

# The Westporter



August 2020

WESTPORT  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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## CHANGE IN HOURS

Beginning August 1, 2020, the 1855 Harris-Kearney House will be open to the public every Friday and Saturday from 1-5 pm. The last tour will begin at 4:15. For group tours, please call 816-561-1821 to make a reservation.

## NEW DONATIONS

The 1855 Harris-Kearney House is delighted to announce the donation of a mid-century Victorian **Cheval mirror** from Mrs. Jean O'Brien. A cheval mirror is a free-standing tall mirror that is suspended inside a vertical mirror frame. The swinging feature makes these mirrors ideal for giving a full-length reflection, thus earning them the nickname of dressing mirror. Brimming with Victorian flair, this walnut beauty is a framed, three panel diamond-dust mirror mounted on a simple yet elegant stand with four supporting legs. Most recently, this beautiful mirror was housed in a Victorian home in Kansas.

Continued on page 7



The 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum and Westport Historical Society are a §501(c)(3) charitable organization

Thank you to our friends & sponsors for your continued support and generosity



## WEST PORT POLICE GUARD

As the Civil War progressed, and General Ewing issued Order No. 11, it was found expedient to form armed companies of citizens for the protection of their homes and for local service in connection with military operations. One of these companies was organized at West Port, Missouri and was known as The West Port Police Guard, under the command of William A. Bevis. It was made up of one hundred men and was organized in one single day—October 9, 1863. The next day, it was ordered into active service and was not relieved of duty until July 9, 1864. During this nine-month period, the company was engaged in carrying out the stipulations of Order No. 11.

The relief from duty was to be short lived, however. With the Confederate invasion of Missouri by General Sterling Price, in the fall of 1864, guerrilla activity increased along the border, and The West Port Guard was ordered back into service on September 1, 1864. The men would not be relieved from duty until March 12, 1865, a few short weeks before the collapse of the Confederacy.

As General Price and his Confederate invaders marched closer to Missouri's western border, the West Port Guard became engaged in more vigorous activity than patrolling the border. They performed guard duty in Kansas City and dug trenches and threw up breastworks preparing against an anticipated attack by Price's army. On October 21, 1864, as the Confederate Army approached the Little Blue River, members of The West Port Guard were sent to Colonel Thomas Moonlight who was preparing to resist the Confederate advance along the Little Blue. There the West Port Guard served Colonel Moonlight as scouts and continued that duty until October 22. During the Battle of West Port, the Guard was engaged in guard and picket duty along Brush Creek the night of October 22-23. When General Price's army retreated from West Port, on October 23, the West Port Guard resumed its scouting duties until the Federal pursuit was broken off when General Price and his army crossed the Arkansas on November 7, 1864.

The West Port Guard, and the other border companies were not recognized by the state of Missouri as a militia organization and thus were not paid by the state. The Guards were recognized by the United States government, and finally in 1871, they were approved, by an act of Congress, to receive the same pay and allowances as any volunteer in the service of the United States.

~taken, in part, from *THE WEST PORT POLICE GUARD IN THE CIVIL WAR* by Howard N. Monnett

### THE OLD MILL

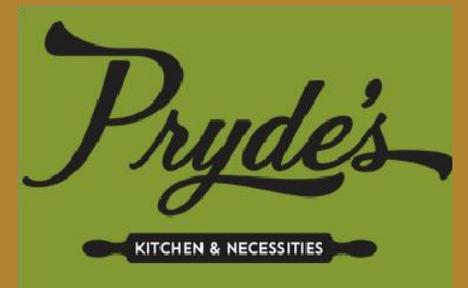
Nothing quite evokes nostalgia  
 As a mill upon a stream;  
 A creaking, rough-hewn relic  
 Haunted by ghosts in plank and beam;

Remembering where our fathers  
 Heard the splash of water-sound;  
 When they burned their tallow candles  
 And the corn was being ground.

Now the mammoth wheel is silent  
 And the water flows on by,  
 The mill, so filled with memories,  
 Heaves a giant happy sigh.

~ author unknown

### Visit Our Supporting Business Partners



## MILLING IN WEST PORT

The location of West Port was really no accident. The townsite was selected because it was surrounded by many springs. The springs fed and formed Spring Branch which later became Mill Creek because of the many mills that would be built on it. These springs served the town of West Port its water system in the early days, and this was a boon to the weary travelers on the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails.

Flour milling was an important, early industry in West Port. There were water wheels, horse-powered mills and some operated by people in harness. Some of the mills looked like copies of the early windmills in Holland. These mills were powered by the water in Mill Creek. The water was diverted to flow over the mill wheel which was converted by gears into the power to turn one or two of the millstones. Kernels of wheat were then ground between the two stones. The actual milling of the grain was done by a saddle stone. It was a piece of hard rock about the size of a half-brick, one side of which has a convex surface and fits into a concave hollow of a larger stone. The upper stone would be moved forward and backward in a rowing movement which would grind the grain between the two stones. Later a handle was added to the upper stone to enable the operator to rotate it, and an opening through which the grain was fed was also added.

The first miller in West Port was Allen Ward, who moved his mill from the Shawnee Mission. His mill was placed at the intersection of Main (Westport Road) and Water Street (Mill Street) beside Mill Creek. Water Street was the road used by settlers to get to town. It can still be found one block west of Pennsylvania, but now it is named Mill Street. A sad incident happened at this Ward Mill when an Indian was killed during milling. His blanket became caught in the machinery and he refused (or was unable) to let go of the blanket and was drawn into the mill and crushed. Thereafter, for a number of years, as long as Allen Ward operated the mill, members of the Kansa tribe of Indians collected an annual indemnity of free grain in payment for the death of the member of their tribe.

A "corn-cracker" mill was owned by James H. McGee, and another flour mill was owned by C. Valentine Smith. A mill owned by John Calvin Morris was quite prosperous, as were the other mills. A large power mill stood on Mill Creek and was operated by Robert Johnson and Robert Hall. Millers, in those days, sometimes took pay for their services by retaining bushel for bushel of the meal they ground. Since settlers and mills were not always close to each other, the settlers often took their grain to be milled just twice a year. Roads could be bad and often creeks had to be forded. The oxen, used to pull the grain wagons, were slow and usually several days were consumed in the trip. The farmers usually waited at the mills until their grain was ground. If others were there before them, the wait could be much longer. Sometimes in the case of the treadmills or water mills, the settlers had to furnish their own power, so they had to take four or five oxen or horses along to perform that duty.

The mills did a good business. By 1860, about 500 bushels of grain per farmer/settler was being produced. Mill entries show that many barrels of flour were being hauled to West Port Landing and put on steamships for delivery to towns and cities east of West Port.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local mills could no longer compete with huge mills located in other areas and so they closed to become a link to the pioneer past.

~taken, in part, from *MILLS OF ANTIQUITY* by Adrienne V, Christopher



AC  
HOTELS  
MARRIOTT



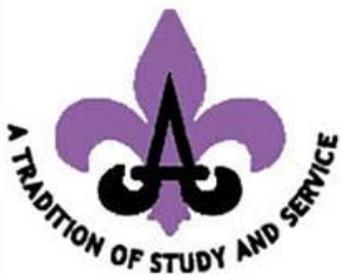
Joe's  
Pizza  
Buy the Slice



SPOOKS  
SUPERNATURAL PARANORMAL  
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KANSAS CITY ATHENAEUM



A TRADITION OF STUDY AND SERVICE



BREAKFAST  
THE  
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BRUNCH • LUNCH  
SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

## THE JAYHAWK

The JAYHAWK is a myth. It has no historical use. The myth had its rise in the characters of two birds that frequent the Missouri Valley, namely the **blue jay**, a noisy, quarrelsome robber and the **sparrow hawk**, a genteel killer and when necessary, a courageous and cautious fighter. Just when and where and by whom the names of the two birds were joined in “Jayhawk” and applied it to human beings, no one knows. However, it is known that the term originated in the home territory of the birds somewhere between Texas and Nebraska. The name was applied to an overland company of gold-seekers, to Jennison’s band of freebooters, to Montgomery’s rangers, to bands of Missouri guerilla border ruffians, and to the free soilers in Kansas. Jayhawking became a general term to express marauding or plundering.

It is not known how the name gradually became applied to all residents of Kansas. Perhaps it was because Kansas was nationally known as the center of disturbance, so Jayhawk became a nationally known byword. Probably Jennison’s band of fighters and freebooters, followed historically by Jennison’s “Jayhawk regiment” in the Civil War had something to do with causing the name to adhere to Kansas.

Found in a 19<sup>th</sup> century prayer book. It is faded with use; author unknown:

### HOPE FOR THE BEST

Oh! Why should we ever be shading  
 Moments of parting with pain?  
 Though the rose we have cherished is  
 fading,  
 Time will bring roses again.  
 Though fate our destinies sever—  
 Though for a season deprest—  
 Trusting in Providence, ever,  
 Still let us hope to be blest.  
 There is a star just above us,  
 Shinning for happier days:  
 There is a spirit of love us,  
 Beaming beyond the star’s rays.

Today, the Jayhawk has become much nobler and has taken on the spirit of comradeship and courageous fighting qualities to now reflect the name Jayhawk. Today’s benevolent Jayhawk spirit is to make Kansas great and to reflect good deeds.

But, no matter what the origin of this mythical creature, its uncertain history, or its early use by people whose actions were sometimes questionable, today’s Jayhawk embodies the Kansas spirit of unity, loyalty and right living.

~Taken in part from *Origin of the Jayhawk* by Dr. F. W. Blackmar

## THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS

The Westport Historical Society would like to say “thank you” to our business partners for being a part of our family. We are truly grateful for the support and commitment each has shown to us in the last 12 months.

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## DID YOU KNOW . . .

- The Missouri Compromise admitting Missouri to the Union as a Slave State and Maine as a Free State, with no slavery in the Louisiana Purchase above 36 30’ was signed in 1820?
- Missouri was admitted to the Union as a Slave State under President James Monroe, in 1821?
- In 1826, Jackson County was created and named after Andrew Jackson?
- Regular steamboat traffic between St. Joseph and Weston began?
- Thomas Jefferson established the Methodist Mission for the Shawnee Indians in 1838?
- West Port was platted in 1832 by John Calvin McCoy?
- In 1833 the Mormons were driven out of Jackson County and West Port was established as a trading post?
- In 1844, the Missouri River flooded and destroyed all crops in the low lands?
- In mid-May of 1849, 5000 wagons left West Port for California?
- The Town of Kansas was incorporated and the Cholera epidemic spread through Missouri in 1850?

**WESTPORT HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY ANNUAL  
MEETING AND  
LUNCHEON**

**November 14, 2020**  
1855 Harris-Kearney House  
Upper gallery

Wine Social: Noon  
Luncheon: 12:30 pm  
Society updates, election, and  
speaker at 1:15 pm

Speaker will be announced in  
October. Cost of luncheon is  
\$14. RSVP by Nov 7. Email  
westporthistorical@gmail.com  
or call 816-561-1821. Please let  
us know of any dietary  
restrictions. **Check our Facebook  
page for updates.**

**1855 HARRIS-KEARNEY  
HOUSE CHRISTMAS  
OPEN HOUSE**

We invite you to celebrate the  
Christmas Season with friends,  
family, neighbors, and fellow  
members of the Westport  
Historical Society at an informal  
Christmas Open House on  
Sunday, **December 6, 2020**,  
from 1 to 4 pm. There will be  
informal tours of the beautifully  
decorated Mansion House, a  
chance to visit with 19<sup>th</sup> century  
reenactors, listen to Christmas  
music performed by our  
museum musicians, and enjoy  
holiday refreshments.

**RECOLLECTIONS OF SUSANNAH YOACHAM DILLON—1906**

I was not only the first white girl but the first white child born in the first white man's cabin built in what is now the state of Kansas. There was no Kansas City and no West Port, and there were no states of Kansas and Nebraska. When I was born, there were no white people living in Indian Territory except for a few missionaries and Indian agents. Where the business district of Kansas City is now, I would ride my Indian pony, letting him graze at what is now 12<sup>th</sup> and Main. I would work my way through the grass and brush to what is now Petticoat Lane where I would pick wild grapes. I often knelt and drank from a natural spring at the junction of what is now 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Main.

My father was Daniel Yoacham who moved here from Powell's Valley in Tennessee, in the early 1820's, with a young wife and one or two babies. Family tradition has it that when they arrived here, they had worn out their shoes as they had walked the last part of their journey barefooted. Rosannah May was my mother. She was the granddaughter of John Seiver, the first governor of Tennessee, when it became a state. Already in the area were William May, Mother's brother, and Major John Campbell, a cousin. Major Campbell was the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, assigned to what is now Turner, Kansas. My mother and father lived with him for nearly a year after their arrival, while father was looking around and deciding where to settle. It was at the Indian post trader's house that I was born on January 12, 1830. I was the only girl in the family. Also living in the house was Captain Joseph Parks, Chief of the Shawnee—many of whom were camped around the agency.

I was the first white baby the Indians had ever seen and they simply went wild for me. The squaws made me beaded moccasins and buckskin clothing, beautifully embroidered and decorated. They adopted me into the tribe, and until I was grown, they treated me as one of their own. They trusted me, and I trusted them, and I grew up with no fear of Indians.

My father took up a government claim embracing a large parcel of land covering the territory from what is now Westport Road south to what is now 64<sup>th</sup> Street. My father built the first house at what is now the intersection of Westport Road and Mill Street. It was built of solid walnut longs, and had a few rooms. Later a second floor was added and it became known as Yoacham's Tavern. This hostelry was a gathering place for trappers, hunters, traders, Indians, and soldiers who traveled to what would become the town of West Port. At the time, it was the only inn on what would later become the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails. My father was a very popular man and much beloved. He was known as "honest Squire Yoacham" and was the first elected justice of the peace in all of this western country. He performed all of the early marriages and people came from hundreds of miles just to be married by him.

The first few years, after they arrived from Tennessee, were in what later became West Port. They worked to clear out the land in the workable months, then in the winter months we shared a double house with Francois Chouteau and his wife, who was a French woman from St. Louis. Fred Chouteau was living in the Indian Territory when I was a young girl, and I did not know about his Indian wives.

As a girl, everything that was not grown wild here or grown in the garden had to be brought in by boat from St. Louis. We had no sugar, and I was a big girl before I tasted cane sugar. The only sweets we had were maple sugar and the honey found in the abundance of bee trees in the primeval forests along the rivers and streams around here. Often a barrel or two of honey would be had from one old hollow tree.

RECOLLECTIONS OF SUSANNAH YOACHAM DILLON—CON'T

Historical Resource Library

The library at the 1855 Harris Kearney House Museum contains many books and files which may be used as reference material for those seeking information on early Westport, the Town of Kansas, and many of the residents who lived and worked in early Kansas and Missouri. If you would like to do research using our sources, please call the museum staff to make an appointment: (816) 561-1821



If someone you know is not a member, please consider a membership in the Westport Historical Society for that special gift!

INDIVIDUAL	\$40
FAMILY	\$50
PATRON	\$125
BUSINESS	\$150
SPONSOR	\$300
LIFETIME	\$800

The membership includes invitations to special events, the society's quarterly newsletter, free guided tour of the museum house, and a 10% discount on gift shop items.



The Indians loved by mother's cooking, as it was a novelty to them. There were hundreds of tepees around West Port, and the Indians would come in, eat, and pay same as the white man. They were especially fond of buffalo steaks and many a time would kill a buffalo and bring the meat to my mother to cook for them, giving her a supply for herself for doing it.

I was present when Father Dalton laid the cornerstone of his first little long church, here. When there were no churches or Catholic church in West Port in the early days, Father Dalton, and priests that were passing through, would hold mass in our parlor.

The way this city has grown is wonderful, but somehow, we have lost something in gaining all of this. I can remember when I walked down Main Street (Westport Road) and met everyone in the town within a couple of blocks. This is the way I like to remember our town; it was so neighborly. Then, too, people live too fast now and pamper themselves too much. People who sleep outdoors nowadays think they are regular pioneers.

~Part 2 of Recollections will appear in the November 2020 WESTPORTER

HARRIS HOUSE WALL COVERINGS

The wall coverings Mrs. Harris chose for her Mansion House were dictated by the function of the room and the tastes of the century. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was thought that papering the principal rooms of the house, as well as the bedrooms, was the appropriate style. The rest of the rooms might be painted. Of course, white washing was done in the kitchen. White washing was economical, and easy to apply after a long winter of smoky fireplaces.

Colors of walls in the main house were subject to the fashion of the time. Some of the colors Mrs. Harris had to choose from for paint or wallpaper were tea green, pearl grey, drab yellow, light fawn, burgundy, and light blue. Mrs. Harris decided to wallpaper her home rather than paint the walls and stencil simple patterns around the edges of the woodwork and around window frames. She liked the idea of pretty, cheerful, long-lasting wallpaper. There were various patterns available from which selections could be made. Natural objects like fruit, flowers, birds, and foliage were applied to paper with remarkable detail. A late 18th-century style that lasted far into the 19th century featured the use of a plain solid shade of coloring applied to wallpaper, usually in green or in blue but available in a wide range of other colors as well. These papers were called "plain papers" and were usually advertised with "rich" or "elaborate" borders. The "plain papers" had one advantage over paint—they hid the cracks.

A neutral or fawn colored paper with small patterns in favorite colors or small-scale florals in repeating patterns were popular. Landscapes, vertical patterns of alternating floral stripes, scroll work, and miniature scenes were also in demand. These papers were bright, strongly colored and even gaudy in styles with spectacular nonrepeating views and landscapes. Paper borders took the place of carved cornices in more elegant homes.

In other wallpaper decorations, printers imitated drapery, sculpture, ornamental carving, plasterwork, and other architectural detail. Combinations of vivid green with grey, strong harsh red with brown, or a brilliant shade of blue paired with brown were particularly popular. Also, favored by many were the embossed papers trimmed in gold imported from Germany.

The next time you visit the mansion house, ask to see samples of Mrs. Harris' wallpaper. ~Westport Historical Society files

### FROM KANSAS CITY IN 1911

- October 1 The Osage Division of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad is completed from Holden to Kansas City. Excursion parties are riding over the new line.
- October 4 The chestnut vendors with their street corner roasters are beginning to appear.
- October 6 The Kansas City **TIMES** office is now open upon Sixth Street, between Main and Delaware.
- October 7 We have learned that on Tuesday night, Wild Bill, the city marshal of Abilene (Kansas) shot two of his police force and killed them. They fired the first shots and missed the marshal who drew and placed both of them *hors de combat*. One of the men killed is said to be Mike Williams, formerly proprietor of the Walnut Exchange, corner of Twelfth Street and Main.
- October 17 The Grand Industrial Exposition has been most auspiciously inaugurated. The fondest hopes of the inceptors of the grand entertainment have been more than realized in the manner in which the fair was opened, and today our city rejoices in the success of another of her grand enterprises, wherein each individual citizen is more or less directly interested.
- October 20 A man was thrown from his horse on Grand Avenue last night, breaking his arm. Whiskey was the prime cause.
- October 28 For services during the War, the Westport Guard began receiving money yesterday.

~ Westport Historical Society *Quarterly*, Vol. VI – X, 1970-1975

### NEW DONATIONS, CON'T Heating Stove

Victorians loved, intricately detailed heating stoves which kept Victorian society toasty. Mr. and Mrs. Roger Robertson have donated an American Victorian heating stove to the 1855 Harris-Kearney House. The handsome stove is wrought iron topped with a round urn finial, and has a hammered steel rim. The hammered steel scroll pieces on each side of the stove are a beautiful decoration, but each served as a safety feature to prevent persons from bumping into the stove and suffering burns. We are pleased to incorporate this marvelous stove into the children's bedroom in the Mansion House.



Our Education Partner in our Time Traveler Program



# UNITED FEDERATION OF DOLL CLUBS INC.

# Thank You!

## WHS Needs Volunteers!

Do you have a few hours to spare? Do you enjoy learning about history and sharing what you know? Would you like to be a part of an Historic House Museum and Historical Society?

Whether you would like to be a docent giving tours or if you would just like to help out at special events such as field trips, ice cream socials, or Christmas Candlelight Tours — we always welcome folks who would like to volunteer!

Whatever your skills or talents, we have a place for you!

Call Alana Smith for more Information at (816) 561-1821 or (913) 648-0952



*The Board of Directors and Staff of the Westport Historical Society and the 1855 Harris-Kearney House send you well wishes that you, your family, and friends remain healthy and safe through these uncertain times.*

*Thank you for your continued, generous support!*

Westport Historical Society  
4000 Baltimore  
Kansas City, MO 64111