

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 Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday 10:00-5:00
Or Phone 573-248-6147 or 573-565-2025 for an appointment

Dear Ralls County Members and Friends

The Ralls County Historical Society will have its January meeting in the courtroom on the second floor of the Ralls County Courthouse in New London on Monday, January 26. The doors will open at 6:00 pm and the meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. After a short meeting archeologist, Karen Hunt will present a program on her archeological dig at the Quarles Farm near Florida, MO. Also, members of the "Friends of Florida" will talk about their ongoing projects and their plans to preserve the historic Florida MO area. Information on how you can volunteer, donate or become a member of these groups will be available. The public welcomed and encouraged to attend both the meeting and programs

In the meeting we will preview some ideas and plans for 2009 and the future for our society. Our membership and museums have been successful and are growing in size yearly. Because of this and to continue this growth we will need more manpower, space, funding and input from members and friends of the society.

I would like your input on my ideas and also want your ideas in person, written or emailed. So we do not delay the program we can briefly have a discussion during the meeting and more in depth following the programs.

Dues are due; Above will be the first meeting of 2009, so the dues for 2009 are now due. The single at \$10.00 and the family at \$15.00 memberships will remain the same, but a lifetime membership is available for \$100.00. **Please note that we have changed our address to P.O. Box 463, Perry MO 63462.** Please send your checks this address above, stop by the museum or pay at the meeting.

Friends of the Short Line Railroad;

The Friends of the Short Line Railroad will meet at Chelle's Restaurant in Center MO April 18 and tour our restored Short Line depot. Volunteers will be needed to get the depot ready for this and this years weekend tours.

Perry High School Reunion;

On September 20 we will have the Perry High reunion, we will announce time and place details later. It is hard to believe, but the last class of Perry High graduated fifty years ago in 1959. Both 1958 and 1959 classes will have a reunion that same weekend.

Florida Folklife Festival

Dates for this year's Florida Folklife Festival have been set. The event will be held Aug. 8 and 9. Last year's festivities were called off because of flooding. The festival is sponsored by The Friends of Florida Inc.

Ralls County Cemetery; Flowerree Cemetery #47, Spencer Township, 6 section -55 township-5 range. Information from Mike Weavers files.

- Barkley; John R., born 17, November 1825, died September 3, 1910, married March 30, 1858, Susan K. Flowerree
- Barkley; Susan K., (Flowerree), born January 15, 1837, died September 8, 1903, widow of John R.
- Flowerree; John P., born October 30, 1852, died February 3, 1901, age 48 years, 4 months, 18 days, married December 15, 1886, Margaret J. Burnett.
- Flowerree; James D., born December 13, 1844, died June 27, 1856
- Flowerree; Mary, born June 30, 1864, died November 1, 1868, daughter of Dan A. & Lizzie

- Flowerree; Mary F., born October 10, 1840, died October 29, 1840
- Flowerree; Matilda A., (Caldwell) born October 9, 1813, died May 21, 1888, age 74 years, 7 months, 12 days, widow of William Kemper
- Flowerree; Robert E., October 20, 1853, died August 8, 1854
- Flowerree; William H., November 27, 1842, died September 20, 1845
- Flowerree; William Kemper, born October 10, 1808, died November 27, 1881, married March 21, 1833, Matilda A. (Caldwell)
- Glascoock; George, born February 27, 1848, died April 17, 1906
- Lake; Frank Lear, born August 4, 1890, died January 1, 1894
- Lake; Jephtha T., born August 11, 1849, died July 7, 1911, married March 19, 1878, Margaret A. Barkley
- Lake; Margaret20A., (Barkley), born September 10, 1860, died June 10, 1914

Lake; Robert A., born March 17, 1880, died April 30, 1890, son of J. T. and M. A.

Lake; R. B., born April 22, 1881, died January 6, 1894

Lake, infant, born and died October 17, 1896

Bit of Ralls County History

NEW LONDON PUBLIC SCHOOL

By John Megown

Up to the year, 1865, the school privileges of New London, were very meager, and were in common with all other country school districts of the county. Perhaps our only privilege over other school districts was that we had a six months term while the terms of most districts in the county ran from three to four months.

In the late half of 1859, a number of enterprising citizens in and adjacent to New London, not being satisfied with the scholastic facilities granted by the then school system, conceived the idea of providing a better and more thorough educational system for their children and the children of the community, and country contiguous.

A mass meeting was called resulting in the organization of a Stock Company, and subsequently the erection of a building which occupied the site of the present building (1898).

Many citizens of the county, grasping the great need for a better and more thorough course of learning, aided materially, in one way or another, in the enterprise. Among them, I shall mention a few who were very active, viz: James Glascock, Hiram Glascock, H.C. Wellman, O.H.P. Ledford, Francis B. Stout, Sr., Samuel W. Mayhall, who built the building, Samuel K. Caldwell, Robert K. Caldwell, Allen Brown, Hanceford Brown, Walter McFarland, Taylor Jones and Dr. Charles F. Clayton (Pardon the reference) and the writer, though a young man, argued vehemently for the much needed undertaking. And afterwards was President of the Board of Education for twenty years.

On May 1st, 1860, Samuel K. Caldwell, John and Joseph F. Jamison, sold the present site (1898), Block 24, Lots 83 and 86, to Dr. Charles F. Clayton, Anderson Briscoe, James D. Watson, James Glascock, Baylis G. Rector, Samuel K. Caldwell, Allen Brown and Eli W. Southworth, President and Directors of the Ralls County Male and Female Academy.

Soon thereafter the contract was let for the erection of the school building. The building was a substantial four room brick structure – large enough to accommodate more than two hundred pupils, and was finished in the late summer of 1860. But for five long years, the building, the pride of the community, stood unused and as a veritable

beacon of a more tranquil and better day. Due to the fact that the great civil war was approaching, and had cast its dark, demoralizing shadows over our once happy land, and paralysis took the place of energy, desperation the place of enterprise – and in our streets where a short while before cheerfulness and prosperity brightened the eye and gladdened the heart of all – nothing relieved the dull monotony [sic] but the occasional tramp of the soldiery or the drill of the militia. For more than five years this demon, Upas [sic] like, cast his sickening shades over us. And the dream of our better school was, like all things else, caught in its wake.

The clouds of war having passed, the sky being once more clear and calm, the former longings of the good people for a good school returned and efforts were renewed to establish the school they had so fervently worked for.

Prior to that time (1885), the means of education were indeed very meager in Missouri, so far as public schools were concerned. There was no form of taxation then to support the schools – the trustees of each district would in the fall of the year employ a teacher to teach the district school – the only qualification was that one must be able to freely wield the rod, spell well and know the rule of three, and double rule of three, direct and inverse. Each district had a small sum of money, which was first paid to the teacher, and then the remainder of his or her salary was provided by making out a rate bill. This bill was made by taking the whole number of days attendance of all the pupils and dividing it into the amount to be raised. Then the number of days which each child had attended as shown by the teacher's report was multiplied by the rate per day thus found, and this gave the amount to be paid by pupil. Them [sic] each head of the family or guardian was charged with the bill of the pupil he had sent.

In the fall of 1865, the contemplated school opened with William Christian as principal and sole and only teacher – it was an experiment. Many had said that no one could teach a school in New London, as the children of the town [had become so unruly, the reputation had become so bad that the country people, or many of them, were afraid to send their children to New London. The experiment was a success, the school gradually increased in numbers until there were 126 enrolled, and a second teacher was employed, Miss Ruth Brown, then shortly another one, Malissa McKinney.

After the first session in the year, 1866, the Principal associated himself with Prof. George H. Laughlin to continue the school, but before the convening of the next session, he, William Christian, resigned his charge and accepted a position in Troy Christian Institute of Troy, Missouri, which left Prof. Laughlin in full charge of the school, where he remained until 1874. In his second year he had associated with him, Prof. Samuel P. Lucy, who remained several years; and both afterwards became very prominent in school work.

On September 1st, 1868, O.H.P. Ledford and H.C. Wellman, trustees, for the creditors of the Ralls County Male and Female Academy, sold the ground, buildings and all equipment to George H. Laughlin and Samuel P. Lucy, for the sum of \$3500.00.

On June 28th, 1871, George H. Laughlin and Samuel P. Lucy, sold and conveyed to the Board of Education of the Town of New London, Missouri, for the sum of \$3600.00, all of their right, title and interest in the school building and equipment. And this was the beginning of the New London Public High School under an Act passed and approved **** 21, 1870. Prof. Laughlin remained with the school until 1874, when he

accepted a chair in the Normal School at Kirksville, Missouri, and became recognized as one of the leading educators of the State.

After Prof. Laughlin, came Professors Gaff, Iles, Miller, Hardin, Howe, Eastman, Allison, Loos, Allison, Howard, Settle, Whitecotton, Ford, Briggs, and George M. Laughlin, a brilliant son of a noble sire. Much could be favorably written in behalf of these splendid educators who have done so much to shape the education and lives of this section. And much could be written of the deserving and qualified associates and assistants who have worked by the side of their principals in this great and constructive work, but space forbids.

The building of 1860, became inadequate, and in 1893 was razed. On practically the same site a much larger and more commodious building was erected. We have a very thorough High School course of study, and pupils need not go from home to find facilities for a well grounded and thorough education.
(See Attachment)

The Mark Twain Lake Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers will have a "Salt River Expo" on May 15-17 @ Warren See South Spillway recreation area. (below the Clarence Cannon Dam). Society member John Hawkins who was a big help with our Ralls County Courthouse Sesquicentennial program is the main organizer of this event. If you can help can on the project or want more information you can contact him at 573-355-4365, johnhawkins1@live.com. For those who are on the internet there will be an attachment on this newsletter.

Preserving Oak Hill Rural School;

We have been asked to help a20group working to preserve the Oak Hill School in Ralls County south of Hannibal. In the past we have had two of our meets at this school and a saw first hand the great work this group has done. I meet with the group on March 21 and we are making plans to create a fund to help in the restoration of the school to be use as an exhibit and sample of the many rural schools that some of you went to school at. We will be contacting the surrounding area school districts to welcome them to have the site for field trips and even use as a classroom for a day. On the last Saturday from April to November there will be a monthly open jam session the last Saturdays from April to November at the School house. The public and all musicians are welcome and are encouraged to attend. If you enjoy country, western, folk, gospel and any good music please try and attend. The first session will be April 25 from 6 pm to whenever. On May 9th there will also be an auction of terms and merchant certificates donated by friends and members. If you have any item you would like to donate please contact us at the numbers and address on the front page of this "Newsletter". Old school items are needed to furnish and use as displays.&nb sp;

Courthouse Doors;

The interior doors of the Ralls County courthouse have been replaced and the county has given us the original 1858 doors for our museum. We will have on display as soon as we can after our move.

School Bell and Sundial;

When the Perry school closed the school district donated the large bell that was first used at the Strother Institute in 1880s and the memorial sundial that dedicated by the former students of Mr. and Mrs. French Strother in 1930. Recently the building was sold and the Perry Junior Chamber Commerce volunteered to move both to the Perry city park and restore the roof covering the bell.

Terri (Leake) Laird benefit;

There will be a benefit for Terri Leake Laird on March 28 from 11:00 am. To 8 pm @ Mark Twain High School gym. Terri is the daughter of society member's Sam and Sharon (Day) Leake and is battling cancer. There will be food and desserts will be available for sale all day. Music by Heaven Bound, Joyful Sound, Rachel Bringer & band, Chuck Wade, Tony Gilland and Larry Hilderbrand and others will be jamming. There will be an auction at 2 pm with more than r 95 items to be auctioned off. Just some of these include 2 hour Skid Loader work, 3 day duck hunting trip for 2 in NE Arkansas,=2 02 hour power washer service, 2 hour tree trimming, homemade quilt stand, and many Cardinal Tickets. Raffle between 7 pm and 8. Just some of the raffle items are Wii Nintendo entertainment center, home made rocking chair and handmade quilt.

Bit of Ralls County History

The Hannibal Courier-Post, Wednesday, December 30, 1953
100 Years Ago Town Of Center Was Virgin Soil
Claims Connection With Mark Twain's Military Career
By Mrs. Mabel Keithly, Staff Correspondent

CENTER, Mo., Dec. 30 – Before 1853 the town of Center was virgin soil on which the prairie grass grew to a height that would seem fabulous to this generation and the deer, the wolf and the prairie chicken were plentiful. In the year 1853 the land on which the town now stands was fenced for the first time and leased from Col. W.C. Splawn. It was then known as Splawn's "black swamp" its principal product being frogs and green heads (horseflies) enemy of man and his livestock on the prairie.

The settlement on the north and west was the old Robert Briggs farm, on the south and east W.S. Tipton, W.C. Splawn and Nimrod Waters.

In the early seventies the counties in Missouri were seized with an epidemic of railroad fever. Ralls County engaged in the enterprise of building the shoreline from Hannibal to St. Louis via Gilmore and also the branch from New London to Perry.

The grade for the latter route was built twenty years before the track was laid.

With the beginning, T. Jeff Ellis built the first house on the site of the present town of Center starting a grocery and drug store. This building still stands and can be seen on the lot belonging to Mrs. Mabel Keithly, wife²⁰of the late E.A. Keithly of Center. This first house is located at the rear of the home and is one half blocks south of Center's first bank building which still stands and is occupied. The old bank building

was built in 1889 and the brick were fired three blocks south where Bennett Stuart's home and lots are located. In the day books of George Osterhout who was president of this bank, we find an entry where lumber and building materials were hauled by wagon from Hannibal taking two days to make the trip. The teams were put up and fed. Lodging and board were supplied at the Marion House at the cost of \$1.00 for the entire trip. This oldest bank building of Center is directly across the street west of the present Center State Bank.

Center was originally called "Jeff Town" being named for Jeff Ellis the first man to live on "the swamp". Soon after James Mason built another house, which was later occupied by Landia Whitamore a jolly, round and efficient sheriff of the county, [sic] Sheriff Whitamore married Evelyn Mairrah [sic] Ralls descendent of Daniels Ralls and both are buried in Olivet Cemetery of Center. Just about this period the present town was regularly, planted by J.M. Mason and given the name of Center. From this small beginning has sprung up the present town of Center, and most of the business men who contributed to its growth and development were native citizens of the county and immediate neighborhood. B.C. Briggs and M.L. Hulse were the next to engage in business later G.H. Smith, N.B. Smith and others.

About the year 1876 Ralls Lodge No. 33 A.F. and A.M. soon after removed to the town thus Center has the oldest lodge of Masons working under its original charter in the county and observed with appropriate ceremonies the Centennial of Ralls Lodge No. 33 A.F. and A.M. in June of this year.

In the list of Worshipful Masters of Ralls Lodge No. 33 A.F. and A.M. from 1853 to 1953 we find that Col. John Ralls who organized the lodge and for whom Ralls Lodge No. 33 A.F. and A.M. is named served nine times as Worshipful Master over a period of years and Col. W.C. Splawn served the lodge in the same capacity two years. Col. John Ralls the son of the man for whom Ralls County was named is buried in Olivet Cemetery at Center.

In the year 1889 G.W. Osterhout, W.W. Epperson and others moved into the town and built homes. Soon after the prospect of completing the Perry branch road gave an impetus to the building of more substantial business structures.

It was at this time that the first bank building was built, including the adjoining storeroom, now occupied by the Cash Beavers station and office [sic] the second story of this storeroom was completed by the Baptists and seated for a church. The Methodist church house was the first built in the town and is one of the oldest of their denomination in the county. In 1890 the Christian church house was moved from Olive t Cemetery one mile north to its present location. This is the oldest organization of the Christian church in Ralls County. The Baptists built their first meeting house in 1890. It was partially destroyed by fire in 1897. The present church house was erected in 1898 in Splawn's addition. In 1889 Dr. N.A. Foster built the first brick building in the north settlement of town, "across the tracks" to many natives of Center. Dr. Foster was also the first resident physician.

- 1[2] Added from Mrs. Davis list not on Sheila Lugena list.
2[3] Added from Mrs. Davis list not on Sheila Lugena list.
3[4] Added from Mrs. Davis list not on Sheila Lugena list.
