

# RALLS COUNTY MISSOURI HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

Volume 1 Issue 4, July 2002

Dear Members and Friends of the Ralls County Missouri Historical Society:

Please try and attend the July 15 meeting at the Center MO Christian Church basement. We would like your input on the items and projects in this newsletter. The doors will be open for sure at 6:30 pm and the meeting will start at 7:00 pm. I will likely be there early if you would like to visit with others before the meeting.

The May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting has to go down as one of the largest and most successful meeting in our societies history. I counted over 60 people and more came in after that. The speakers and display of Shortline history was outstanding. Thanks to Conrad Cheatham and Andy Sisk for their interesting presentations and the people who shared their Shortline items. John Phil Conn who videoed the speakers and items had major heart surgery only a few days after the meeting. He said when he recovers and has caught up on his work he could edit the video, I told him there is no hurry and for him to take care of himself and his business first. The people who attended came from all over the area, I known of at least five who drove from Columbia MO. Many who attended where former Railroaders and people with Shortline connections. For those who missed the meeting Conrad and Andy will be at the Center Park Day on July 27 and we will have a display of Shoreline photos and items. See more on this later.

In this issue members will be able choose the name for this Ralls County Historical Society newsletter. Twenty names have been submitted; please vote for your choice on the ballot provided.

The Ralls County Library is studying the possibility of building a new library to replace the present location in Center. I have ask to attend their next meeting to see if they would be interested in putting in a history and genealogy room/museum in the new library. We have received many requests and inquiries about a location to provide a place to house, display and store historical items of Ralls County history. Both the society and library have turned down items that people want to donate that have important Ralls County historical value, because we don't have a place to store and preserve these items. Genealogists and students of history stop in the present library and because of the limited space cannot get the information they need. Because the library is open six days a week and is staffed a new library would provide the library and society with a location to display, preserve and share Ralls County's history to all. What I think is another value of a genealogy-history room is that the young people the area would have location to learn about their history and families. If we do not teach the young about our history, who will and can?

I would like to appoint a group to study the moving and restoring of the Fagan School. If you have an interest in this project please contact me before the July 15 meeting. A rough estimation was made last year that the moving cost alone would be in the range of \$7,000 to \$8,000. This would not cover restoration, reroofing and furnishing the building. Also can the old building take the move? Can we get volunteers to do the restoration work or do we have to get a contactor? We do not have the money for this without outside funding.

The City of Center continues to work on restoring the Shortline railroad depot in that

town and getting it listed as a National Historical Landmark. At the Center Park Days on July 27 we will feature photos, articles, videos and other railroad items to help create and continue interest in the project. An early picture of the present depot being restored would be very helpful, please let us know if you have one. There are plans to do a painting and write an article to publicize the Shoreline. If you have photos, articles or stories of the Shortline be sure and stop by our tent. There is an interest in forming a group to help with this project and other locations on the former Shortline route.

## **COURTHOUSE**

Wheels are moving slowly but surely on restoring the Ralls County Courthouse in New London for its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. I meet with the Ralls County Commissioner, who shown interest in doing something to save the courthouse and have it ready for 2008.

Everyone is in agreement that something has to be done to save it soon and the time to begin is now. We agreed that the first step is get an idea on the cost involved in bring the building up the first class shape. Letters were sent to begin the study of the cost and as soon as we get an idea of the cost we can begin to make plan on how the money can be raised. The "Ralls County Herald-Enterprise" ran an article on our meeting with the commissioners and the condition of the courthouse. Thanks Gene for your coverage again. The Hannibal Courier-Post is planning an article on the subject soon. Mark Fuqua has be a big help in looking into funding and other sources available. The Courthouse is a National Land Mark and asset to the county.

## **COFFEE MUGS**

The third versions of coffee mugs are still available at \$5.00 each. This version features the Catholic Churches St. Paul and St. Peters. St Paul built in 1860 is the oldest Catholic Church north of St Louis and known as the mother church of north Missouri.

## **"LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE" AFGHAN**

There will be raffle for a "Little Red School House" Afghan to be given away at the "Time Was Days" in Perry on September 28. Tickets will be \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Tickets are available from Billie Mac Cearley, Imogene Karaff and Mary Beck or by mail by sending a check to Ralls County Historical Society, P. O. Box #182, and Center MO. They will also be available at our booth manned at local events. It can be seen at the May, July and September meetings and manned booths.

## **THANKS**

John Palmer donated a 1958 Courthouse Centennial Atlas of Ralls County.

**Ben Akers has donated newspaper, clippings, articles and items.**

**CALENDAR:**

**Ralls County Missouri Historical Society: Regular meetings for 2002.**

**July 15, 2002 Ralls Center Christian church basement**

**September 16, 2002 at Perry VFW.**

**November 18, 2002 at New London courthouse basement.**

**Special meetings are being planned and notice of these events will on the following newsletters. This special meetings will be for speakers and many out of town members would like to have a day meeting so they would not have to travel the longer distant at night. These could be a picnic or join meeting with another historical societies.**

**Other Ralls County Events**

**July 27, 2002 Center MO Park Day**

**September 28, 2002 “Time Was Days”? Perry MO**

**September 29, 2002 “Old Perry High School” Reunion**

**If your town, club or group were planning an event where it would be appropriate to set up a booth about RCHS we would like to know about it. If you would be available for these events to man a booth please let you know.**

**Books available from Ralls County Historical Society, P.O. Box 182, Center Missouri 63436**

**“Ralls County” by Goldena Howard (reprint of 1980 History of Ralls Co.) \$50.00 plus \$5.00 if mailed**

**Mark Twain” Oliver and Goldena Howard \$15.00 plus \$2.00 if mailed**

**“End of a Way of Life” by Dee West and Okle Rouse \$15.00 postage paid**

**“Ralls County Missouri Settler and Settlements Volume #1, Lick Creek” \$15.00 plus \$2.00 if mailed**

**Membership in RCHS is \$10 per person or \$15.00 per family per year Jan. 1 to Dec 31**

### Presidents Views;

**HELP! HELP! We need volunteers! We now have a number of major projects that we could use help with. The type of help varies we need carpenters, word processors, interview people, researchers, photographers and people with any craft or skill. Our progress and growth depends on our membership's participation. We welcome non-members also who wants to help on these projects.**

### "RALLS COUNTY" HISTORY"

Thanks to Sue Delaporte

### James F. Hagar Recalls Some Early Day History of Ralls County

James F. Hagar, nearly 94 years of age and one of the oldest remaining members of the early day families of the Sidney community in Ralls County southeast of Monroe City, when visited recently by U.S. Marshal W.B. Fahy of this city, recalled some interesting early day history of that community, of which very few people today have any knowledge. Ms. Fahy has furnished the NEWS with the following interesting sketch, compiled from the reminiscences by Mr. Hagar:

Out in Saline Township, Ralls County, a mile west of Sidney (formerly Mound Sidney), James Fenton Hagar, confined to his room with a broken hip, looked out the window of his room and pointed down the highway and revealed some very interesting history.

Mr. Hagar was born August 25, 1851. His father, James Thomas Hagar, came to Ralls County from Kentucky in 1832. From the same part of Kentucky, and about the same time, there immigrated to Missouri the Lynch family who settled near St. Paul. These families having known each other in Scott County, Kentucky, naturally visited when they came to Missouri. They forded the Salt River in two-horse wagons, and on horseback, to visit and talk about their Kentucky ancestors. Young Hagar was a strong, athletic, handsome man. It was only natural that Jane Lynch would become fascinated with the Kentuckian. Romance was just as real in those days as it is now. Jane Lynch and James T. Hagar were married November 20, 1832. They settled on a farm which is still known as the Hagar farm, southeast of Monroe City about nine miles. Here their children were born.

In May 1859 Mr. Hagar died, leaving his wife, Jane Hagar, the Hagar farm, four or five Negro slaves, and a family of eight children, all of whom are now dead except James Fenton Hagar.

Jane Hagar was known to all the citizens of Ralls County as "Aunt Jane." She was one of the most colorful and unusual women that ever lived in Ralls County. She faced the responsibility of rearing a family among strangers and in a new country with an iron will.

Before her husband's death, "Hagar's Tavern" had been established on the farm, and was well known to travelers on the Hannibal-Paris Plank Road, the word "tavern" having a very different meaning in those days. Instead of being a place to drink and dance, it was a place where

the weary traveler rested; slept in a feather bed; ate home-prepared food, and had his oxen or horses stabled under comfortable surroundings.

Aunt Jane managed the farm and the tavern. Farmers, driving their turkeys, hogs or cattle from the West to the market at Hannibal would stop at the Tavern and enjoy a venison steak, wild turkey, home-made cider, or refresh themselves from a barrel of whiskey which was always free to the patrons of the tavern. Drinking in those days was common; drunkenness was rare, probably due to the difference in the quality of whiskey. Hagar's Tavern was noted for its hospitality. The name of "Aunt Jane" Hagar became known, not only for her ability to make the traveler comfortable and happy, but for her wonderful courage and endurance. She was an "un-reconstructed" rebel. The South surrendered, but Aunt Jane never did. She fought the Civil War all of her life. To her it was never finished.

### ARRESTED BY SOLDIERS

Repeatedly Union soldiers arrested Aunt Jane, and took her to Mound Sidney, then a flourishing little town in Saline Township, where she would be held as a prisoner, but on account on (sic) her children she was always released without punishment. It was not unusual for the soldiers to go there and make life rather uncomfortable for the owner of the Tavern and the guests. One of Aunt Jane's friends, Billy Riggs, stopped at the Tavern and asked for lodging. John McDonald, with a few followers, had been attempting to capture Riggs. They went into the Tavern and demanded that Aunt Jane surrender Riggs. She delayed him with a prolonged argument until Riggs made his escape. McDonald mounted his horse and started at a gallop north from the Tavern. A couple of shots were fired, and McDonald's horse fell dead.

### STARTED TO BURN TAVERN

On another occasion a group of federal soldiers came to the Tavern and demanded that Aunt Jane give them dinner. She advised them that she would not cook dinner for any "damned Yankee." They threatened her but she still refused. Colonel Thackery of Lewis County, a big burly fellow who was one-fourth Negro, advised Aunt Jane that if she did not cook the dinner at once, he would burn the Tavern. She still refused. Whereupon, Colonel Thackery took a shovel of coals from the open fireplace and threw them into a bed. The flames started. Aunt Jane's daughter, Sally, who afterwards married Doctor Lee T. Bell, and subsequently became the mother of Judge Leo Bell, told Colonel Thackery she would cook the dinner for them if he would put out the fire. Colonel Thackery then ordered his men to throw the bed outdoors. The meal was served by Sally, over Aunt Jane's protest and without her assistance.

On another occasion Aunt Jane was taken to Mound Sidney as a prisoner and left at the William B. Fahy home, in a small frame house still standing. The Hagers and the Fahys were friends. Mrs. Fahy prepared a meal for Aunt Jane, who refused to eat the food until her captors paid for the same, stating that she was a prisoner and her captors, and not her friends, would have to feed her. Until Mrs. Fahy was offered some money, and accepted some green coffee instead, Aunt Jane refused to eat.

On still another occasion she was taken to New London. Judge George L. Hardy, father of the late John Hardy, accompanied her. A couple of Bushwhackers came to Aunt Ellen Smith's hotel and boasted that they had brought in a couple of "pretty birds." Aunt Jane asked what kind of "birds" they were. She was told they were Rebels. Judge Hardy did what he could to get her from expressing her vitriolic opinion of the Yankees, but to no avail. They argued violently, and

threatened Aunt Jane with a great deal of punishment, finally relenting and letting her go home. Judge Hardy often remarked that he never cared to be with Aunt Jane again during the Civil War days.

Billy Hutchison, who lived east of Hagar's Tavern, and a mile west of Mound Sidney on a farm now known as the "Morgan Farm," operated a still on the land now known as the Charles Thomas land, and owned by Matthew Thompson. On the back part of the farm a large spring flowed into Brush Creek. Hutchison employed Tommy Hagar, who had learned the distilling business in Kentucky, to assist his sons, three of whom afterwards became ministers of the Christian Church, in operating the still. The whiskey was, of course, made from corn, and after having gone through the process of distillation, was placed in homemade barrels and stored on the bank of the creek near the spring. At flood time, the barrels of whiskey were dumped into the water, floated down the creek to the "Pap" Dick Shuck farm, near where the Brush Creek schoolhouse now stands. At this point slaves were stationed to stop the barrels of whiskey and bring them to the shore, where they were loaded into ox-carts and hauled into Hannibal, the average price of the whiskey being fifty cents a gallon.

### PLANK ROAD TO SIDNEY

From the Shuck farm north to Mound Sidney, there was only a trail-way. From Mound Sidney to Hannibal, on what is now known as the Hannibal-Paris Gravel Road, there was a plank road. This road was composed of long boards placed crosswise so the wheels of the ox-carts would run on the planks. When they got off the boards, it was a hard job to get them back. It was the original intention of the builders of the road to build from Hannibal to Paris, but by the time the road was completed as far as Mound Sidney, it proved to be very impractical. The boards would warp, sink into the mud, and the road was little better than the original trail over which stagecoaches went westward. The building of the road was a major event in Ralls County. Judge Daniel B. Kendrick, father of Jerome and Robert Kendrick, and grandfather of John and Henry Kendrick, was County Judge from the Western District of Ralls County and he was in favor of building the road. The taxpayers were against it. (Taxes were high in those days – the taxes on eighty acres of land were often as high as fifty cents). So the voters defeated Judge Kendrick and elected Judge Hardy, but before Judge Kendrick went out of office, he ordered the road built and so came about the historic "Hannibal-Paris Plank Road," which never got to Paris. A force of men was kept employed to keep the boards in place, and help drivers put the wheels back on the warped boards. Among the workers was an Irishman named Hennessey, as his name implies. He was a man of small stature. The neighborhood boys began to call James Fenton Hagar "Mike" Hagar after "Mike" Hennessey, the Irishman. The nickname still stays with "Uncle Jimmy". In later years, "Uncle" Bob Spalding of Spalding Springs was largely instrumental in the building of the Gravel Road, which took the place of the Old Plank Road.

### SLAVE TRADER IN VISIT

B.M. Lynch of St. Louis, a Negro trader, used to make visits to the Tavern once in a while, and on one occasion bought a Negro woman from Christy Gentry, a Baptist preacher who lived on what is now known as the Jarman farm. The woman became rebellious and the Gentrys were afraid of her, so they sent for Lynch, who bought the woman and took her down the river. There was little traffic in slaves. The slaves were devoted to their masters, and the masters to their slaves.

Travelers increased up and down the Plank Road. More immigrants came from the East. A Yankee, named Wilson, started a store in the vicinity. Two other stores were soon built. One of

them, the large two-story stone building which still stands, is a monument to the ghost town which was once the thriving, busy town of Mound Sidney. A schoolhouse was built on the George Whitecotton farm. This burned. A second schoolhouse was built, and then the stone building which still stands. Mr. Hagar recalls that this schoolhouse has sent out some very unusual men. He is a little boastful in saying, "A good many of my boys went to school there, and then taught their first school there in the old stone schoolhouse, and afterwards made records for themselves and were honored by the people." Among those he named were James H. Whitecotton, his brothers, George and William Whitecotton, William B. Fahy, and Lloyd E. Greathouse. All of them got their start in this schoolhouse, as did the present warden of the Missouri State Penitentiary, Thomas E. Whitecotton, who also attended Brush Creek School.

### UNION OFFICER IN THREAT

The stone store building at Mound Sidney was built in 1860, the schoolhouse a short time later. In September 1864, Major A.V.E. Johnson and a party of soldiers came into Mound Sidney. From the farmers around in the immediate vicinity Johnson ordered his men to take all the available horses and leave them at Mound Sidney with Wilson, the storekeeper, and that he would return within a month and burn every building in the little town. Johnson felt resentful because a short time before his visit his sisters, who lived near Huntington, came into town singing a Union song, and were not well treated. After taking the horses, Johnson and the men proceeded southwest towards Centralia

### Members only can vote please:

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### Please vote by number

E-mail your number of choice, bring your ballot to the meeting or mail your ballot to Ralls County Historical Society, P.O. Box 182, Center MO 63436. Ballots receive after July 15 will not be counted. Winner will receive at St. Paul-St. Peter's mug at the September meeting. We will replace cost of mailed ballot for those without an e-mail address only

My Choice of Newsletter name is # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Ralls Recollections
2. Ralls County Restoration
3. Ralls County Heritage News
4. Then and Now in Ralls County

- 5. Ralls County Review**
- 6. Ralls County Past & Present**
- 7. Ralls County Times**
- 8. Salt River Connections**
- 9. Joanna Dam Area News**
- 10. Ralls County Historical**
- 11. Ralls County Post**
- 12. Restoring Ralls County History**
- 13. Reflection**
- 14. The Town Crier**
- 15 The Communication**
- 16. The Messenger**
- 17. Reflection on the Past**
- 18. Ralls Co. Heritage**
- 19. The Lamplighter**
- 20. Ralls Reporter**