

The Westporter



February 2022



4000 Baltimore
Kansas City, MO 64111
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westporthistorical.com



REOPENING

The 1855 Harris-Kearney House will reopen for the season on Wednesday, March 2 for CIVIL WAR WEDNESDAY from 11:00 am to 3:30 pm. House tours will begin, again, on Friday March 4th at 1:00 pm.

PLEASE JOIN

The Historical Society is funded entirely by grants, admissions, and the contributions of its members—we receive no local, state, or federal monies. In order to continue our work, the Board of Directors would like to encourage you to become a member of the Westport Historical Society. Your membership dues will go a long way toward helping us continue to offer free programs and cover annual operating expenses. If you are not a member, we hope you will consider joining. If you are a past member, we hope you will consider rejoining. A membership application may be found on our website www.westporthistorical.com, or at the museum. Thank you to all current members for viewing the society and museum as worthy of your financial support.

We invite everyone (including life members, who, of course, owe nothing in annual dues) to consider a contribution to our “2022 Capital Campaign.” Although we are aggressively applying for grants, the foundations which help non-profits want to see evidence of successful local fundraising. In essence, the \$25, \$50 or \$200 you might donate to us can unlock the door to thousands more in grant money. If you wish, please combine your membership dues and any donation on one check, made out to the Westport Historical Society, and mail it to 4000 Baltimore, KCMO, 64111, or you may pay online.



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



MANY, MANY THANKS

The Executive Board and the Board of Directors of the Westport Historical Society and the 1855 Harris-Kearney House would like to express our sincere THANKS and WELCOME to new LIFETIME MEMBER *Beverly Shaw*. Ms. Shaw has been an ardent supporter of the Society, and we are grateful to her for her many generous contributions. It is members like Ms. Shaw who make it possible for the Society to continue its mission to Preserve, Protect and Promote the history of West Port, the Town of Kansas, and Kansas City. To all current Life Members, thank you for your dedication and continued generous support; we appreciate your example and commitment to the health of our non-profit organization. A list of the Society's Lifetime members is included in this publication.

DID YOU KNOW . . .

1. In 1871, several thousand pounds of buffalo meat was packed and cured in Westport?
2. The Westport Horse Railroad began its service from the city limits of Kansas City to Westport in 1871?
3. Chicago's \$196,000,000.00 fire took place in 1871?
4. On Saturday, January 22, 1859, the temperature reached twelve below zero?
5. Sela Hudson was the first marshal of West Port?
6. Dr. Benoist Troost built the first brick hotel in the Town of Kansas in 1849?
7. In 1839, construction began on the Shawnee Methodist Mission in its present location?

DOCTOR, DOCTOR

Medicine in Missouri in the 1850's was in a transitional phase from the old "theory approach" to one concerned with cures and reliable standards of practice. The 1850 census in Jackson County listed fifty-one physicians, one dentist, and seven druggists. But anyone who wanted the responsibility of healing took it. There was little difference in practice between a graduate of a medical school and a person who was familiar with a few, simple remedies and called himself a doctor. The bulk of the responsibility on the frontier fell to women; doctors were called in only in serious cases.

The type and supply of drugs depended on the doctor, his training, ability, and financial condition. More than likely, he was his own pharmacist. Calomel, a purgative, was a popular medicine. It was given in strong doses and, if the patient lived, it was assumed to be because of the calomel. If the patient died, it was assumed that nothing could have saved him.

Instruments were few and crude, consisting of a mortar and pestle for mixing drugs; lancets for bleeding, which was thought to be a cure for everything; forceps for childbirth; and tooth drawers for extracting teeth, since most doctors practiced dentistry. They could pull decayed teeth, but there was little they could do to prevent the loss of teeth.

The charges for calls varied from \$.25 to \$3.00 for a night call.

~Historical Society Files

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No. 1

SPECIAL ART EXHIBIT
May 6 – July 2, 2022

**Finding a Higher
Ground**

*Forgotten treasures of
Kansas City*
by R. Gregory Summers

Kansas City’s past comes to life as artist R. Gregory Summers paints long forgotten KC landmarks and events.

From the early settlers at the start of the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails to the “Roaring 20’s” Kansas City was the place to be, and captured in these paintings are select moments in time as reimagined from old black and white photos by nationally renowned artist R. Gregory Summers.

Shown for the first time, see the collection in its entirety this spring as the Westport Historical Society brings us “Finding a Higher Ground” at the Harris Kearney House Museum.

More information will be included on our website, Facebook page, community calendars, and emails, beginning in February.

RECOLLECTIONS

An uncanny and similar evolution and development and anecdote of two sagas in Midtown, Kansas City, Missouri, by Edward J. Browne—January 2012
In the 1880, my maternal grandparents, Edward and Mary Dillon Flavin, both from County Kerry, Ireland, purchased a home and established a grocery store in the 2700 block of Jefferson in Kansas City, Missouri in the area then known as “Kerry Patch.”

At the same time, in 1878, The Redemptorist Community established a monastery and later a Parish at 33rd and Broadway in Kansas City, Missouri.

In 1900, Kansas City, Missouri purchased the property that included the “Kerry Patch” to assemble the land for what is now Penn Valley Park.

In 1901, 111 years ago, the Flavins purchased the property at the southwest corner of 33rd and Pennsylvania Ave. and built the first of what would become a three-building complex. The first building was operated as a grocery on the first floor and their private family residence was on the second floor. They built the fourplex to the west of the store in 1910. In 1916, they built the duplex to the south and moved their family from the second floor of the store building to the second floor of the duplex where they lived until their deaths—Edward in 1922 and May in 1944.

Meanwhile, James R. Brown and Margaret, who were married in 1915, took over the ownership and operation of the grocery around 1917, and changed the “Browne’s.” In the 1960s, their eldest son, Bob Browne and his wife, Marge Blake Browne, took over the ownership and operation of the grocery.

Around 1970, Penn Valley College took the land between Summit and Broadway from 31st and 33rd Streets. This was a severe blow to Browne’s Grocery and to the Redemptorist Parish because of the displacement of thousands of people. However, Browne’s Grocery, now named Browne’s Irish Market & Deli, and the Redemptorist Parish are still surviving and thriving. In fact, the present Our Lady of Perpetual Help Redemptorist Church is celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year.

Browne’s Irish Market & Deli is now owned and operated by Kerry Browne and her husband, John McClain, and with Kerry’s sister Deb Browne Feehan providing some assistance to them.

On December 22, 1983, the Historic Flavin/Bowne Building Complex at 33rd & Pennsylvania, Ave., was added to the official Kansas City Register of Historic Places.

The ‘corner’ and adjacent land on the southwest side of Pennsylvania between 33rd and 34th Streets is still owned by Edward J. Browne (third generation) and Kerry Browne and John McClain (fourth generation) and Deb Browne and Dr. John Feehan (fourth generation) in various shares.

In 2010, Kansas City names the street from 33rd to 34th on Pennsylvania as the “Honorary Flavin/Browne Ave.”

See, “ED BROWN,” on page 6.





Remembering Sharon Smart

Board Member and Westport Historical Society Life Member Sharon Smart passed away on Saturday, February 5 after a long battle with cancer.

Sharon attended St. Teresa High School and the University of Missouri. For 44 years, she was employed by the Kansas City Life Insurance Company. Sharon was a member of the Kansas City Ski Club, the Ladies of Charity, and BOTAR.

As a life-long resident and a descendent of one of the pioneering families of Kansas City, Missouri, Sharon enjoyed local history. To preserve, protect and promote the history of Westport and Kansas City, Sharon served on the Boards of Westport Historical Society and the Native Sons and Daughters.

It is extremely difficult to imagine a community without the sweetest, kindest, most genuine person to ever walk through the doors of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House. Whenever we were doing something at the Mansion House, we only had to name it and Sharon was the first to volunteer--she always had our backs: Westport Art Fair, St. Pat's Parade, Veranda Sale, Music on the Lawn, Christmas Candlelight Tours, School Field Trips, Easter Egg Hunt, Fundraising, Baking Cookies, Library Speaker Series, Leading Tours, Financial Support, Dedicated Board Member, and the list goes on! There are not enough words to express the sorrow in our hearts. Our dear, dear Sharon will truly be missed, forever remembered, and always loved.

She is survived by her sister, Sally Smart, and her brother, James Smart, Jr., her niece, LoriAnne Smart and nephew, Madison Smart, (Lane), her great nieces, Bella, Tenley, and Lila Smart and great nephew, Hudson Smart.

August 22, 1964 — February 2, 2022

Katherine Louise Norris Perkins Heaviland, "Kathy," passed away peacefully on February 2, 2022 at NorthCare Hospice House in North Kansas City. Kathy was the wife of the Director of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House reenactments and former board member Richard Heaviland.

Kathy will be missed everyday by all who love her. She was one of sweetest, kindest, most gracious persons one would ever hope to meet. Kathy lit up a room each time she entered, and her smile lifted us to happy places. Whenever she was asked to help with a project at the Mansion House or on the Battlefield, she never hesitated; Kathy was a big part of each success. The Board of Directors and members of the Historical Society will forever be grateful to



Kathy for her work and dedication to keep history alive for future generations. Fly high with the Angels, dear Kathy, you will always be remembered and loved.

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 through the COVID epidemic!

Lifetime Members

- BEER KC Restaurants:
Char Bar, Beer Kitchen, Mickey's Hideaway, Port Fonda
- Mayor & Mrs. Richard Berkley
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- Marty Wiedenmann Jarvis
- Kelly's Westport Inn
- Crosby Kemper, III (Honorary)
- Dorine Lowell
- Olga Marr (Honorary)
- Patricia Cleary Miller
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- Steve and Marianne Noll
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WEST PORT MISSOURI IN THE 1850'S

I, Charles Raber, came to West Port with my parents from Highland, Illinois in October 1855 at the age of fourteen. My first employment was with Francis H. Booth, at a salary of \$5.00 and board per month. At the end of the first year, he voluntarily raised my wages to \$10.00.

I was an eyewitness to a riot that started on Main Cross Street [now Pennsylvania] just north of the Harris House [Hotel]. At that time, West Port was a wide-open town and doing a large business with the Indians. I lived over the line in the Territory of Kansas. West Port was also the outfitting point for the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails and the Salt Lake trade. Saloons flourished and gambling was allowed in all of them. The leading saloon was located where the City Hall, now used for the fire and police station, stood. It contained two billiard tables, and a bar and card room in the rear.

John and Phil Bucher were the proprietors and besides comparing racehorses, were ever ready to sit in a poker game.

Across the street a German Family with the name Board carried on a meat business with a bar connection. This seemed to annoy John Bucher very much and when in his cups he was very quarrelsome.

One day, when he had indulged rather too freely, he went over to clean out the Board establishment: young Board defended himself with a meat cleaver and Bucher rushed back to his place badly used up.

He told that Board was trying to kill him and in a very short time he had a lot of gamblers and some citizens who had "no love for the dam Dutch" at his heels. The entire Board family had to flee over the Kansa line. Doors and windows were smashed and everything in the building was destroyed. Several barrels of whiskey had the heads knocked off and spilled. Then they went to Phillip Becker's boarding house a short distance north where the tables were set for dinner. Here they wrecked the dining room, then went to the corner of Main Street [now Westport Road] and Broadway where they drove out the German families and partly wrecked a two-story building where Dr. Wheeler's business block stood.

The Boards were afraid to return and took up their residence in Shawnee Town, Kansas. . . . On the 27th of November following the riot, Bucher's place was destroyed by fire, and it was the general opinion that the building was set afire by the Boards out of revenge for what had happened. Later, the barn of Smith and Emmons, who ran the bus line between Westport and Kansas burned and was charged against the Boards as one of the men of this firm had taken part in the riot.

I slept in the place and might have lost my life had it not been for one of Jack Harris' servants. I had given up my former position and was working for the Buchers at the time. I got better pay but much longer hours. Sometimes it was about two or three in the morning before I hit my trundle bed which we shoved under the pool table in the daytime and pulled out for me to sleep on after closing up. In the morning I had to get up and open the place for early customers. Being a mere boy, I required my sleep. I got so when I hit the trundle bed, I was dead to the world. . . .

I had never disclosed the cause of the fire before for two reasons. First, because I was unintentionally the cause, and second, if I told how, it started people would think I was trying to shield the Boards and make enemies of my friends.

The fire started from a box of ashes that stood between the stove and the wood partition in the rear of the room. There must have been some live coals which burned through the box and set fire to the partition. When the servant broke in the door and woke me up the fire reached the ceiling above me. I grabbed a pail of water and rushed in the back room where I found a burned streak from ash box to ceiling. I was to blame for leaving hot ashes in the box. When the blame was placed on other shoulders, I kept my mouth shut.

I never told this before but do so now to clear up a mystery and point out a lesson to others to never leave hot ashes near wood.

~By Charles Raber

Continued from “Recollections,” on page 3

4 Windows to the Past...or, Future
2022 CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

ED BROWN

In March 2013, the Westport Historical Society and the 1855 Harris-Kearney House asked long-time member Ed Brown to be Westport’s “Grand Marshall” to our entry in the Kansas City St. Patrick’s Day Parade. We were honored when he accepted our invitation so that we could honor him for all he has done for our community. He represented us well as he waved to the crowd from the famous “Gatsby Car” with his name banner on each side of the car. Below is a copy of the thank you from Ed to the Society’s board:

March 28, 2013
Members of the Board
Westport Historical Society
4000 Baltimore
Kansas City, MO 64111

Dear All Members:

It has been a privilege and I thank the Westport Historical Society for honoring me at the 2013 Kansas City St. Patrick’s Day Parade. It was truly an honor, and I very much enjoyed the day.

kindest Regards,
Edward J. Browne

Many thanks to all who have donated to the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Window Restoration Capital Campaign. It is vital for this year’s capital campaign to be a success so that the Mansion House is secure for another 166 years and beyond. As you know, the society receives no local, state, or federal funds, so your generosity is deeply appreciated. With continued support from donors like you, we will be able to raise the \$24,000 needed to make the restoration of 24, 166-year-old windows possible. If you have not made a tax-deductible donation to our building’s capital campaign, please consider supporting our vital window restoration. May we look for your check to “Westport Historical Society” with “window restoration” in the memo? Our address is at the left. Or, if you prefer, donations can be made online: www.westporthistorical.com. Thank you for your consideration and continued support. Our generous donors to date:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Allin and Donna Phistser | Alice Creveling |
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| Mr. and Mrs. James Budde | Sharon Smart |
| Sally Smart | Tom Platt |
| Dan and Alana Smith | Pryde's and Louise Meyers |
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| Mr. and Mrs. Robert Russell, in memory of | |
| Nancy K. Russell | |

THE WESTPORT BURR OAK TREE

There once was an oak tree in Westport that had a girth of over twelve and a half feet, a diameter of about four feet, and a height of seventy feet. This indicates that the age of the tree is over two hundred years old, judging from the felled specimens of similar size in this area whose rings have been counted. Thus, it was mature enough to offer a “lynching limb” 110 years ago during pre-Civil War border strife that surround the village of West Port. Tradition tell that it once served to lynch a man. Thousands of travelers to Santa Fe, California, and Oregon passed nearby whichever way their wagons let the town of West Port to “cross the prairies, as of old, the Pilgrims crossed the sea.” Western pathfinder, Jim Bridger, must have known it well, for it was just across the hollow from his outfitting store, which he and his son-in-law operated between excursions to the wildernesses of Montana, Wyoming, and Utah. Who knows what tales the tree might tell?

The last century has not been easy for it. Houses grew up around it, streets, sewers, power wires came on the scent. A storm at some time topped its central trunk, and doubtless other accidents left dead snags, holes, and scars. All other burr oaks of the neighborhood—for once there must have been many—either died or were cut down, and none grew back. A survey shows no other burr oaks for several blocks around.

Finally recognizing the tree’s importance, we arranged last summer to have it professionally pruned and fed for a fresh start on its next century.

With occasional care continuing, this rejuvenation should ensure that our old oak will still be around to witness the events of the next hundred years, unless “progress” overwhelms it.

Whenever you are in our area you are invited to come sit in its shade and think about what it has already witnessed.

~taken in part from *Flower and Garden* Vol. XV, NUMBER 1, January 1971

LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION

Letters of introduction are to be regarded as certificates of respectability and are therefore never to be given where you do not feel sure on this point. To send a person of whom you know nothing into the confidence and family of a friend, is an unpardonable recklessness.

A party holding a letter of introduction never takes it himself to the party to whom it is addressed, but he sends it with his card of address. However, if a young gentleman has a letter to one who is many years his senior, or to one whose aid he seeks in some enterprise, he takes it at once himself.

When a gentleman, bearing a letter of introduction to you, leaves his card, you should call on him, or send a note, as early as possible. There is no greater insult than to treat a letter of introduction with indifference—it is a slight to the stranger as well as to the introducer, which no subsequent attentions will cancel. After you have made this call, it is, to some extent, optional with you as to what further attentions you shall pay the party. In some cases, everyone may be very busy, which is always a sufficient excuse for not paying elaborate attention to visitors. It is not demanded that any man shall neglect his business to wait upon visitors or guests.

Do not imagine these little ceremonies to be insignificant and beneath your attention; they are the customs of society; and if you do not conform to them, you will gain the unenviable distinction of being pointed out as an ignorant, ill-bred person. Not that you may *care* the more for stranger by showing them civility, but you should scrupulously avoid the imputation of being deficient in good breeding; and if you do not choose to be polite for *their* sakes, you out to be so for *your own*.

Letters of introduction should only be given by actual friends of the persons addressed, and to actual friends of their own. Never, if you are wise, give a letter to a person whom you do not know, nor address one to one whom you know slightly. A letter of this kind must therefore be carefully worded, stating in full the name of the person introduced but with as few remarks about him as possible. It is generally sufficient to say that he is a friend of yours, whom you trust your other friend will receive with attention, etc. In traveling, it is well to have as many letters as possible, but not to pin your faith on them.

~Taken in part from CIVIL WAR ETIQUETTE
by R. L. Shep

2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THE 1855 HARRIS-KEARNEY HOUSE

March 2 through December 14 : Civil War
Wednesday (every Wednesday)

March 5 through December 17: House open for tours.
Check Facebook for the latest updates.

April 22 and 23: Opening of the Arthur Kraft Mural
(TENTATIVE DATE)

May 6 through July 2: FINDING A HIGHER
GROUND: *Forgotten Treasures of Kansas City*

June and July: Music Concert on the Lawn—Each
Saturday afternoon in June and July

June 10 through August 6: “*A Tale As Old As Time*”
Celebrating World Doll Day & ‘-/National Doll Day

August: To be announced

September: Visit the Westport Historical Society
booth at the Westport Art Fair

October: Paranormal Investigations
(Dates to be announced)

November 5 through December 17: Mansion House
Decorated for Christmas

December 4: CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE: *Deck the Halls* (Special Exhibit)

December 17: Mansion House Closes for Winter

March 1, 2023: Mansion House reopens for 2023
with CIVIL WAR WEDNESDAY

Thank You!

WHS Invites 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, talents, and interests, we have a place for you!

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



The 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum is preparing for the 2022 tourism season. We are available for group tours, events and meetings, too. Please call 913-231-6749 for reservations and information, or send an email to westporthistorical@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued, generous support!

**Westport Historical Society
4000 Baltimore
Kansas City, MO 64111**