

Ralls County Historical

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July 2005

RALLS COUNTY MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 182

CENTER MISSOURI 63436

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~morchs/>

Ralls County Historical Museum and Library

120 East Main Street, Perry Missouri

Open Saturday 9:00-5:00 Sunday 11:00-4:00, Wednesday 10:00-5:00

Phone 573-565-2025

Dear Ralls County Members and Friends;

The Ralls County Historical Society will hold its July meeting at the St Paul Catholic Church, Monday, July 18. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m., but members and the public will be welcomed to arrive at 6:00 p.m., to walk the cemetery or visit the museum.

St Paul is the oldest Catholic Church in northeast Missouri built in 1862 and the parish dates back to 1828. Three Revolutionary War soldiers are buried in the cemetery which is the oldest still active church cemetery in Ralls County.

From Perry take highway 154 to highway 19 turn left (north) for about 3 miles to county road EE, turn left, go about 2.5 miles to St Paul Drive which will take you the short distant to the church. From Hannibal or New London take highway 19 south out of Center for about 5 miles to county road EE turning right and follow the above directions. From Monroe City take county road W west to county road J, turn south and go about 9 miles to county road EE and turn left going about 2 miles to St. Paul Drive.

May Meeting; Those who missed this meeting missed a great show of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Schreakengast's antique stationary engines. He and another collector displayed engines dating back to 1900 and had several in operation that night.

Greenlawn Church; In very short time Marsha Knudsen was done an unbelievable job in the restoration of the Greenlawn church and with limited funds or man/women power. She, her husband, mother, community service people and outstanding volunteers have scraped, repaired, painted and cleaned this church, all in very hot weather. Please drive by and see the unbelievable results of this hard word. There is more work and funding needed to complete the project, so if you can volunteer or donate to help her put the finishing touch on the historic church and worthwhile project.

Center Shortline Depot; We are planning to open the Center Shortline depot to public on Saturday July 30 at the Center Park Days. Here again is an example of what can be done with limited funds and hard work. Maxine Moore has been in charge of this project and has worked miracles with the old building. This will be an on going project for sometime and help is needed to get the site

Dues for 2005; Payments mailed should be sent to Ralls County Historical Society Inc., P. O. Box 182, Center MO 63436. Single membership \$10.00 and family 15.00

Courthouse; The work on the courthouse has begun and seems to be on schedule. Plans for the 150th anniversary of the courthouse in 2008 should be beginning. This will be a major project and will likely include not only the county but the State of Missouri. If you would like to be on this committee to work our part in the program, please let me know.

Museum/Library; I have added my collection of books on Missouri history, Maryland/Kentucky Catholic families, Civil War, Mississippi River, cover bridges, mill and genealogies to the library, so anyone is working on any of these areas please stop and research.

Old Perry Bank; This will be our next project to have it ready for the "Time Was Days" in Perry on September 10-11. If you would to work on or head this project let me know.

Perry High School Reunion; This has been a project of mine for a few years, but last year I turned the small fund generated over the years to the RCHS because of the trophies and pictures the Ralls County School

donated to the museum. Again this year all the profits will go into our general fund to help maintain this display. If you know of any other project that we can generate income from, please let me know.

Fund Raising; We are in need of a fund raising committee to generate income for the society. Our finances are good, but costs are increasing for material and supplies for the museum and society projects. To be sure we can keep our growth and not limit our projects we need to keep our financing strong and ahead of the curve. Send an e-mail, letter or talk to me about any ideas you may on fund raising, let me know if you would be interested on work this committee.

2005 Calendar of Meetings; September 19 Society Picnic; November 21

Presidents View; I would like to congratulate Marsha Knudsen, Maxine Moore and their helpers for their hard and dedication to the Greenlawn and Center depot projects. These results show what can be done with hard work and creativity. Ralls County now has two more historic sites saved because of their efforts. The county in the past few years has done an outstanding job in preserving and saving historic sites and locations. Since November 2003 we have held meetings at Oak Hill School, Ilasco, St. Peters/Brush Creek Catholic, Rensselaer Ralls County Courthouse and now St. Paul all saved by individuals or groups hard work. As a county we should be proud of our history and continue to preserve as much of it as we can.

Ralls County Cemetery:

Great house # 57; Saline twp. 29-56-6, about ½ mile south of Brush Creek Church by Ron Leake Many of the stone where down and covered with dirt, it is likely there are more stones. Differing information from Rev.

Gammon in ()

Greathouse; Fanny M., died July 11, 1836, age 10 months, 1 day. (daughter of W & S. B.

Greathouse; James, born 1833, died 1890

Greathouse; John H. born February 11, (February 1) 1827 @ Hancock County Kentucky, died December 5, 1851

Greathouse; Margaret Lucretia????? daughter of W. B. & S. A. (died 19, 1834, age 2 year 6 months 9 days

Greathouse; Sarah (Sarah B.) born 8, 1893 @ Montgomery County Maryland, died July, 1852, age 58 years, 1 month, daughter of Obed & ??? Suegrainder (Obadiah & R. Swearingen)

Greathouse; William B., born January 1794 A Bullitt County Kentucky, died December 1876 @ Hannibal, Marion County Missouri. **Veteran of War of 1812**

Perey; E, J, born August 20, 1820 (July 20 1820), died March 4, 1857, daughter of William & S. B. Greathouse

Smith; John B., died October 2, 1867, age 58 years 4 months, 14 days

Watson; Robert L., born December 14, 1865, died April 10, 1866, grandson of William & S. B. Greathouse

Watson; William, born Janary 9, 1829 At Columbia Kentucky, died September 25, 1857

Wilkinson; Lou P. wife of J. E. died?? 12, 1852, age 33 years

Bit of Ralls County History;

SHORT LINE NEWS III. (The Friends of The Short Line) By Conard Cheatham

Back in the early 1990s there was a popular political statement: "It's the economy, stupid." That is a statement that really applies to the history of the St. Louis & Hannibal. As you look over the history of the railroad you can see the ups and downs of the American economy reflected in the railroad. I decided to make some comparisons and I note that the Short Line was definitely influenced by the panic/recessions which occurred between 1857 and 1944.

The original railroad on the route between St. Louis and Keokuk, IA., was the St. Louis & Keokuk Railway. This line was chartered on December 29, 1856 but was not built. Railroad construction needed a considerable amount of money. America was rocked by a financial panic which struck in August 1857. The American economy had been booming since the end of the Mexican War. On August 24 the New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company failed. One writer has noted that this began one of the worst economic crises in American history.

Almost immediately after this failure New York banks put severe restrictions on capital. This caused the public to perceive that a several financial problem was about to happen. A run on the stock market caused the price of stocks to fall 8-10% per day. Great Britain pulled its money from its American branches, railroads over built and then defaulted, etc. A severe blow against the economy occurred when the steamship S.S. Central America" sank on September 12, 1857 during a hurricane. This ship was carrying gold and silver from the San

Francisco mint to Eastern banks. This included some 30,000 pounds of gold valued at \$20 per ounce and a number of wealthy individuals.

Banks failed all over the East Coast and there were failures as far west as Omaha. There was a severe financial contraction here and all over the world. Major investments were slowed or stopped altogether. The new railroad needed financial help from beyond the Midwest for its construction. Then the Civil War broke out, further limiting funds for railroad construction.

After the War efforts were made to re-start the St. Louis & Keokuk. Money was still tight in the counties through which it was to pass. Finally, some construction work began in 1871. In the political turmoil over which route to use a new company, the St. Louis, Hannibal & Keokuk was chartered and started construction toward Wentzville. On September 12, 1873 a financial panic occurred when the Philadelphia banking company of Jay Cooke & Company closed its doors. The Cooke bank was heavily invested in railroads. It was funding the new Northern Pacific Railroad as another transcontinental route. The Cooke company realized it was over extended and declared bankruptcy. This bankruptcy touched off others. 89 railroads went bankrupt. 18,000 businesses failed during the years 1873-75. While the Cooke failure was the catalyst for this panic the Grant Administration had a monetary policy of contracting the money supply which caused the financial problems to magnify.

The short money supply/recession continued until 1878. It was during this time that the Short Line was moving south from Frankford to Bowling Green in 1874-75 (12 miles). It made it to Prairieville/Eolia in 1879 (15.5 miles). It was after Eolia that Short Line people went East and secured financial assistance from John I. Blair and Moses Taylor. These two supplied the capital to complete the line to the Wabash. (Its noted that the better financed St. Louis, Hannibal & Keokuk Railway reached St. Peters in 1879). So the Short Line took almost a decade to build the 89 miles from Hannibal to Gilmore and a major cause may have been the Panic and Depression of 1873.

The Perry Branch was built in 1892-93. Even as the line was being constructed between New London and Perry there were investigations into extending this branch beyond Perry. Surveys were run on different routes from Perry to the Wabash or another road. Articles in the Frankford Chronicle speculated on when the extension would be built. A couple of articles even speculated that the Wabash would buy the Short Line, extend the Perry Branch westward and make it a major Wabash route. One writer even claimed that the Short Line had purchased rail removed from a Wabash main line in Illinois. No extension or sale was made.

A Panic of 1893 was probably a major factor. There were various causes of this panic. Too many people tried to redeem notes for gold. The Philadelphia & Reading Railroad went bankrupt. Then it was joined by the Northern Pacific, the Union Pacific, and the Santa Fe all went under. The Company with the most widely traded stock, the National Cordage Company went into receivership. 15,000 companies and 500 banks failed. The Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 and the McKinley Tariff of 1890 are both given as major causes. With this bad money situation the wealthy Blairs did not want to put up funds for the extension, even though the money supply began to improve during 1896.

The beginnings of the railroad planned to run between St. Louis and Hannibal was affected by the panics/recessions in 1857 and 1873. The Great Depression of 1929-30s was a factor in a drastic change of the railroad. In the 1920s John Ringling took more and more control of the circus as his older brothers died. Several of his sisters-in-laws complained that John was spending too much of the circus profits on his projects, on things like oil wells, the 1925 edition of the Madison Square Garden in New York City, his personal art collection, a large house in Sarasota, FL, trips to Europe, railroads, etc.

These sisters-in-law brought suits and battled John. Things went bad him. His wife Mabel died in 1929. In 1930 the Depression hit John and the circus very hard. He lost control of the circus and the ability to schedule Madison Square Garden. John had to give up his \$50,000 annual salary. His sister, Ida Ringling North and sons John and Henry, moved to the mansion in Sarasota to help John with his financial problems. Some of these recommendations included getting rid of non-revenue producing property. This included the section of the Short Line from Bowling Green to Gilmore. The family did heed the pleas of officials from Troy and preserved the 5 miles of track from Troy to the Burlington Railroad at Moscow Mills. The rest was abandoned in 1932-33.

Panics and recessions had definite effects on the Short Line throughout its history and pre-history.

Ron Leake