concluded, the night would be spent in dancing. (6)

Another source of more profitable recreation among the old settlers was that of hunting bees. The forests along the water-courses were especially prolific of bee trees. Many of the early settlers, during the late summer, would go into camp for days at a time, for the purpose of hunting and securing the honey of the wild bees, which was not only rich and found in abundance, but always commanded a good price in the home market. The Indians regarded the honey bee as the forerunner of the white man. (6)

Pioneer Christmas celebrations were combinations of the various cultures in each community. The Germans brought the major innovation during the waves of their immigration. This, the Christmas tree, was their symbolic representation of Christmas. Families of other descents quickly adopted the tradition. Other cultures contributed their own customs: Santa Claus, Yule logs, holly, mistletoe, turkey dinners, and the shooting of firecrackers. Many

slave-owning families followed the tradition that slaves need not work so long as the Yule log burned. Therefore, the strongest slave sought out the biggest log that could fit into the fireplace. (7)

Another German custom, the New Year's Eve Serenade, was observed in many settlements. It was sometimes called the "New Year Shooting." A few men, with their shotguns, stopped at a neighbor's, gave a salute, and after that, the men at that place joined them until a large group had accumulated. When they arrived at a home, they would sing and shout, "Happy New Year to the Family in This House." Then they would all fire their guns. The family would come out and greet the guests, who would then go on to the next place, always wishing those inside a Happy New Year. (8) This custom is similar to the present day custom of Christmas Caroling.

Parties and dances were popular; in fact, they were the most popular winter diversions. Usually they took place in a granary or barn after the wheat had been sold. There was a local caller and fiddler for square dancing, and sometimes the luxury of a local

accordionist. Invitations were never needed, for it was not a custom to serve refreshments; hence, there was no need to be exclusive.

There is, however, a story about one dance that was rather exclusive. One Saturday night, there was an imposter at a local dance. A young "city slicker" had been passing through and dared to invade the party. His handsome dress and suave mannerisms stole the hearts and turned the heads of the young ladies. Unfortunately for the young swain, he chose Minty Bell, who was promised to Jack Collinger, as his most frequent partner.

Jack, detained by threshing, had planned to arrive late. When he did arrive, he was outraged. He stomped out of the room along with some of his friends, all of whom had some "idys" about "what orght to be done." Mentioned punishments were "tarred and feathered," "rode back to town on a rail," and "hev that purty curly hair of his'n singed off'n his head."

Jack and one friend caught a cat, climbed onto the roof, crawled to the stovepipe, and removed it

from the opening. When the dude and Minty passed below, down went the cat and landed smack-dab on the princely head. By the time he could look up, the pipe was back in the hole, and everyone except Minty and the victim was laughing at the scratches on his face and hands. Without a word to anyone, he left the dance, jumped into his buggy, and galloped away. (9)

Some people looked at the dances which most of the young people attended with jaded eyes, thinking, because of religious beliefs, that they were sinful. Parties, though, were considered legitimate for all, regardless of the games that were played there. The most popular of party activities were folk dances, but these were not considered dances at all. They were referred to as "singin' games."

In the summertime, parties were held in large barnyards. The "singin' games" played usually included, "Miller Boy", "Dancing Josie", "Skip To My Lou", "The Old Brass Wagon", "Sweetheart Hunting", and "We're Marching 'Round The Levee." (10)

Candy pulls were a wintertime entertainment. They took place in the homes, and usually consisted of small crowds of friends who met to make candy. Taffy and molasses candy could be pulled and twisted while it was warm. There would be competitions to see who could pull the longest strand without breaking it. This provided a game and refreshment in one. (11)

A charivari was a sort of comic serenade given to a newly married couple. At first it was given only to a couple if one of the partners had been married before, but eventually charivaris were given to all newly-marrieds. Its purpose was to wish them good luck and happiness.

To have a charivari, a crowd would gather and go to the home of the couple, supposedly to surprise them, with a fantastic conglomeration of noises made up of anything available. They used tin pans, cowbells, horns, and even their own voices for the "chivaree." The couple, usually expected the neighbors, and were prepared to serve refreshments. Everyone knew it was all in fun, and accepted the "chivaree" as a compliment, even though the noise was

sometimes almost unbearable. (12) Today we call these "wedding receptions."

> The Fourth of July was always observed in Missouri with great fervor and excitement. Even the busiest farmers stopped their work and celebrated with dinners, spirits, singing, and dancing. Games were enthusiastically played, such as greased pole climbing, catching greased pigs, sack and potato racing, wrestling, markmanship, tug-of-war over a mudhole, and, of course, the inevitable horse races. Strangely, it was not for over 150 years that Congress officially made the Fourth of July a national legal holiday. (13)

In the late 1800s, a traveling circus went about the state with its contingent of freaks, animals, and various daring performers, giving opportunities for the local people to observe new things of great interest to them. Along with the circus came another innovation--electric lights. The spectators, enthralled by their first glimpse of such an amazing invention, tended to stare at the lights instead of the elephants. The lights, burning carbon, were noisy, but for a while, the area was brighter than it had ever been before. (14)

Along with hunting, fishing, hiking, fencing, singing, and dancing, theatrical production shared the amusement hours of the German settlers in early rural

Missouri. Since many of them were accustomed to attending the theater in Germany, it was in no way unusual that they readily established their own theaters in America.

The German residents of Hermann, Missouri were no exception, founding a theater as early as 1843. Wherever German theatricals were presented, virtually the entire German community participated in them. Unlike the English speaking thespians, the German performers were men and women, sometimes even boys and girls, as opposed to young men only.

Whereas an American who acted in plays found it necessary to justify his activities to his fellow-men by claiming that the theater was educational or cultural, the Germans usually felt that the theater was worthwhile simply because it was fun. Although the Germans sometimes formed independent dramatics societies, they more frequently fostered the theater through their excellent musical and athletic organizations. German amateur dramatic performances were of three varieties: tableaux, stunts, and legitimate plays, almost equally divided between the

light and serious types. Unfortunately, extremely rare is any word account of an "insignificant" amateur performance in a near frontier state. That show was only a temporary event, a thing of the moment; once done, forgotten--except for a few personal recollections of hilarious entertainment or a lingering memory of the theater's ecstatic thrill. Not even the amateur actor of today thinks of the theater historian of tomorrow. But even if it be rustic or elementary, the genuine theatrical spirit was there. (15)

CHAPTER SIX ENDNOTES

(1) History of St. Charles, Montgomery, and Warren Counties, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: St. Louis National Historical Company, [1884]; reprint ed., [1969]), p. 114.

(2) Evelyn Milligan Jones, Tales About Joplin....Short and Tall (Joplin, Missouri: Harrigan House, 1962), p. 39.

(3) Lillian Nothdurft, Folklore and Early Customs of Southeast Missouri (New York, New York: Exposition Press, 1972, p.48.

(4) Jones, p. 39.

(5) Jones, p. 40.

(6) History of St. Charles, Montgomery, and Warren Counties, pp. 117-118.

(7) Lew Larkin, Missouri Heritage (Columbia, Missouri: American Press, Inc., 1968), pp. 43-44.

(8) Nothdurft, p. 62.

(9) Nothdurft, pp. 50-52.

(10) Nothdurft, pp. 53-59.

(11) Nothdurft, p. 60.

(12) Nothdurft, p. 62.

(13) Larkin, pp. 84-85.

(14) Milligan, pp. 48-50.

(15) Elbert R. Bowen, "The German Theatre of Early Rural Missouri," Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume XLVI Number 2, January, 1952, pp. 157-161.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HAVE YA' GOT RELIGION? CERT'NLY, LORD.

Religious practices were important to most of the early settlers. Religion gave them the confidence they needed to face their new, radically different lives in a strange new environment. It gave them comfort when they needed it, confidence in the future because of God's protection, and a place to vent their frustrations and other setbacks in the company of others who were living similar experiences. Religion provided a "father figure"--all-knowing, all-protecting, and all-forgiving.

Lillian Nothdurft cites the importance of religious gatherings to those people of the Missouri frontier. Although quite different from modern day practices, they were anticipated with great enthusiasm. "Goin' to meetin'" was a favored pastime

for early Missourians. Often neighbors held worship services in their log cabins. Not only did the men bring their women and children, they always brought their guns and dogs also. The guns were stacked in the corner, and the dogs were left outside. If the dogs "treed" a coon or a wildcat, they would interrupt the service, and all of the people would proceed outside to observe. Some communities built make-shift shelters in the form of a "brush arbor" constructed from a framework of poles with branches or brush laid across the top.

"Brush" Arbor meetings lasted for a week. A large arbor was built, covered with enough brush to keep out the rain, or, at least a part of the rain. Plank benches were set on the ground, and a crude pulpit, usually a log set on one end, was placed in the front for the minister. To ensure warmth, a fire was built at each corner of the arbor. This was a place of true worship. A minister or evangelist preached and prayed, and the group in attendance joined in singing many of the old time favorite songs. (1)

Often a bugler would announce the start of a camp meeting, an outdoor religious gathering. It took staying power to survive those revivals which sometimes continued for weeks. Some came as far as forty miles, camping out for days. These meetings not only served a religious purpose, but they also brought many people together to become better acquainted.

A unique method of lighting the services began with an egg made into an egg- shell lamp. A tiny hole was made in the small end of the egg, and the contents removed. Then the shell was filled with oil from a raccoon or with bear grease, and a cotton string put in for a wick. The whole was then propped up in a saucer of salt, and it was given the auspicious title of "God's egg." (2)

Preachers were seldom assigned to one place, but traveled on horseback around their circuits. These circuit-riders had to endure great danger, hardship, and exposure. Some carried a "fever cure" with them to ward off the "shakes." This was a bottle of brown liquid, known to them as "old agility," but most of the people referred to the same substance as "corn

likker." The circuit riders carried guns as did the other men. In manner and dress, they were decidedly informal, but wore the hat identified with the station as they traveled about the countryside. It was very tall, and was referred to by the early settlers as a "bee-gum." (3)

There is a story of a young couple, desiring to be married by a minister, who set off to find him, having heard he was somewhere in the area. They had sworn that neither hellfire nor high water would deter them from their quest. When they finally found the preacher, he was on the other side of a flooded creek too high to be forded. The high water did not drown out the wedding; the minister shouted the service across the roaring creek, and the young couple made their vows at the top of their voices. (4)

Among his reminiscences of German immigrants in Missouri in 1834, Gert Goebel recounts the story of an old bachelor who lived in Washington. He was a well established cooper, but was unhappy in his lonely life. The village watchmaker who traveled extensively in his trade, told him of a very attractive widow he

had met. A meeting was arranged, but when they found themselves in one another's presence they were most embarrassed. Neither ventured to utter a word, so the exchange of sidelong glances of the greatest eloquence became the major exchange. These must have had a favorable result, for they joined hands, which inspired the watch/match-maker to rush forward to congratulate them. After a brief hesitation, the widow sighed, "Well, if it is the will of the Lord that I shall have another husband, let's go to the squire and be done with it." (5)

A young couple traveled from Potosi to a nearby French City (Ste. Genevieve?) to exchange their marriage vows in a "jump the broomstick" wedding. After the ceremony, the wedding party was returning to Potosi when they were intercepted by some local Indians. The Indians were quite impressed with the finery of the party, and chose to confiscate it for themselves. Although not harmed physically, the entire wedding party had to return home without a stitch of clothing, much to the embarrassment of all. (6)

Whenever a settlement became well enough established into a community, one of their first priorities was often the erection of a permanent church. How proud and self-satisfied was the community who built its own church building! "Surely, God can see now how important He is to us!" The first churches differed in denomination and some practices, but they had many similarities also.

The buildings were usually small, were practically all of frame construction, and were located near some country road. There was nearly always a cemetery in conjunction with the church building. Some even had a parsonage for the minister and his family.

When a church building was constructed in a community, it often served as the entertainment center for the citizenry, as well as a meeting place for area committees, both church-related and secular. This was because the building was most often the largest in the area. Many times it also served as the local schoolhouse.

Usually the rural preacher served several congregations, and visited them on a regular schedule. He was generally given the title "brother", and he continued to preach in the homes if a church had not yet been built by one of his assigned flocks.

Nothdurft explains that the services ranged from quiet worship, when the congregation sat listening and and praying, to the highly emotional type, when the preacher's powerful oratory and strenuous physical gestures would arouse the listeners to respond with shouting and gestures of their own. Many of the more active services were conducted by a guest evangelist, also called "brother," who was engaged to do a "whole week's worth of preachin.'" A special "Revival" such as this was presented annually.

The churches, for the most part, had a small group of good singers. Naturally, they were usually untrained, but they normally sat together on benches, usually in front of the pulpit, facing the others. These "singing specialists," forerunner of the choir, led the singing of the hymns. (7)

Lillian Nothdurft also recalls that picnics were a favorite activity, and often took place on the church grounds. These were usually sponsored by a church group to raise money for a current project. Various kinds of food or drink were sold, and, as at such church functions today, most of these were donated, making the profit one hundred per cent. Ice cream was made in hand-powered freezers, with young boys earning their treats by cranking the handle. On special occasions, there would be a speaker or singing, and for further entertainment, the young people played games. Ice cream suppers were just about identical to a church picnic, except they took place in the evening instead of the afternoon following church service. (8)

Thus, the people's religion served two purposes: it gave them the psychological feeling of security and unity, and it provided a base for social activity.

CHAPTER SEVEN ENDNOTES

(1) Lillian Nothdurft, Folklore and Early Customs of Southeast Missouri (New York, New York: Exposition Press, 1972), p. 48.

(2) Evelyn Milligan Jones, Tales About Joplin...Short and Tall (Joplin, Missouri: Harrigan House, 1962), pp. 11-14.

(3) Jones, p. 16.

(4) Jones, p. 15.

(5) William G. Bek, "The Followers of Duden," Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume XVI, Number 2, January, 1922, pp. 294-295.

(6) Earl A. Collins, Legends and Lore of Missouri (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1951), pp. 5-6.

(7) Nothdurft, p. 40.

(8) Nothdurft, pp. 59-60.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ, 1234567890, AND OTHER CHILDREN'S CLASSICS

Much of the education in Missouri in the early nineteenth century was through private subscription schools, taught by young, Ichabod Crane-type men who took private pupils, whose parents paid one dollar per month. The schoolmaster was boarded around at different homesteads each week. He conducted classes on two logs--one for the pupils, and one facing them for himself. Evelyn Jones records that one of the first school districts in Missouri was named "Seldom Seen", for some students had to follow a trail blazed with knives through the dense thickets. The children brought books from home in order to learn the mysteries of reading. One frequently used was The Moral Instructor, which contained many sayings of Benjamin Franklin.

The first constitution of Missouri, adopted in 1821, stated, "One school or more shall be established in each township, where the poor shall be taught gratis." The immortalized "little red schoolhouses," painted red because that was the cheapest color of paint to buy, began to spring up all over Missouri. The first schools outside of St. Louis were established in St. Charles, Boone, and Howard counties. Public education in Missouri met with even more resistance in early days than it does now. Then, however, it was the parents who objected. "I'm not gonna send our children to school," one adamant early settler announced. "Never sent 'em a day in their lives so far, and they're just as healthy as the neighbor's children." (1)

Beyond the spelling book, small dictionary, and an old arithmetic, the textbooks were just about anything--The New Testament, Pilgrim's Progress--anything that the family might possess. Weem's Life of Washington, Franklin, Marion, and other Heroes of the Revolution was about the only history used. (2)

Students used goose quills for writing pens and made ink by putting black jack in a pot full of water and boiling it down nearly as thick as syrup. The mixture was then strained and coperas were added to the fluid. (3)

The teacher, now classed as a folk character, dates back a great many years. The first teachers, eventually often female, boarded in the homes of the townspeople, but later teachers were local citizens with enough native intelligence to fill the role of teacher. As a whole, men and women teachers were a highly respected group of people. These teachers were, for the most part, self-taught, and stressed the learning of fundamental subjects. Their curriculum was limited by their own knowledge and by a general lack of demand for education. The fundamental subjects were well learned by those students who applied themselves to their studies, and by others who were influenced by the birch rod to take advantage of the educational opportunities open to them. (4)

In one community an applicant for a teaching job was being examined by the local trustees. They

asked the applicant if the world was round or flat. He answered that he wasn't sure, but he could teach it either way. Strangely enough, they decided he should teach that it was flat. (5)

No doubt the most difficult task for the teacher was keeping the students busy and quiet, for while the teacher was working with one group of students, the other students were in the same room (some things never change). Boys were usually efficient paper wadders, and they soon learned to shoot them accurately while the teacher was occupied elsewhere.

The teacher had an enormous task. She had to be a disciplinarian, a conscientious teacher and a playground aid all together. With the advent of organized sports such as baseball and basketball she became a coach, training her teams for competition with other schools. (6)

Willis King, a country doctor who practiced shortly after the Civil War, remembers an unusual school custom of the period:

> There was a custom common in those early days called "turning the teacher out for the holidays." A few days before Christmas, the boys would begin to talk about "having Christmas," which was synonymous with enjoying the holidays. The teacher would insist that he couldn't spare the time and intended teaching throughout the holidays.
>
> On the 24th of December, the older boys would go to the schoolhouse before daylight, make a fire, and bar the door with benches. As the children arrived at school, they would either be let in through the door or pulled through a window. When the teacher came he would scold, threaten, make great feints at battering down the door, and sometimes even go up on the roof, covering the chimney with his coat to "smoke them out!" As a last resort, the teacher would come to the window and inform the boys that if they didn't let him teach, he'd go home.
>
> This would bring the boys out and after a long chase, the teacher would be caught and tied hand and foot. The boys did not only demand holidays; they demanded candy and apples, and sometimes whiskey! This demand for whiskey grew out of the fact that nearly all families had whiskey in the home. (7)

Schoolhouses served as social centers for parents of students as well as the other townspeople. Programs were presented for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the last day of school. The programs consisted of group songs, recitations, and short plays. Every child had a chance to participate in these programs in addition to the group songs.

Once every year schools gave a box supper, inviting all other schools to attend. The girls came with beautifully decorated boxes containing a meal for two people. These boxes were auctioned off to the highest bidder who would then share the dinner with the girl who had prepared it.

A box of candy was presented to the girl who was voted to be the most popular, the votes costing one cent apiece. The most popular man present was awarded a piece of soap, a towel, and the title of the "homeliest man present." Whenever two schools had participants in this contest, the competition became very hot, and the school could make quite a bit of money selling the votes. All of the money realized from these affairs was spent on books or equipment for the school.

The year's work was customarily completed on the day before closing day so that the report cards could be presented to the students on the final school day. Spelling bees and ciphering matches filled the morning of the last day, with games or another program in the afternoon. A basket dinner, brought by patrons,

was served afterward. Everyone ate his fill and visited with one another. It was a sort of a "homecoming" for those who had attended that school in their youth and who enjoyed visiting with their former classmates. (8)

Even today, particularly in small towns, the local school is the gathering place for community meetings, sporting events, musical performances, and social gatherings. In many ways, there have been a lot of changes in education, but in others, things are very much the same.

CHAPTER EIGHT ENDNOTES

(1) Evelyn Milligan Jones, Tales About Joplin... Short and Tall (Joplin, Missouri: Harrigan House, 1962), pp. 17-18.

(2) Willis P. King, Stories of a Country Doctor (Chicago, Illinois: The Clinic Publishing Company, 1902, p. 36.

(3) Floyd A. Shoemaker, ed., "Missouri History Not Found In Textbooks," Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume LIV, Number 1, October, 1959, p. 101.

(4) Lillian Nothdurft, Folklore and Early Customs of Southeast Missouri (New York, New York: Exposition Press, 1972), pp. 21.

(5) King, p. 37.

(6) Nothdurft, pp. 37-38.

(7) King, pp. 36-38.

(8) Nothdurft, pp. 38-39.

CHAPTER NINE

TAKE TWO ONIONS AND CALL ME IN TEN YEARS

Many of the health problems that plagued the early settlers were the result of cultural behaviors, which, in themselves, were unhealthy practices.

Wherever the whites settled, they brought with them their traditions of diet, habits of cleanliness or filth, and their own varying emotional patterns. The French were perhaps the most adaptable, for their balanced diet stressed fruits and vegetables, stressed wine rather than hard liquors, and their cookery included few fried foods. Consequently, many lived to an advanced age.

The German migration, however, brought into the region a much more diverse stock. As a group, they had inherited all the worst traditions of cookery:

high in meats and starches, usually fried, and the people were often guilty of excessive drinking. (1)

Gottfried Duden included some medical information in his letters.

> Some Indian tribes eat no salt at all despite the fact that they exist almost entirely on meat. They maintain that eating salt impairs free breathing." (2)
>
> The use of sulfuric acid is very important for the inhabitant of recently cleared forest ground. The breather of the harmful air of the overturned soil almost always suffers from bloody abscesses , malaria or even bilious fever. During the first two years, he should never drink water during the heat of summer without adding a few drops of sulfuric acid. Mixed with rum, with French brandy, or even with common brandy and water, perhaps with the addition of sugar, it is a pleasant drink, and, for the health, far preferable to citric acid. Since ancient times, vinegar has been considered a preventive against all bilious disorders, and rightly so, especially when it is made of honey. But sulfuric acid is better by far.
>
> Everyone knows here that a person who has recently recovered from malaria suffers a relapse when he occupies himself with laundry work. This happens more frequently in hot weather than when it is cold. The soap, which is only too often made of rancid fat, certainly is not beneficial to the body when it is inhaled for some time in a warm atmosphere. Malaria and dysentary seem to have a common cause noticed here because of the frequency with which they follow each other.
>
> Purging induced by Epsom salts and cream of tartar, and plasters to alleviate the local disorders of the chest, repeated incisions in the surface of the painful swellings for the purpose

> of causing slight bleeding, and the use of sulfur-naphtha and sulfuric acid very quickly put an end to the danger of catarrhal ailments. The patients are completely restored to health in six to eight days. (3)

The pioneers seldom had the presence of a doctor to give them medical assistance, but every family had a collection of "receipts," or home remedies, handed down for generations. Most of the ingredients called for were usually on hand because they were "home-grown," such as tallow, beeswax, etc. These and the usual "doctor book" guided them through one sickness after another.

Following are some "stand-by" cures as recorded in Dr. Chase's Recipes, now a valuable collector's item:

> Tetter, Ringworm and Barber's Itch - To Cure - Take the best Cuba cigars, smoke one a sufficient length of time to accumulate 1/4 or 1/2 inch of ashes upon the end of the cigar; now wet the whole surface of the sore with the saliva from the mouth, then rub the ashes from the end of the cigar thoroughly into, and all over, the sore: do this three times a day and inside of a week all will be smooth and well. I speak from extensive experience; half of one cigar cured myself when a barber would not undertake to shave me.... Tobacco is very valuable in its place (medicine) - like spirits, however, it makes slaves of its devotees.
>
> For Fever Sores: Scrape a fresh turnip and apply

it every four hours, night and day, until healed....

Pelet White's Old Salve - Rosin 3 lbs.; mutton tallow and beeswax, of each 1/4 lb.; melted all together and poured into cold water, then pulled, and worked as shoemaker's wax.... recommended for old sores, cuts, bruises, rheumatic plaster, etc., etc....

TOAD OINTMENT - For sprains, strains, lame-back, rheumatism, caked udders, etc., etc. - Good sized live toads, 4 in number; put into boiling water and cook until very soft; then take them out and boil the water down to 1/2 pint, and add fresh-churned, unsalted butter 1 lb., and simmer together; at the last add tincture of arnica 2 oz. An old physician considered this the best prescription in his possession. Some persons might think it hard on toads, but you could not kill them quicker in any other way.

The juice of pokeberries, set in the sun upon a pewter dish, and dried to a consistence of a salve and applied as a plaster, has cured cancer. Poultices of scraped carrots, and of yellow dock root have both cured, cleansed the sore and removed the offensive smell of fetor, which is characteristic of cancer.

Dr. Chase also formulated a mixture to serve many pressing needs: "For grease spots, shampooing and killing bedbugs." He also admonished, "Don't squirm now, for these are not half it will do. This preparation will shampoo like a charm, it will remove paint from a board, and if it is put upon a bedbug he will never step afterwards, and if put into their crevices it destroys their eggs and thus drives them off the premises. A cloth wet with ;it will soon

remove all the grease and dirt from doors which are much opened by kitchen hands." (4)

It was a common belief that measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, and the like were inevitable and unavoidable, and that to try to escape them would defy Providence. Hence, when the weather was good, the children were often deliberately exposed to these diseases. (5)

Many people years ago suffered from nervous excitement and inflamation of the brain. This was caused, some thought, by "tight stockings and the reading of novels." (6)

Walking in the rain during dog days supposedly caused headaches and baldness, though chronic headaches also caused baldness and gray hair. These headaches might be bound with a halter with which someone had been hanged; the rope used in an execution had special merits. (7)

Bleeding was considered proper at the onset of all inflammatory illnesses. The arms of patients were often so scarred from repeated bleedings in which the locating of a good vein became a difficult task. The more a patient bled, the weaker he got, and the more he needed to be bled. When he felt faint and relaxed, he was usually given ipecac and often calomel. (8)

Onions were an indispensible item to any first-aid box, and they were recommended by many pioneers as a cure for earache, when a hot or warm onion should be inserted into the aching ear. Boils and carbuncles could be cured by using as a poultice a mashed onion which had been hollowed out, filled with soap, and roasted in hot ashes. (9) An onion, baked with sugar and eaten would cure a cold. An onion poultice (onions fried in lard and put into a bag) placed on the chest cured a chest cold. The juice of an onion could draw out the poison of an insect sting. (10)

Several ways to treat a cut were: application of salt to prevent infection and promote healing; cobwebs applied to stop bleeding; ear wax to heal

them; castor oil also was considered to be a good healer.

Following is a far-from-complete list of "sure-fire" home remedies. Of course, these are no longer in use, now that it is much easier to call a doctor or visit a drug store than it is to dig for roots or gather herbs. They continue to be a part of Missouri folklore.

> Roots of a poke plant, cut in discs and fried in lard will cure lumbago.
>
> Tea made of mullein leaves will cure a cold.
>
> A piece of red flannel wrapped around the neck will cure a sore throat, as will a few drops of kerosene on a woolen cloth wrapped around the neck. Also, a sore throat will disappear if you wrap your left stocking that you have just removed, around your neck.
>
> Corns may be cured by applying saliva to them immediately after you have arisen from bed in the morning.
>
> Water taken from a stream before sunrise on Easter morning has healing properties.
>
> To cure catarrh (inflammation of nose and throat), wash your feet every night and wear clean socks every day.
>
> To stop nose bleeding, repeat Ezekiel, 16:6 from the Bible: "And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live.'"

> To ease a child's gums while teething, rub them with rabbit brains.
>
> Bad breath can be stopped by gargling with vinegar and water. (11)

A bottle of quinine was kept in the cabin, for at times, chills and fever, otherwise malaria in a mild form, would attack some member of the family and he would take a few doses of the specific. In that day, there were no capsules, and medicine was administered in powdered form, wrapped in a large, moist wafer, floating in a little water in a tablespoon. Then, there was lemon juice or jelly as an after taste to reward the young. (12)

A friend of Grandmother's once told me,

> I well remember, when a boy, there being a tavern in our district (possibly Van Bibber's), where teamsters stopped to rest and water their horses, of seeing the carters, instead of drinking their half-bottle of whiskey, pouring it into their boots cold, as a protection against the frost. They told me there was nothing equal to it to warm the feet; that it was better than fire, for the feet remained warm for a long time and prevented sickness. (13)

Eye trouble, especially "films on the eye" was supposedly relieved with the use of dried human dung. "It should be finely powdered and blown into the eye."

It is believed this cure was developed from the way Jesus, in John 9:6, spat on the ground, made a ball of clay, and inserted it into a blind man's eyes, enabling him to see. (14)

Constipation could be effectively treated by "eating soup made of chicken-- feathers and all." (15)

Most of the pioneer families had many children, but infant mortality was high. The pioneer mother-to-be did her best, often with poor help. For instance, when a baby proved to be reluctant to enter the world, a bit of dried snuff blown into the mother's nose by way of a goose quill would bring on fits of sneezing and sometimes the desired results. Persons were spoken of in later life as having been "quilled babies". (16)

There was a practice among midwives of shaking newborn infants for an imaginary disease which they called "liver grown." If the infant did not do well, they assumed that "its liver has growed to its side." They remedied this imaginary difficulty by turning the poor thing upside down; then, holding it by the heels,

they gave it a slow downward movement, as if they would drop it, then jerked it upwards suddenly. They repeated this several times. If the child lived, they "broke it loose"; if it died, "it was growed too tight." (17)

The science of infant care was not yet known, and instead of a vitamin, a baby was given a bacon rind, usually attached to a string so that if accidentally swallowed, it might be recovered. When weaned, usually by the almanac, youngsters began to eat cornbread, biscuits, and "pot likker," like grown-ups. The fittest survived, and the rest, "the Lord seen fitten to take away." (18)

In family medicine few substances ranked higher than "Indian snakeroot." The term is not precise, for a number of unrelated plants are called snakeroot, but it came close to being a panacea. Within our generation the white snakeroot, which contains alcohol called tremetol has been proven to be the cause of "the milk sickness," the most mysterious and alarming of frontier diseases. It's most famous victim was Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln. (19)

Milk sickness was encountered in many localities. The usual symptoms were irregular breathing, cold clammy skin, subnormal temperature, and bloated abdomen. The patient would be overcome with weakness, ingovernable thirst, agonizing pain, and often death. The disease afflicted both cattle and persons. Animals which ate the flesh of milk-sick animals were also afflicted. It was finally traced to a poisonous plant--a form of snakeroot. Even today there is no antidote. (20)

> There was a false and foolish belief about the palate coming down. In some forms of nasal and throat inflamations, there is a choking sensation, and many ludicrous methods were used to "raise the palate up."
>
> I was called in my early practice to see a boy who "had got his palate down and couldn't get it up". When I arrived at the house, I found the whole family assembled in one room, all very excited. In one corner near an open window sat the unhappy victim, and an old lady standing over him with a stick, twice as large as a pencil, and six inches long, twisted into a wisp of hair on the crown of the boy's head.
>
> I got it up jest so fur an'couldn' git it no further, so I jest hilt it where I had it an' waited fer you to come." The boy's face was flushed, his eyes protruding, and his mouth wide open. There was an expression of fear on his face, as if he expected to hear something pop when the

> palate went back. The old lady gave an extra hitch on her stick, and the boy's eyes bulged out a little more, and he raised up about two inches off the chair. I untwisted the stick and swabbed his throat with silver nitrate. The palate "went back" in a short time. (21)

To expedite the growth of a mustache, the sap of a grapevine was almost infallible, or the young man might put sweet cream on his upper lip and have a black cat lick it off on a dark night. (22)

The following is from an article published in the 1850s and quoted in The Midwest Pioneer. It sounds remarkably like a pioneer era version of anorexia:

> Young ladies will resolve to become extremely pale from a notion that it looks interesting. For this purpose, they will substitute for their natural foods, pickles of all kinds, powdered chalk, vinegar, burnt coffee, pepper, and other spice, especially cinnamon and clover; others will add to these paper, of which many sheets are eaten in a day. They have a desire for everything except that which is nutritious. Soon the complexions become death-like in hue, the whole frame withers, and a premature grave awaits the unhappy victim." (23)

Another "beauty treatment" was involved with the removal of freckles. This could be accomplished by going to the garden before sunup every morning, and bathing the freckled area in dew from cabbabe leaves. (24)

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The science of medicine has always experienced a difficult time escaping from the cloud of the supernatural and the influence of superstition, where, after all, it had its own origination. Even today many old fashioned, time-honored beliefs are discarded only with great reluctance. (25)

Throughout the ages, hydrophobia has been considered one of the most dreaded afflictions of man and animal. From the fear of this malady plus the total lack of a remedy, the theory of the "madstone" evolved, and was only discarded a few decades ago. The actual origin of the madstone has remained a mystery. One theory is that they were formed by petrification in the stomachs of deer. But whatever the origin, madstones were considered a great asset to their localities. Ownerships, the owner's name also given to his madstone, were widely advertised by word of mouth from those who had been treated. Most owners received their madstone by inheritance.

The stones were small in size (irregular cubes, less than one inch in each measurement), gray

in color, quite porous, looking much like the marrow structure of a large bone. Observed under a microscope, the particles appear highly polished and hard.

If a person was bitten by a dog which was suspected of being mad, he would hurry to the owner of the local madstone. It was taken from its case and placed in a glass of warm water. All of the handling was done with tweezers, and never touched by a human hand nor placed directly on the wound. The patient's left wrist was shaved, the warm stone placed thereon, and tightly bound to the wrist with a strip of clean linen, to be left there approximately two hours. Then, during the next tense moments the arm was unbound: if the patient had been infected with rabies, the stone would adhere to the wrist; if there was no infection, the stone would fall off. On some occasions, the stone would adhere for several hours. Then the stone would be re-soaked, and the whole process repeated until the person was entirely "cured".

There was a fixed fee for each adherence of the stone. The fee also included room and board for

the patient, and feed and care for his horse. If the stone did not adhere, there was no charge. No records were kept, so no one knows how many people were actually "cured", or even treated by madstones. Few people of the present generation have even seen a madstone. Nonetheless, in its more than one hundred years of service, it was certainly a psychological success. (26).

How could a country doctor tell, before he reached a house, that his patient had died? Many people had the habit, when one of the family died, of taking the bed upon which the dead one lay, and the clothes which had covered him, and putting them on the fence. As a rule, the more ignorant and thoughtless they were, the nearer they would put it to the front gate. (27)

In a conversation with a Senior Citizen of St. Louis County, she recalled:

> I remember how my father always told us children that under no circumstances were we ever to touch his scythe, let alone decide to play with it. One day my brothers got it down to clear of a place to play baseball, and, as fate would have it, Ted got a serious cut on his leg. They knew that if Papa

> found out, there would be more trouble than they cared to deal with, so they took Ted down by the creek and put a thick coating of clay on the gash. Every day they removed the old clay and put new clay on it. It wasn't until they were grown that my father was informed of the incident. But the hardest thing to believe about it is that Ted didn't even have a scar. (28)

Against such successes as frontier medicine had, may be set off many dangerous and horrifying practices, such as the poulticing of abcesses and open wounds with barnyard manure. The pioneer could do practically nothing about bacterial infections, and therefore made use of magic -- meaningless rituals, seers, asafoedita, wearing of amulets, etc. (29)

As time progressed, Missourians were urged to move away from false health practices, and improve their physical well-being with "proper" remedies and behaviors. The following is an advertisement from the Montgomery City, Missouri, Standard, May 25, 1883:

> Many of our young men are suffering from a state of mental exhaustion, which renders them unfit for business or study. Injurious habits that weaken their constitution are clung to with a pertinacity that is appalling. Young man, stop! let health and perfect manhood be at least one of your chief aims in life. If you already begin to suffer from disturbing dreams, etc., make haste to strengthen the weak portions of your body by using that friend of temperance and long life, that

> strengthener of every part of your body, Dr. Guysott's Yellow Dock and Sarsparilla. It will quickly restore your health and keep you from falling into the rapacious clutches of some advertising quack doctor. Be wise in time. (30)

No matter how beguiled, no matter how mismedicated from time to time, they must have been a hardy stock, for survive they did. Perhaps it was because of home remedies and healing charms. Perhaps it was in spite of them.

CHAPTER NINE ENDNOTES

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(22) Pickard and Buley, p. 80.

(23) Pickard and Buley, p. 95.

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(25) DeVoto, p. 41.

(26) Robert S. Withers, "The Madstone," Missouri Historical Review Quarterly, Volume XLIX, Number 1, Pp. 123-126.

(27) King, p. 178.

(28) Interview with Helen Boening Buchanan, St. Louis, Missouri, May 14, 1985.

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CHAPTER TEN

WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD

Almost every community had its "village witch," whose special "powers" enabled the curing of people with a mixture of herbs, potions, and primitive psychology or merely the influencing of the local folk in one way or another. Some plant cures were based on resemblance of physical characteristics of a certain plant to the part of the body in trouble. Others were probably derived from sheer desperation. (1)

One man who claimed to be a witch stated that the special powers were available to him because he possessed a special bone, and anybody who got a similar bone would have the same power. His instructions were: "First get a toad. Take it to the churchyard and find a grave with an ant hill on it. Bury the toad in the middle of the hill, and return to

the grave at midnight for the next three nights. On the fourth night, dig down and the ants will have eaten all the toad's flesh, leaving just the bones. Throw the bones into a stream, and one will float upstream, against the current. Get it, for that's the one that will give you special powers. (2)

Carrying in a small bag, a sheep's tooth given to you by a witch will prevent toothache. (3) To cure a toothache, stand booted on the ground under the open sky, or catch a frog by the head, spit into its mouth and ask it to take away the ache. (4)

Warts must have been a great concern for the Missouri pioneers, because getting rid of them seemed to be a major objective. They weren't sure where they came from--some thought from touching toads--but many "cures" were suggested by the village witches.

> Warts can be removed by letting a grasshopper eat them.
>
> Another cure for warts is to tie as many knots in a string as the warts you have, and drop the string where someone will be sure to step on it. The first person who steps on the string will develop the warts.

To cure warts, touch them with as many little stones as you have warts

Rub an old dishrag over your warts; then bury it in the ground where the rainwater from the eaves of your house will fall on it. When the rag decays, the warts will disappear.

Cut a potato in two and rub the cut side over the warts. Feed the potato to the hogs and your warts will disappear, while the hogs will get them.

The surest cure for warts is to wash them with spunk water. (This is rainwater that has collected in a hollow stump and has been there long enough to turn brown. (5)

Wrap as many stones as you have warts in an ivy leaf, and throw it into the road. Whosoever picks up the parcel of stones will acquire the warts and leave you free of them. (6) (Conversely, never pick up a parcel made from an ivy leaf!)

Rubbing the warts with green walnuts, slit beans, or corn, either belonging to the family or stolen, bacon rinds, chicken feet, silk threads or horsehair was another wart eliminator. The removing agent was usually buried, either at midnight or at daybreak.

Some warts could even be given away to anyone riding a gray horse; others could be sold for a cent, which must either be given away or put in to the church collection plate. (7)

Warts were not the only problems to trouble the settlers, but the witches had either preventatives or cures for nearly everything.

Carrying a potato in your pocket at all times would stave off rheumatism. Some ladies sewed special

pockets in their dresses in which to carry a small raw potato for this purpose. (8) Another rheumatism preventative was to carry a buckeye nut in your pocket or purse. (9)

Asthma could be cured by walking around the house at midnight in the full of the moon. For pleurisy relief, the sufferer had to creep around a table leg three times, stopping exactly where he began. (10)

Shingles could be cured by the application of blood from the amputated tail of a black cat. (11)

A small piece of lead fastened to a string around the neck will prevent nosebleeds. A small bag of assafoetida hung there will ward off contagious diseases of any kind. A black silk thread tied around a baby's neck will prevent the child's ever having croup. Goiter can be cured by wearing a necklace of Job's tears. General good health can be assured if by always carrying the bone of a raccoon in a pocket to absorb the body's poisons. (12)

The easiest way to cure a blister is to make a snail crawl over it. The flow of water from a pricked blister was considered to be nearly as good as bleeding. (13)

A stye on the eye could be healed by rubbing it with a gold wedding ring. Many claimed this worked without fail; others were more specific, saying the stye had to be rubbed three times. If a wedding ring was not available, the tail of a black cat could be used as an alternative. (14)

A bunch of fennel hung over doors that open outward was an anti-witch herb and would protect from enchantment. (15) (Did they ever wonder if this also eliminated the enchantment of their amulets, etc.?)

There are a number of old sayings and beliefs that get passed on through the generations until no one really knows where they came from. "Everybody" knows, for example, one mustn't eat blackberries after October 11 because that's when the Devil curses the fruit; or if someone spills salt he must take a pinch

of it with the right hand and throw it over the left shoulder to avoid bad luck. (16)

Strange beliefs often had a great influence on household duties, crop planting, sickness, and death. These things were both foretold and governed by "signs":

> If one stubs a toe, he will have bad luck unless he kisses his thumb, which will change it to good luck.
>
> When getting out of bed in the morning, the right foot must be put out first or bad luck will follow that day.
>
> Picking a five-leaf clover is bad luck, but spitting on it and throwing it over the left shoulder will make it good luck.
>
> Dropping a dishrag on the floor means someone is coming to visit you who is a dirty housekeeper.
>
> If one butchers hogs during the waning moon, the meat will shrink when it is cooking.
>
> Showing a baby its reflection in a mirror before it is six months old, means the child will suffer much pain while teething.
>
> If a turtle bites someone, it won't turn loose until sundown.
>
> If a snake is killed, it won't die until sundown. (17)
>
> If a rooster crows on the doorstep, company is coming.

> Should a cardinal fly across the path in front of one, he will meet someone he know.
>
> Wishing on a perched cardinal before it flies away, makes a wish come true. (18)

Young people have not changed very much over the years. Even in the early days there was a concern about their future. As a result, the village witches devised a set of "marriage signs" for them.

> On Halloween one can discover the first letter of his future spouse's family name by peeling an apple, keeping the peel in one piece, and throwing the peel over the right shoulder. Whatever letter of the alphabet it resembles as it lies on the ground represents the first letter of the appropriate name.
>
> If someone walks backward into a cellar at midnight on Halloween, by looking into a mirror carried in the hand, the reflection of the future mate can be seen.
>
> Go into a garden at midnight on Halloween and walk backward into the cabbage patch and pull up a cabbage stalk, it will show what your future husband will be like. A tall stalk means a tall man; a short stalk, a short man; a slender stalk, a slender man; a thick stalk, a husky man; a straight stalk, a man of good character; a crooked stalk, a crook; an old dry stalk, an old man; a fresh young stalk, a young man; a damaged stalk, a man of ill health. (19)
>
> Look into a well on Halloween, and see the image of the future spouse.
>
> When the first robin of spring is seen, looking in a shoe will show a hair the same color as that of your future mate. (20)

If a shoestring comes untied, it is a sign that your lover is thinking of you.

If someone who knows you does not recognize you, it is a sign that you will be married soon.

If you fall or stumble while climbing a stair, it is a sign that you will not be married that year. (21)

Being farmers, the people were greatly concerned with the weather. Signs were, as a result, formulated for the weather, and weather forecasting.

If it rains before seven, it will stop before eleven.

If it rains on Easter Sunday, it will rain on the following seven Sundays.

If the moon is tipped upward, it indicates dry weather; if its tips are down so its crescent couldn't hold water, there will be rain.

Big drops of rain mean it will not rain very long.

If all the food prepared for a meal is eaten, the next day will be fair.

Frost will come six weeks after the katydids begin to sing.

All of the following indicate the coming of rain: a dog eating grass; your hair curling; killing a toad; flies stinging; a rooster crowing at night; an owl hooting during the day. (22)

There were signs and superstitions that governed the execution of the day to day tasks of the homesteaders also. These determined when certain

activities should be done, and when they should not. For instance, plant root vegetables during the dark of the moon and they will produce a good crop. Plant leafy vegetables in the light of the moon and they will be productive. No matter what the weather, if turnips are planted on July 23, they will prosper. If someone is given plant cuttings, he must not thank the giver, or the plants will not grow.

> If a garment is cut out on a Friday, it must be finished that day, for if it remains unfinished overnight, there will certainly be some kind of trouble.
>
> If one must carry a knife, scissors, or other sharp tool, hold it with the point away, but not pointed at anyone else. (Sounds like plain common sense-- falling and cutting yourself would certainly be bad luck).
>
> Fasten a horseshoe above the door and it will bring good luck, and drive witches away, provided the arms of the horseshoe point upward; otherwise, the good luck will fall out. (23)

In the backwoods in the mid-1800s, when beliefs in ghosts and witches were commomplace, there were "signs"--bad signs in particular.

> It was a bad sign to see the new full moon through a treetop or anything that obscured it; but to see it for the first time full and fair over the right shoulder brought good luck.

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> It was a bad sign for a male person to take up a chair and twirl it around by one of its legs.
>
> It was a bad sign for any male person to come into the house with an axe or hoe or any sharp implement on his shoulder. It was all right if he went through the house and out another door, but he could not take the implement from his shoulder until he was outside again.
>
> Crowing hens and bellowing cows were a great terror to the superstitious. Something was going to happen; somebody was going to die; the hen must be killed, and the cow (being too valuable to kill) must be beaten away from the place with sticks and stones.
>
> If a bird flew into the house, it was a sign that somebody was going to die. If a person were sick and a bird flew in, it was a very bad sign. It did no good to point out the fact that usually nobody died--it was still a bad sign! (24)

Other signs of bad luck include laying a scissors on the bed, burning the wood of a peach tree, burning your combings, reentering a house by a different door from which you left it, or stumbling over something (unless the person goes back and walks over it again). (25)

There were some good luck signs also. It is good luck to find a horseshoe, to eat moldy bread (sounds like a mother's idea), to wear a new dress for the first time on Sunday, to swallow a chicken heart whole, for a spider to make a web in a doorway, to

spit on the bait before dropping the hook in the water, to be born on Sunday, to put on the left stocking first, then put on the right shoe first, or to carry the left hind foot of a rabbit that was killed at midnight during the dark of the moon. (26)

Everyone has wishes. That is a part of human nature. But the early people of Missouri had ways to make wishes come true--or so they thought.

> Make a wish, then open the Bible. If you open to a passage that begins with "And it came to pass," the wish will come true.
>
> Make a wish when seeing a load of hay, but do not look at it again or the wish will not come true.
>
> A wish made while a star is falling will come true.
>
> If the hem of a dress turns up, kiss the place where it has turned up three times and make a wish.
>
> When a piece of pie is served with the point toward you, cut off the point, push it aside, make a wish, eat the point last, and the wish will come true.
>
> If you accidentally put on a part of your clothing inside out, make a wish before you change it. (27)

Some of these signs and omens seem to be remotely connected with religious beliefs, while some are related to nature. Others are so bizarre, it's

difficult to connect them with anything. But whatever the source, the people followed them with their whole hearts. Perhaps they offered some kind of security. Whatever the reason for their creation and observance, many of them have carried over to the present time.

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(7) Madge E. Pickard and Carlyle R. Buley, The Midwest Pioneer, His Ills, Cures, and Doctors (Crawfordsville, Indiana: R. E. Banta Publishers, 1945), p. 79.

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(9) Nothdurft, p. 69.

(10) Pickard and Buley, p. 82.

(11) Pickard and Buley, p. 80.

(12) Pickard and Buley, pp. 68-70.

(13) Pickard and Buley, p. 112.

(14) Page, p. 41.

(15) Thesen, p. 152.

(16) Thesen, p. 130.

(17) Nothdurft, pp. 71-72.

(18) Earl A. Collins, Legends and Lore of Missouri (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1951), pp. 7-8.

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PART THREE

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MEMORY

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MISSOURI'S TWILIGHT ZONE

The lack of scientific knowledge can result in stories of ghosts and hauntings. Some of the tales from the past can now be explained when studied by scientists. Yet, there are other stories passed along by word of mouth that have never been explained, and possibly never will be. Perhaps the mysteriousness has grown through the generations. Then, again, maybe there is a group of Missouri spectres that make an appearance now and again just to check up on the things they left behind.

Occurrences in the vicinity of Loutre Lick in the realm of science were also favorite topics of Isaac Van Bibber. At the end of winter, or in unusually rainy seasons, according to Van Bibber, lights or balls of fire were seen, apparently coming

out of the ground. At other times, large volumes of smoke arose from the soil. Supposedly, two preachers riding late a night about nine miles from Loutre Lick saw a ball of fire at the end of a whip. In a short time, another ball of fire appeared at the other end of the whip. Almost immediately, the preachers, their horses and the objects around them seemed to be enveloped in "wreaths of flames." The preachers were so overcome with the spectacle, they couldn't tell more than this. Scientists of the time concluded that "combustion of a coal bed or decomposition of a mass of pyrites" must be the explanation of the strange happenings. (1)

The origin of the story of Greunigh's Ghost dates back to the Civil War, when a man by the name of Greunigh lived on a farm. According to common belief, he had buried some money in one of the fields. One night a group of bushwackers came to get Greunigh, who was asleep in the farmhouse loft. He heard them and tried to escape, but the Bushwackers killed him while he was climbing down the corner of the house. After that, on damp foggy nights, a light could be seen moving in the fields. People of the community believed

it to be Greunigh's ghost, hunting for the buried money. Some doubters called it a will-o'-the- wisp, produced by gas escaping from the earth, but to the natives, it was the ghost of Greunigh, and it may still be haunting those fields. (2)

Another ghost story also deals with buried money. Families who owned adjoining farms separated by a fence both insisted that at certain times they saw what looked to be a glowing figure of a woman, wearing a large hat and moving along the fence as though looking for something. The owners of the farms were reluctant to investigate what they saw. They said they didn't want to dig along the fence, because they didn't care what it was, and they didn't want to find something they didn't want to see. (3)

Reported in the Missouri Intelligencer, June 5, 1824:

> Between 7 and 8 o'clock on Saturday morning the 29th a noise was heard resembling thunder or the explosion of a few light clouds, far to the S. S. W. All are at a loss to account for it. To some it appeared to have come from the north; to others from the west, southwest, & south. Persons living in different directions, at a distance of from 30 to 60 miles, report the like noise to have been

> heard, about the same time. As the morning was unusually clear, wherever it was heard, it was at first generally conjectured to have been the customary salute of some steam boat. It is now known that no such vessel was within the greatest distance spoken of, nor is there a piece of artillery in the country that could be heard one-tenth of it. (4)

Hamilton Hollow is a quiet valley, which has both of its exit roads passing over a stream. Several reports over a century have been made of persons being chased by a huge, black, bear-like animal with large, green, glowing eyes. Each has felt the creature's hot breath at the back of the neck, just before they escaped across the stream. All descriptions of the Hamilton Hollow Ghost have agreed in details. (5)

Several mysterious ghost stories have transversed several generations. Among these is the tale of the Spinning Wheel Ghost. In 1888, two old maids, Sis and Ruth Brooks were walking home from church one evening when they suddenly heard the distinct hum of a spinning wheel behind them. They listened for a moment, and then began to run, but they could not escape the spinning sound. Suddenly they heard a mournful wail of a woman, and then the sound stopped. A few weeks later the sisters were visiting

with some neighbors at their grandmother's home, where they told of their frightening experience. Just as they finished their story, all present began to hear the unmistakable spinning wheel buzz. After a time, the woman's wail followed, seeming to come from the attic. Men from neighboring homes searched the house from top to bottom, but found nothing. Twenty-six years later, the Spinning Wheel Ghost returned to the same area, and there are still reports of it today. (6)

Even quite recently, in July, 1972, sightings of a large, shaggy, foul-smelling black creature were reported in Louisiana, Missouri, normally a quiet river town on the Mississippi. Several witnesses reported having seen and smelled the "monster," and some even heard it growl. He was given the name "Momo" to denote "Missouri Monster." Search parties endeavored to discover the identity of Momo, but nothing was ever found that resembled the descriptions. He was either six (or twelve) feet tall, and had red (or green, or orange) eyes. One person claimed to have seen him pick up a sports car and

throw it off a road. Plaster casts were made of huge footprints, which laboratories later concluded were fakes.

When reports from an area south of Louisiana, near Bowling Green, included sightings of a circle of flashing lights that either landed or hovered just above the ground for about five minutes, the possibility of unidentified flying objects was also investigated by scientists.

Some people believed Momo was a Yeti hiding in the cave systems. Others believed it was the result of a truckload of hogs that had overturned on a highway just previously. Even 'coons, frogs, and honey bears were named as perpetrators. Whatever Momo was, he created quite a bit of excitement across the state for several weeks. But the real identity of Momo was never discovered. (7)

The answers to the reality of these stories may never be known. But, is that really so bad? Isn't it more exciting and thought provoking if they remain mysteries forever?

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(5) Earl A. Collins, Legends and Lore of Missouri (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1951, pp. 45-47.

(6) Collins, pp. 42-45.

(7) St. Louis Post Dispatch, 19 July-26 July 1972.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

In ancient times people created myths to explain natural phenomena and to extol the heroes of their time. Missouri's counterpart to that tradition includes the legends and folktales that have come to us through the telling of tales about people and places.

Across the state in many areas are found local bluffs or cliffs called "The Lover's Leap." All seem to be so named for a similar legend. It involves a young Indian maiden who has been disappointed in love because of the sternness of her unyielding father, usually the tribal chief, who would not allow her to wed a young brave of an enemy tribe. In her profound sorrow, the young maid leaps to her death from a nearby cliff, sometimes with, sometimes without the

company of the loved one. If all of the Lover's Leap legends are to be believed, the mortality rate among Indian maidens must have been quite high. (1)

One day, in the southern part of Montgomery County, Mr. James L. Pegram yoked his oxen and with his eldest son and a nephew, went down to the place called "Devil's Back-bone" to get flat rocks for hearth stones. The first rock they pried up had a yellow jacket nest under it. These attacked the oxen and made them run away. They retrieved the oxen, and pried up another rock, only to find a bumble bee nest. All were stung. The next rock had another bumble bee nest, and each was stung again. By this time they were getting discouraged, and thought about going home, but decided to try another rock. There they found five large rattlesnakes. They killed them and skinned the largest one, which measured five feet in length, and four inches in diameter. This time they did agree to return home, but they had not gone far when they ran over a hornet's nest. These stung the oxen and made them run away, tearing the wagon to pieces. Finally the men reached home without rock or wagon, very

hungry and half dead from their stings. After that, they always gave the "Devil's Back-bone" a wide berth. (2)

The scenic beauty of Round Springs is attributed to the violent actions of an Indian Chief, as are many idyllic locations in Missouri. As the story goes, the chief was unhappy with his daughter's choice of husband. In a rage of temper, he stamped his foot, making the large hole in the ground. From that time on, the springs have bubbled into it, forming a well-known tourist attraction in the state. (3)

Blue Spring's origin is a similar story. This time the chief imprisoned his daughter in a cave. She, being fond of a spring near her childhood home, prayed for another to replace the one she missed. Needless to say, her prayer was answered. (4)

The Indians had their own myths and legends, and the white men were fascinated by them, and borrowed them to give themselves a greater repertoire for storytelling sessions. Joel Chandler Harris achieved fame through the publishing of the "Uncle

Remus" stories, all about talking animals who get themselves into and out of trouble, and, at the same time, teach a few morals. Most of the stories he "created" are based on Indian legends that have similar characters and content. For example, the story of the Rabbit versus the Tar Baby was told by the Cherokee, the Menomini, and the Biloxi tribes. (5)

A widow lived alone on her little farm, and she had a gooseberry patch that yielded a good crop annually. She would pick the berries, and sell them in town, going door to door. One year during gooseberry time, she drove her mule to town, carrying a tubful of berries which she planned to sell. She left them in the wagon while she ran an errand. While she was gone, the cashier of the local bank noticed some women examining the gooseberries. They desired to buy some, so to be helpful, he sold them for her. When she returned, Sarah found her berries gone, and the cashier handed her the money. Two days later, the young bank cashier received a cardboard box filled with gooseberries, and a note which read, "Heres the last goseberys if you will ples sel them for me I will be much obliged." (6)

Schoolmaster in Warren county, Joseph Lamb, had an old brass watch which was his prized possession. One day, while binding wheat for Mr. Isaac Fulkerson, he dropped it, and it could not be found. About one year later, Mr. Fulkerson was plowing in the same field, when suddenly he heard something going "tick, tick, tick" in the furrow behind him. At first he thought it might be a snake, and sprang to one side of the plow, but on looking back, he saw Lamb's old brass watch ticking away. It had never stopped running during the twelve months it was lost. (7)

Callaway County's Mr. James Suggett heard a peculiar noise in his stable one day, and discovered a large buck quietly feeding himself at the horse trough. Suggett hastily fastened the door, intending to capture the deer inside, but he was not quick enough. The frightened animal plunged against the door and carried it off on its hinges. It remained fast on its horns, and while he was struggling with it, Mr. Suggett tried to hold him down. The deer proved to be the stronger of the two, and dragged Suggett and the door to the fence. Seeing the buck was planning to

jump over, and, not being skilled at gymnastics, Suggett let go. The deer went over the fence, the door still hanging to his horns. He soon disappeared into the woods, and that was the last Mr. Suggett ever saw of his stable door. (8)

There was a woman who had a reputation for cooking beans better than anyone else. One day she served some of them to a group of road workers. The men ate and ate, and soon the bowl was nearly empty. When one of the men attempted to help himself to another serving, he scraped the bottom of the bowl. When he raised the spoon, he saw that it was filled with rusty nails. When they questioned the hostess, she said, "Yes, that's the secret." All of the men said they were going to tell their own wives to cook beans the same way. (9)

A legend well known in the Missouri area was about Ol' A'nt Easter, who was a real person, an ex-slave. She earned money to support her family by doing laundry for others and cooking food for large affairs. She was usually seen carrying a large sack, either of laundry or of food, depending on her

activities for the day. Parents used the poor, hard-working woman as a threat to their misbehaving children. "Ol' A'nt Easter carries smoke in her poke to smoke white children with. If you don't behave, she's going to catch you and make you black like her own children and take you to her house to live with niggers. Where else do you think all those nigger kids come from?" According to some reports, that threat lasted for some well into their youth. (10)

Truth is supposed to be stranger than fiction, and there is one event in Missouri history that certainly lends support to this theory. Though not a true legend, as legends go, the story of the Battle of Lexington has grown to legendary proportions.

Lexington boasts the oldest courthouse still in use in Missouri, and is more than likely the only courthouse in any place that has a cannonball stuck in one of its pillars. The cannonball has been there since the Civil War.

A lot of stories are told about that cannonball. Everyone agrees that it was fired from a

Yankee cannon, but from there on, the memories don't all agree. One version is that someone carried the original away for a souvenir. Others say that the one that is visible is really a croquet ball painted black. In the battlefield museum there is a display which includes the cannonball that hit the courthouse. Whichever story is correct, there is now a cannonball, original or not, securely bolted to the pillar.

During the war, the Battle of Lexington, also known as the Battle of the Hemp Bales, was unusual as well as important. No doubt, it is the only battle in military history won with the aid of marijuana.

Hemp was one of Missouri's first important cash crops. Lexington was right in the center of the hemp business, and was the shipping center which sent hemp all over the world for use in making rope and bags. Consequently, warehouses along the river were loaded with hemp bales. Most people are surprised to learn that hemp and marijuana are one and the same.

Colonel James Mulligan had his Union group camped on a hill overlooking the Missouri River on

September 18, 1861. General Sterling Price and his Confederates were in the town of Lexington. That morning they started up the hill, and the two groups battled for nearly three days. Even though they were outnumbered, the Union forces had the better position, and held their ground. Then General Price had a brilliant idea that resulted in victory.

The general had his men roll bales of hemp up the hill, using them as breastworks as they advanced. The Union cannonballs were heated red hot, figuring they could set the bales aflame. But, not to be outdone in such a manner, Price had had his mean soak the hemp bales in the river beforehand. Knowing now what we do about hemp's peculiar qualities, it boggles the imagination as to what might had happened had Price had such foresight. It could have been a very interesting battle. (11)

Wherever there are legends, there are memories of the past. Naturally they are not completely true, for deeds and descriptions become exaggerated as they

pass from storyteller to storyteller. But they live on, and with them, memories of a time long gone lives too.

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(6) Lillian Nothdurft, Folklore and Early Customs of Southeast Missouri (New York, New York: Exposition Press, 1972), pp. 32-33.

(7) Bryan and Rose, p. 528.

(8) Bryan and Rose, p. 516.

(9) Nothdurft, pp. 32-33.

(10) Collins, pp. 20-22.

(11) Dickson Terry, There's a Town in Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: New Sunset Publishing, 1979), pp. 102-104.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THAT'S JUST THE WAY I HEARD IT

Humor can be found in any period of history, for where there are human beings there is laughter. Unfortunately, it is the humor of the past that so often becomes lost, for written records generally include factual rather than anecdotal information. Humor is difficult to find when studying history, and consequently, history tends to lose its humanity, unless one looks very closely. Duden himself recorded a humorous anecdote about an early con-artist.

> Many stories are told of the thievish cunning of Yankees. A Yankee brought clocks to the western states, which are much in demand, and for which a high price is paid. He made good sales everywhere by promising to exchange the clocks on his return if demanded. So he sold all the clocks but one, and on his trip back, he gave this one to the first person who complained, keeping the first one for the second person who made a complaint. The third received the clock of the second, the fourth that of the third, and so the speculator could

return home without any worries, since he seemed to everyone to be a man of his word. (1)

William Sherley Williams was called "Ol' Bill." Bill got involved in the religious revival sweeping the country in the 1800s, visiting small villages and scattered cabins demonstrating his hellfire and brimstone preaching. As a Baptist minister, he hoped to convert the Osage Indians of Missouri. But instead he found himself converted, becoming more Indian than white man. He had a mule he called "Ol' Flopear," a horse he named "Santyfee," and a Hawken rifle he called "Fetchum," because it always fetched home the game. Kit Carson is said to have remarked that no one ever walked in from of him during starving times.

Suddenly Ol' Bill gave up circuit riding, some say right in the middle of a sermon when he couldn't keep from looking at a pretty girl. Bill married an Osage girl in 1813 and they had two children. When the government started a survey of the Santa Fe Trail in 1825, he was hired as an interpreter, and was a key figure in negotiating treaties to guarantee safe passage along the trail.

So proud of his marksmanship was Bill he would bet a hundred dollars on a shot, even though he always shot "with a double wobble for he never could hold his gun still." He gambled extensively, sometimes losing a thousand dollars at a game of cards. He refused to stay under a roof at night, and thought a bed was the work of the devil.

When the fur trapping frontier declined, Bill was hired several times by Fremont as a guide. Fremont later accused him of cannibalism, but it was never substantiated. He seemed to have no glory, except in the woods. (2)

When bears were plentiful in Missouri, Benjamin Ellis of Callaway County was a great bear hunter. He wore a suit of buckskin with pants being very stout and thick. When he came to a steep hill in pursuit of a bear, he would sit down and slide to the bottom on the seat if his pants. By this means he would reach the foot of the hill much sooner than he could walk or run down and, "besides," he claimed, "I can take a little rest while I'm sliding along." (3)

Christopher Sanders was fond of hunting, but usually did not have a gun. He had borrowed so often from the Van Bibber boys of Loutre Lick, that they finally became tired of it and were determined to give him a dose to cure him of it. They loaded an old musket about half full of powder and bullets and gave it to him. By observing the boys, he suspected something was amiss, so he returned the gun with the load still in it. Then the boys were troubled to devise a plan to get the load out of the gun, for they were afraid to shoot it, and that was the only way to remove it. A few days afterward, an Irishman came along. He had seen several deer at the side of the road, and wanted to borrow a gun to shoot them. The boys readily loaned him the gun. Soon they heard a roaring that sounded like several small earthquakes. Soon the man returned, having killed three deer and wounded a fourth; but the old musket had kicked him heels over head, dislocated his arm and mashed his nose. Despite this, he was delighted with his success, and exclaimed, "Faith, an' I kilt three of the buggers, and would have got another if the blamed gun had a good load in her!" (4)

Lewis Jones, a noted hunter, trapper and surveyor in early Missouri, ran away from home and came to Missouri in 1802. He tried to persuade Lewis and Clark to include himself in their expedition, but they refused, because Jones wanted to go along as an independent scout without being subject to commands of officers. Some time afterwards, Jones and a friend, John Davis, went on a hunting trip, were captured by Indians, who stole their clothing, and sent them on their way with only an old musket and some ammunition. The weather was very cold, but with the help of a stolen blanket, they were able to keep warm the first day. That night they stumbled on a deserted Indian camp, where they discovered a large panther stretched out in the ashes of the smoldering fire. They shot him, removed his hide with some sharp stones, and made supper from a portion of the carcass. Jones turned the hide and pulled it on over his body, with the fur next to his flesh. They continued on the next day. Ten days later they arrived home. In the meantime, Jones' panther skin had become hard and dry, and he had to

cut it off with a knife. He often said afterward that it had been the most comfortable suit he had ever worn. (5)

One of the most eccentric characters of early Missouri was Major Jack A. S. Anderson. Being employed to assist in surveying, he became well known to the old settlers. His compass, a bottle of whiskey and his dogs were his inseparable and most beloved companions. He dressed entirely in buckskin, and his hunting shirt was filled with pockets, inside and out, in which he carried his papers and other worldly possessions. He would often carry young puppies in his pockets or the bosom of his shirt while their mother trotted behind or hunted game for her master to shoot. He paid no attention to roads or paths but always traveled in a direct line to the place where he was going, across creeks, hills, valleys, and through thick woods. He was never known to sleep in a bed, preferring to lie on the ground, or a puncheon floor, covered with a blanket or buffalo robe. No one ever saw him smile, and his countenance always bore a sad, melancholy expression.

One day Mr. Thomas Glenn of Montgomery County was returning from the mill and met Jack Anderson who accompanied him as far as Cuivre Creek, which they found to be frozen over. The ice was not strong enough to bear the weight of the horse, so they slid the sack of meal over, and then started up the stream, intending to cross higher up where the water was so swift it had not frozen; but Anderson purposely wandered around with his companion until he had confused and bewildered him, and then took him on a long jaunt into Boone and Callaway counties, where they remained about three weeks, engaged in hunting. When they returned they were loaded down with game. They stopped one night at the house of Mr. Thomas Harrison, who treated them to dinner and gave them the best room in the house. During the night, Anderson got up and skinned several raccoons, and after having roasted them he called his dogs in and fed the carcasses to them on the floor, which of course ruined the carpet and greatly damaged the furniture. Mr. Harrison, greatly outraged, charged them for the damages, and as Anderson had no money, Glenn had to pay the bill.

Once during his wanderings, Anderson stopped at the house of Major Isaac VanBibber where he was always treated well and fared sumptuously; but one time he stopped there late at night when they happened to be out of meal, and he had to go to bed without his supper. He lay upon the floor and pretended to sleep. Soon a son-in-law of VanBibber's named Hickerson, who was living there, came in from a day's hunt. He begged his wife to sift the bran and see if she could get meal enough to bake him a hoecake. She did, and Anderson, observing these proceedings, arose, complaining that he could not sleep, owing to the disturbed condition of his mind in regard to a survey he had made that day, in which he could not find the corners. Pretending to illustrate the matter, he took the Jacob staff of his compass and began to mark in the ashes, first cutting the cake into four equal parts, and then stirring it around and round until it was thoroughly mixed with the ashes. Hickerson watched with tears in his eyes, and when Anderson retired again, he begged his wife to go out and milk the cows and get him some milk to drink. She did so, but on her return Anderson met her at the door. Being very dark, she supposed he was her husband, and gave him the

milk, which he drank, and went back to bed. This exhausted Hickerson's patience, and calling up his dogs he went into the woods, caught a raccoon, roasted it, and ate it before he returned to the house, swearing that old Jack Anderson should not beat him out of his supper again. (6)

Dr. Antoine Francois Saugrain, not only a rare good doctor on the frontier, went into an even rarer category by going beyond treating diseases in traditional ways. Lewis and Clark sought him out in 1804 for their medical supplies. He made thermometers for them out of his wife's best mirror, brought all the way to the wilds of St. Louis from France with great care to keep it from breaking. Saugrain scraped the mercury from the back of the mirror, melted down the glass, and enclosed the mercury inside, and marked off degrees as best he could. The journals of the expedition tell of the breaking of the last thermometer during a crossing of the Rocky Mountains.

Saugrain also provided the expedition with matches twenty years before the friction match came into general use. Historians quote Indians fifty years

later recalling the amazing speed with which Lewis and Clark made fire. The doctor also experimented with electricity, much to the delight and consternation of visiting Indians. (He would wire his doorknob to give shocks, or 'giving' them money which had to be retrieved from water, which he had earlier wired to carry current.) Many times Indians were seen running from the home with painful memories of Dr. Saugrain's "big medicine." Saugrain is thought to have been the first Missouri doctor to use a vaccine for the prevention of smallpox. The State Historical Society has on record one of the doctor's advertisements from the state's first newspaper offering vaccine to all persons of indigent circumstances, paupers, and Indians. It also offers the vaccine to doctors and other intelligent persons residing outside the doctor's usual territory. Saugrain died in 1820 at the age of fifty-seven. (7)

Minerals were discovered in Missouri in a variety of accidental, if not bizarre ways. Pete, a slave boy loved to fish, and one day, while digging for bait, Pete turned up some chunks heavier than any rocks he had ever seen. He showed the silvery marks

through them to his master, who recognized them as ore- bearing rocks, but who was not interested in mining at the time. Years later when a shaft was sunk on the sight, it was called, in the idiom of the day, the "Nigger Diggins." (8)

A legend goes, that on one wild and stormy night a doctor was returning from a sick call, and while still three miles from his home he took a shortcut through a dense woods. Being exhausted, he drowsed as he rode along. Suddenly, a low- hanging limb knocked his hat from his head. He dismounted, felt around in the darkness to find his hat, remounted, and rode on. A short time later, his hat was again knocked off. In the next five minutes the whole procedure was repeated five times. Now, completely disgusted, the doctor decided to tie up his horse and sit down to await the daylight. When the first streaks of dawn enlightened the place, he discovered that his horse had lost its way in the darkness, had traveled around in a circle, and had passed under the same limb every few minutes. But under the tree, he also noticed the shining of a bed of zinc ore, which proved to be a very large deposit.

The good doctor was almost embarrassed to admit that, although he did discover the very rich deposit, he had to be hit on the head to do it. (9)

Mr. Darst had several neighbors who were not fond of work, and usually took advantage of their neighbors' cribs and smokehouses for support. Mr. Darst became tired of feeding several families besides his own, so he put a lock on his corn crib. This aroused the indignation of many, particularly those who had been in the habit of helping themselves. Among those was an idle, good- for-nothing sort named Smith. Darst had suspected him for a long time, and it seemed that even locks did not prevent Smith from slipping corn out at the cracks. Darst, being determined to catch him, sent for Smith one day to show him how to set a steel trap. Smith came readily, being honored at being chosen by such an honorable man as Mr. Darst. Darst explained that some person had been stealing corn and he wanted to set a trap by a certain crack to catch the culprit. The trap was fixed, and Smith left, feeling very clever about how he was going to fool the old man. But after he was gone, Darst removed the trap and set it by another crack. The next morning he found

Smith hugging close up to the corn crib, with his right hand fast in the trap. "Good morning, Mr. Smith," said Darst, "you are up early today. Won't you come in?" Smith said he could not just then, as his hand was hurting him very much at the time. He begged Darst to give him thirty-nine lashes instead of spreading the word of his embarrassment. Darst accepted, but the affair leaked out, and Smith left the country. (10)

Boss Logan of Montgomery County had a donkey that he valued highly, and was quite worried because some rascal was in the habit of taking him out at night and riding him. Finally, at the end of his patience, he wrote the following notice and posted it over the stable door: "Whereas, some no account fellow has been riding my ass at night when I am asleep, now, lest any accident happen, I, Henry Logan, take this method of letting the people know that I am determined to shoot the ass, and warn any one who may be riding him at the time to take care of himself, for by mistake I may shoot the wrong ass." His donkey was not disturbed any more after that. (11)

Among the queer geniuses of early times was old Squire Colgin, a justice of the peace who usually rendered decisions in a manner peculiar to himself, the way he considered right, without necessarily consulting the law. A man named Miller once sued a neighbor, Kirkpatrick, on an open account. Colgin rendered judgment in favor of the plaintiff, and afterwards, Miller thought of a buffalo robe he had also sold Kirkpatrick, but which he had forgotten to include in the bill. He whispered to Colgin to make an entry of it on the back of the judgmment, which he did as follows: "Mr. Miller says that Kirk got a buffalo skin for $8, that he forgot to charge in the account, therefore I, Daniel Colgin, justice of the peace of this court, believe that Miller tells the truth about the skin, and I do hereby put it down on the back of the judgment, for to be collected at the same time the balance is paid. Daniel P. Colgin, J. P." Kirkpatrick, very naturally, got mad at the decision, and said if he were going to heaven and should see Miller coming too, he would change his course and go the other place. Colgin considered this contempt of his court, and fined him one dollar.

Another case that was entered upon Colgin's docket still further manifested his peculiar sense of justice. Two citizens of St. Charles had a quarrel about a piece of ice which one had sold the other, and which fell short half a pound. While they quarreled, the ice all melted away, and the dealer went to Colgin and sued the other man for the price of the ice, which was 6 1/4 cents. Colgin gave judgment in his favor, but made him pay half the costs (75 cents), because he thought it was right that the costs should be divided between them for being "such blamed fools as to quarrel about a little piece of ice that he could eat in five minutes any warm day. (12)

One colorful character was so fond of his horse, he decided that he was a horse himself. He would rush down the street pulling his own buggy, he had his boots shod with horseshoes, and sometimes ate hay from the back of the wagon or grass at the roadside. His tombstone reads:

Here Lies
The Man-Horse
Rest His Ghost
Froze to Death
at a
Hitching Post (13)

The Honorable Jacob Groom of Montgomery County was a member of the first State Legislature, and quite an original character from the early days of Missouri. He and other members of the Legislature, meeting in St. Charles, were invited to the home of Dr. Young for tea. Mrs. Young, a highly cultivated lady, had a piano, the first in the country, and a great curiosity, and she could even play it well, according to reports. Mr. Groom anticipated seeing the piano, for he was aware that people traveled from miles around just to see it and hear Mrs. Young play upon it. As the group entered the house, they were ushered into a room, which contained, among other items, a large old-fashioned, curtained bedstead. Groom at once concluded it was the much talked of piano. He eyed it curiously, felt of the curtains, and eagerly anticipated the arrival of their hostess. Before long she entered the room and welcomed the visitors. When the opportunity presented itself Groom informed her of his great interest in music, how he had heard of her wonderful piano and the elegant manner in which she played upon it. "And now, madam," he said, "I would like the best in the world to see you perform on that

instrument," pointing to the bed. Mrs. Young blushed and left the room in great confusion, while the rest of the company roared with laughter at Groom's expense. (14)

During that same session of Legislature, Groom made a speech which created so much amusement, it was published in a newspaper with appropriate caricatures. A copy of the speech follows:

> Members of this Meeting: "You don't know me I 'spose; well, it's no matter. I tell you my name is Jacob Groom--live at the Big Spring Post Office, Montgomery County (I air the postmaster), and bein' a Jackson Democrat of the upright principle. You see I am a big man--can eat a heap--can eat green persimmons without puckerin'. Salt don't keep me, nor liquor injure me. I am a tearin' critter of the catamount school, and a most decided and total porker in pollyticks. In religion I am neutral, and am decidedly masculine on the upright principle.
>
> Gentlemen Jacksonians and fellows of the conflicacious community in this land of concussence and supernaciousness, Jacksonians, I say exaggerate yourselves and support the insufficiousnes of the oracle of Jackson. Friends, the cause of the veto on the veloniousness of the United States Bank was the purlicution of the Clay party, and when Jackson has spyficated the confidence of the present Congress, he will rise to his supercillious majesty and crush the growing powers of this illusible States. The gentleman, Jacksonians, was adequate to the circumference of Jacksonianism. And not I previse you to exaggerate yourselves, and let them that you left behind see the doings of this 'sembly, the first that has

ever met in this town of St. Charles. Just before we all got to this place we stayed all night at our friend John Pitman's, on the road, where we enjoyed the good eating, drinking and dancing of the hospeculities of our old friend Pitman.

I am no book larnt man, but there is few who can beat me swapping horses or guessing at the weight of a bar. I have come here because my people voted for me, knowing I was a honest man, and could make as good whiskey and apple brandy at my still as any man. I want you all to commit the same like feeling, and finish the whole job on the Jacksonian principle, and if you don't do as I previse, you will come short, and it will be harder for you to git to this place again that it would be for you to ride down from the clouds on a thunderbolt through a crab apple tree and not git scratched." Mr. Groom resumed his seat amid deafening applause. (15)

The following article appeared in the January 23, 1880 issue of the Calloway County Gazette:

On Monday night, Frank Cheatham, (colored), who lives on a part of Sidney Hensley's place took his shotgun and calling up his hounds, Yank and Fan, started out for a turkey and coon hunt. Near the road his dogs got the scent of some animal and commenced treeing it. Frank supposed it was a fox and walked quietly around, occasionally catching a glimpse of the chase. He says he could not see it plainly, but from what he did see he thought it was the largest fox he had ever seen.

The chase continued for nearly two hours, during which time it sprang into the road, just about twenty feet from Frank. It stopped and looked at him, and uttered a peculiar growl or cry....Soon after this, the dogs lost its track. Frank went into the woods where it had disappeared and began to beat about the brush....It ran up a tree. On looking into the tree the hunter could see its head over a forked branch, and two big eyes

> gleaming down on him. He now began to be rather dubious about its being a fox. He picked up a stick and threw at it.
>
> In an instant it sprang from the tree directly upon him. Frank only had time to take one step back and meet it with a tremendous kick....which sent the animal sprawling. At the same time, Yank and Fan froze to it....Frank ran in and by heavy kicking and beating its head with his gun he finished it.
>
> On Tuesday he brought the animal to the Gazette office, where its stuffed skin can now be seen....If it had ever chewed on Frank Cheatham, he would not do any more hunting for a long time. It is said by those who think they know, to be a female Canada lynx. Probably the mate of this animal will be killed or captured in a few days. (16)

Hugh Logan of Montgomery county suffered severely from rheumatism and was confined to his house the greater part of the time. Once he hobbled out into the woods near his house to feed a sow and some young pigs. As he was returning he met a old bear that was teaching her cubs how to climb a tree. When she saw Mr. Logan she left the cubs, reared up on her hind feet and came at him with extended paws and open mouth. When she was nearly to him he flung his hat into her open mouth, and throwing away his crutches, he started for the house at full speed, followed closely by the old bear. He said he could feel her hot breath on his legs every step he took; but he beat her

to the fence, where she turned back. That adventure cured him of his rheumatism. (17)

Titanic Slim Thompson was all that his name implies. Whatever he did, he did well, and some of the feats he accomplished were indeed "titanic." Titanic Slim was always ready to bet, and he had usually figured out a sure thing for himself that looked like a sure thing for his victim. Once, for example, he bet that he could throw a pumpkin onto the roof of an eight story building. Everyone was positive he could not throw an object as large as a pumpkin that high, so the bets were many and high. Just outside the door, a boy met Ti with a pumpkin that Ti had picked long before. By this time it was about the size of a baseball, and dried hard as a rock. It was an easy enough feat for Ti to wind up and throw it to the roof.

Ti was also an expert golfer, which was another source of easily won wagers. Sometimes he would offer to play a round or two for high stakes, on the condition that all players used the same clubs. He, of course, saw to it that it was his own clubs

being used. They were specially made, off balance and awry, but he had practiced with them for a long time and knew how to use them. His opponents found their game hopelessly clumsy, so Ti was an easy victor. Once he made a bet that he could drive a golf ball across a large lake. The distance was so great it was not humanly possible, so nearly everyone bet him on that one. Ti's only stipulation was that he be allowed to pick the day. All agreed to any date he set, just so they be "privileged" to witness his defeat. Ti waited until a extreme cold spell struck and the lake froze over. Then he drove the golf ball out across the ice, and its momentum caused it to bounce easily to the other side. (17)

Missouri's first self-propelled vehicle which could be called an automobile was built in St. Louis by a man named J. D. P. Lewis. He took an old family buggy, rigged it with batteries and a drive mechanism. He could go seven or eight miles an hour then in 1893. Nine years later when St. Louis issued its first automobile license, Lewis received tag number one. A. L. Dyke established the first automobile supply house in the country in 1899. His hottest seller was an

early day do-it-yourself kit, which included radiator, steering gear, engine, transmission, axles and wheels. He also sold appropriate attire to wear while motoring. A person fully dressed for the activity was said to be "all dyked out" -- changed today to "all decked out."

In 1900 three cars raced a horse at a St. Louis picnic. The horse won. In some places laws were made banning cars from the streets as pests and nuisances. In those days the "snort wagons" were often stopped for speeding by policemen on horses. By 1903, Missouri passed the first state law licensing automobiles, and the first speed limit was set at nine miles an hour. The law also provided that before any car could pass another vehicle drawn by animals, the operator had to sound a bell or whistle to let the driver stop and get off before his animals became frightened and ran away.

Away out west in Kansas City, in May of 1901, the only two cars in the town collided head-on. Seems the town's only two drivers decided to play the first

game of "chicken". No one was hurt. The cars were pulled apart and continued on their way. (19)

A rather rotund man from England was having problems lighting his cigar as he rode in a convertible through downtown Jefferson City, and he feared the people would be disappointed to see him without his trademark. He was Winston Churchill, and he was on his way to Fulton, where he was to make his famous "Iron Curtain" speech. In Fulton, where he had sugar-cured ham for dinner, he told the hostess that the "pig had reached its highest point of evolution in this ham." The podium was crowded with dignitaries, including President Truman, the key figure in bring Churchill to Missouri. After that day, the phrase "Iron Curtain" gained great prominence, even though Churchill had previously coined the words in a speech in the House of Commons. Today a graceful old English Church stands on the campus of Westminster College. It was brought to Missouri from England piece by piece, and the bombed-out church hulk has been restored to honor the speech and the man who made it. In the audience that day was a boy who had been excused from school in St. Louis to attend the ceremonies and make

a report on the talk. His name was Thomas Eagleton, later to become a U. S. Senator from Missouri. (20)

After the speech Churchill waited in the car while President Truman chatted with some of the people in attendance. Churchill turned to a man nearby and quietly remarked, "Does that old woman ever stop talking?" (21)

Harry Truman might not have impressed the dignitaries of the time, but history is proving him to be one of the most effective presidents this country has ever had. His Missouri twang may not have been the ideal speech tone, and his "down home" phrasiology may not have been acceptable to the most critical listeners, but he exemplified the Missouri spirit. More than likely there were other presidents that belied the aristocratic image the office implies, but more of Truman's personality has been recorded than others before him. He was Missouri, and didn't mind showing it.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN ENDNOTES

(1) Gottfried Duden, Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America, trans. James W. Goodwin (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1980), Twentieth Letter, p. 99.

(2) Bob Priddy, Across Our Wide Missouri (Independence, Missouri: Independence Press, 1982), pp. 14-17.

(3) William S. Bryan and Robert Rose, A History of Pioneer Families of Missouri St. Louis, Missouri: Bryan, Brand and Company, 1876), Pp. 515-516.

(4) Bryan and Rose, p. 514.

(5) Bryan and Rose, pp. 504-505.

(6) History of St. Charles, Montgomery, and Warren Counties, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: St. Louis National Historical Company, [1884]; reprint ed., [1969]), pp. 120-121.

(7) Priddy, pp. 104-105.

(8) Evelyn Milligan Jones, Tales About Joplin....Short and Tall (Joplin, Missouri: Harrigan House, 1962), p. 43.

(9) Jones, p. 93.

(10) Bryan and Rose, pp. 513-514.

(11) Bryan and Rose, p. 509.

(12) History of St. Charles, Montgommery, and Warren Counties, Missouri, p 121.

(13) Jones, pp. 76-78.

(14) Bryan and Rose, pp. 502-503.

(15) Bryan and Rose, p. 503.

(16) History of Callaway County, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: St, Louis National Historical Company, [1884]), pp. 474-475.

(17) Bryan and Rose, pp. 597-508.

(18) Jones, pp. 130-134.

(19) Priddy, pp. 176-178.

(20) Priddy, pp. 140-141.

(21) Interview with Crawford A. King, Jr., St. Louis, Missouri, June, 1967.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PAUL BUNYAN, EAT YOUR HEART OUT

Tall tales, no matter how silly and outrageous, are fun, and they have always been fun. No gathering of the settlers was ever complete without a tall tale or two, just as family gatherings today most often require the telling of some family traditional "whoppers." Of course, nobody, except maybe the very young, actually believes them, but it's always fun to hear them retold. Then, as now, when someone would tell a new one, everyone present had another tale to add to his collection.

Missouri has a representation of tall tales. Bally Sally Cato is a giant who liked to intimidate local farmers. Once while four ot them were slaughtering a cow, he stole all four parts of the cow from them and swallowed each whole.

John Putnam is "Missouri's Paul Bunyan." He performs similar feats, but does not own a blue ox.

Uncle Bennie Newton witnessed two snakes "swaller each other 'til thar warn't nuthin' left but haids." (1)

The "tall man," a descendant of Daniel Boone, was so tall that nobody knows what his height really was. During harvest season farmers employed him to stack their oats and hay, and he had to sit on the ground to make himself low enough to reach down to the top of a stack. He hung his lunch basket in the tops of the tallest trees, and when he wanted a drink, he reached up and squeezed a cloud into his mouth. (2)

A rich old character known as General Burdine, who resided in Dog Prairie, near St. Charles, at an early date, made his living by hunting and fishing, and was distinguished for his eccentricities and the marvelous yarns he could tell about his adventures in the woods. He shot a buck one day, and killed him so dead that he did not fall, but remained standing until

the General went up to him and pulled him over by the ear.

On another occasion, while hunting on Cuivre River, he discovered a large fat buck standing on the opposite side, and on looking up into a tree just over it, he saw a fine, large turkey. He desired to kill both, but had only a single- barreled gun, and knew that as soon as he shot one, the other would leave. But a happy thought struck him. He put another ball on top of the one that was already in his gun, and with that he shot the turkey; then, dropping the muzzle of the gun in the twinkling of an eye, he killed the buck with the other ball. He then had to wade the river to get his game, and in doing so caught the seat of his buckskin pants full of fine fish, which he carried home along with his turkey and deer.

Another time the General was hunting, he shot all his bullets away, but happening to have a lot of shoemaker's awls in his pocket, he loaded his gun with them. Presently he saw three deer in a group, fired at them and killed two. The third one was pegged fast to a tree by one of the awls, where it swung and kicked

until the General let him loose and took him home alive.

Late one very cold afternoon the General shot a buffalo on the bank of a creek and, upon, removing the skin, he rolled himself up in it and lay down and slept the night. Next morning the skin was frozen so hard he could not unroll himself or even get on his feet. He began to think he would have to lie there and starve to death. Finally he rolled himself down a bank of the creek and landed in a warm spring, which soon thawed the skin until it was soft. He unrolled himself and went home rejoicing.

One day, before he was grown, the General saw a woodpecker fly into his hole in a tree and he climbed up to catch him. When he put his hand into the hole, he caught a black snake, which frightened him so badly, he let go his hold and fell into the forks of the tree, where he became wedged in so tightly he could not get out. He began to call for help and pretty soon a boy came along whom he sent to get an ax

to cut the tree down. The boy did as he was directed and cut the tree so that it fell right side up, and the General was saved.

He had a pony named Ned that he rode on all of his hunting expeditions. Ned was as smart a horse as anyone could want to see. One day they came to a deep creek with steep banks, across which the General felled a small sapling with his tomahawk, intending to walk over and let Ned swim. But Ned winked one eye and smiled in his peculiarly sly manner, as much as to say, "Never mind, old fellow, I'll show you a trick worth knowing." The General started across, holding the bridle in his hand, but when he reached the middle of the creek he stopped and looked back to see how Ned was getting along. To his amazement, he saw the pony walking the sapling after him. Ned shook his head and motioned for his master to go on, and they passed over without either of them getting wet. (3)

Mr. Calvin Tate, Callaway County, says the wild pigeons were so thick one summer that sometimes when they would light on a tree it would bend down to the ground with their weight. He went hunting one day.

Seeing a fine lot of pigeons in a tree, he hitched his horse to one of the limbs, fired, and killed three hundred with one shot. The rest flew away, and as soon as that tree was relieved of their weight it straightened up, carrying his horse with it. The poor horse had to hang there until Mr. Tate could go home for an ax to cut the tree down. (4)

Mr. Tate also owned a little Negro boy named Skilt, who was so deaf he could hardly hear it thunder. One morning Skilt got up much earlier than usual, and saw some wild turkeys eating corn out of the crib near the house. He determined to have one of them, or do something in the attempt to catch them. He made his way carefully to the opposite side of the crib, crawled under it, and seized two old gobblers by the feet. They proved too much for Skilt, and flew away with him hanging on to their legs. Skilt's mother began to scream, and Mr. Tate ran out of the house to see what was wrong. He looked up and saw Skilt and the turkeys just as they were about to disappear into the clouds, and showing no apparent intention of coming back again. He called to the boy to let one of the turkeys go. Skilt, despite his deafness, heard what

his master said, and obeying, brought one of the turkeys down in triumph. (5)

Benjamin Barnes, a pioneer of Boone and Callaway counties, had a cousin named Azel who was a blacksmith well known for his ability to spin yarns. He said he made a scythe once that was seven feet in length, and it could cut seven acres of grass in one day without having to grind or whet the blade. As he was going home that same evening he saw a sheepskin lying on a pond of water, with the wool side up. With one sweep of his scythe he shaved the wool off clean without making a riffle on the water.

Barnes raised five acres of corn one summer and when it was nearly ripe, a large turkey gobbler (really large!) stood on the outside of the fence and picked off nearly all the ears. He later killed the gobbler, which weighed six hundred pounds in all, and yielded twenty-nine pounds of feathers. (6)

Mr. David Kennerly of Callaway county poured some slop into his hog trough one day, and a little bull calf came along and drank it all. It filled him

as full as a tick, and resulted in a serious catastrophe immediately afterward. As he turned to go out of the lot his belly struck against the end of a fence rail, and he was stuffed so tight that he busted open on the back and the slop flew ten feet high. (7)

A man who wanted to plant an acre of corn and cucumbers bought a farm that had "the most fertile land thereabout." The land in that place was very fertile. After he had planted the corn, he went to get a drink. By the time he got back, the corn was up and beginning to tassel. He made a few hills by the corn and planted a cucumber seed on one of them. Before he could move over to the second hill, the first one sprouted, grew a vine, and wrapped around his legs. When he tried to escape, he got so tangled up in the vine, he choked to death. (8)

On a hot Missouri summer day a farmer had his team out in a field gathering popcorn. All at once the corn started popping on the stalks. The horses saw that, and thought it was snow. They began to shiver, and before the farmer could get them back to the barn, they had frozen to death. (9)

James Ripper of Callaway county used to farm in partnership with a neighbor named Hamlin. Hamlin was short, but large and fat, while Ripper was short, but lean as a match. In the fall they would gather the fodder and tops of the stalks of their corn while it was green and sweet, and bundle it up for winter food for their stock. But the corn grew very tall, and they were both so short they could not reach to the tops, so they had to invent a plan to harvest it. They finally decided what to do. Ripper would stand on Hamlin's shoulders and pull the top blades while his partner pulled those lower down. In that way, they gathered their crop in peace and harmony. (10)

Captain William Oxley of Montgomery County says he was a very strong man when he was younger, and one day he shouldered one thousand green shingles and started to carry them up a ladder to the roof of a house. Every round of the ladder broke as he went up, and when the last one broke, he was just high enough to catch the eave of the roof with his teeth. He held on there until some workmen came to his relief.

Some time afterward he lost those teeth which had saved his life. He had shouldered a large beech log and was carrying it into the house for a fire backlog. Just as he reached the door he stumbled and fell, and the log came down on his head with such force that it drove his teeth several inches into the door sill, where they stuck fast, and were drawn out of his mouth when he arose. He afterward chopped them out of the door sill with an ax.

One day the Captain was hunting and heard a sound like someone mauling rails at a distance. He was curious, and hurried in the direction of the sound to see what was causing it. He soon saw a hollow stump, which was full of 'coons, and there was one 'coon more than the stump could hold. This extra 'coon cavorted around on the outside awhile, and then snapped and bit his way into the stump through a hole at the bottom. This crowded out another one at the top, which fell to the ground with a loud thump. This one made his way in at the bottom as the other had done, and a third was crowded out at the top. They kept this up for several

hours, the extra 'coons falling to the ground with so much regularity that the noise sounded like a man mauling rails. (11)

This story is told by a Missouri story teller:

> Back some years ago, four of my friends and I went on a hunting trip down in the swamps. The next morning after we got there we separated. One of the boys killed a bear, another a wolf, another a fox, and the fourth a squirrel. "I had seen a wild hog, but was too far from it to kill it with my gun, so I crept up closer and closer to it, but before I got close enough to shoot, the hog saw me and began to run. "I chased it for a while and was gaining ground, when it ran through a barrel with a broken bottom that caught on its tail and dragged after it. The hog was so scared that it ran so fast I couldn't keep up with it, so I returned to camp without any game. "Ten years later we went back to the place on another hunting trip. Most of the timber had been cut, but I soon realized that we were at the same place I had chased that hog ten years before. And, believe it or not, there was that same hog, with the same barrel, hanging to the same tail--and off in the grass there was a nestful of little pigs that all had little nail kegs hanging from their tails. (12)

A farmer met a man leading a cow, and since the farmer needed one, he bought the cow for fifty dollars. When he got the cow home he got a bucket, but could not get a drop of milk. Being very angry, he put her in the stable with a tub of water and went out looking for the man who had tricked him. Unable to

find him, the farmer returned home. The next morning when he went to the stable, there stood the cow, beside the tub which was filled with milk. She was a self-milking cow, and he only had set an empty tub in her stable, and the next morning it would be full. (13)

An old timer named Jack reported a quail hunt as follows:

> One day out huntin' I used up all my ammunition except a little birdshot, for I'd killed about forty quails. I tied their legs together with some strong twine and throwed them over my shoulder.
>
> I heard the underbrush behind me crackin', looked back, and there, not more than ten feet from me, was a big black bear. I couldn't shoot him, and knowed the only way to save myself was to run for it. I bent over and throwed the quails on the ground, thinkin' the bear might stop to eat them.
>
> I started, but caught my feet in a vine and down I went. I started runnin' again, looked back, and there was that bear, down on his back, as dead as could be.
>
> I took the quails home and went back to get the bear. It seems that when I throwed the quails on the ground one of the buttons busted off my britches. When I skinned the bear and cut it up, there, in the middle of his head, was the button off my britches. (14)

Carl Douglas threw a rock at a large hoop snake. It became very angry about that, took its tail

in its mouth, and chased him down a hill, rolling hoop-fashion. Luckily, Carl came across a tree, which he dodged behind. The snake, unable to stop, slammed against the tree, and its tail stinger became imbedded in the tree. Carl killed it and went home. The next morning he returned, and the tree was dead from poisoning. (15)

Well, maybe it wasn't exactly like that, but who cares? No doubt these tall tales were told over and over to delighted listeners, who in turn, added embellishments of their own and told them again. From a time when entertainment was limited to the power of singing and storytelling and such, the good-natured innocence of these tales brings a special warmth and human quality to the people who told them.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN ENDNOTES

(1) Earl A. Collins, Legends and Lore of Missouri (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1951), pp. 68-69.

(2) William S. Bryan and Robert Rose, A History of Pioneer Families of Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: Bryan, Brand and Company, 1876), p. 527.

(3) History of St. Charles, Montgomery, and Warren Counties, Missouri (St. Louis, Missouri: St. Louis National Historical Company, [1884]; reprint ed., [1969]), pp. 122-123.

(4) Bryan and Rose, p. 522.

(5) Bryan and Rose, p. 508.

(6) Bryan and Rose, p. 522.

(7) Bryan and Rose, p. 521.

(8) Lillian Nothdurft, Folklore and Early Customs of Southeast Missouri (New York, New York: Exposition Press, 1972), p. 35.

(9) Nothdurft, p. 35.

(10) Bryan and Rose, p. 513.

(11) Bryan and Rose, p. 524.

(12) Nothdurft, pp. 30-31.

(13) Nothdurft, p. 32.

(14) Nothdurft, pp. 28-29.

(15) Collins, pp. 74-75.

AFTERWORD

If the reading of this document has made you more aware of something about Missouri history, or if it caused you to smile a time or two, consider why. If it was because you learned something you had never thought about before, or because you were caused to remember something you had forgotten, then think about some bit of information--a story your grandparents told, or an anecdote from your own life--something you have that perhaps no one else knows.

Think about the things you have done, or that you do that might seem unimportant to you now, but which may hold interest to future generations. Record those happenings, those unusual or humorous events. Write about your life today, before it becomes one of the forgotten bits of humanity that will be gone when you are gone.

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