

# The Westporter



May 2022

**WESTPORT**  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



4000 Baltimore  
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The 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum and Westport Historical Society are a §501(c)(3) charitable organization

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## THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY & THE 1855 HARRIS-KEARNEY HOUSE

Are pleased to announce a special Art Exhibit

"FINDING A HIGHER GROUND: Forgotten Treasures of Kansas City"

By

World Renowned and Award-Winning Kansas City Artist R. Gregory Summers



May 6 - July 2

1855 Harris-Kearney House

4000 Baltimore

Kansas City, MO

64111

For more info

816-561-1821



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From the early settlers at the start of the California, Oregon and Santa Fe Trails to the Rip 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.

Enjoy as the past comes alive in these paintings capturing the early beginning of Kansas City as it went from the jumping off point of the Santa Fe Trail, to a major player in the economic growth of the nation.

An exclusive showing brought to you by the Westport Historical Society,

and the 1855 Harris-Kearney House.



**DID YOU KNOW ...**

1. The National Weather Service issued its first weather forecast on November 1, 1870?
2. *The Great Chicago Fire* began on October 8, 1871?
3. President Grant signed legislation designating Yellowstone America's first national park on March 1, 1872.
4. The Jesse James Gang conducted the first successful train robbery in the American West on July 21, 1873?
5. The first Kentucky Derby was held at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., on May 17, 1875?
6. Mark Twain published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876?
7. Lt. Colonel George Custer and the 7<sup>th</sup> U. S. Cavalry battled the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians on the bluffs above the Little Big Horn River on June 26, 1876?
8. Colorado became the 38<sup>th</sup> state in the United States on August 1, 1876
9. Thomas Edison demonstrated the phonograph at the offices of the *Scientific American* on December 7, 1877?
10. Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance" premiered at the Fifth Avenue Theatre on December 31, 1879?

**LONG AGO, A PIONEER SAID:**

- Something may be strange but true; for truth is always strange.
  - Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep.
  - The mill cannot grind with water that is past.
  - Think of these three things: Whence you come, Where you are going, and to Whom you must account.
  - It is better to be a "has-been" than a "never-was."
  - Many run the race, but only one wins the prize.
  - Beggars can't be choosers.
  - Drink water, put the money in your pocket, and leave the belly ache in the punch bowl.
  - Greed and happiness never met each other. How then should they become acquainted?
  - One should know a horse by its speed, an ox by its burden, a cow by its milk, and a wise man by his speech.
  - He is not laughed at by others that laughs at himself first.
  - A sentimentalist is one who sets too high a value on dreams but doesn't know the market value of realities.
- ~Fern Shelton



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**BEER KITCHEN**  
No. 1

**SPECIAL ART EXHIBIT**  
May 6 – July 2, 2022

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**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.

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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.

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More information is on our website, Facebook page, community calendars, and emails.

### THOMAS HOYLE MASTIN

Before coming to Kansas City as one of its early settlers, Thomas H. Mastin, born in 1840, attended Princeton University and then joined the Confederate Army in Tennessee. He was captured in 1862 but managed to escape in Indiana while being transported back to the north with other soldiers.

Carrie Westlake, in her book *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, recounts some of the adventures that followed the escape: "He then exchanged clothes for those worn by a wood chopper and after tramping through the forests for several days, he at length reached a small village where he obtained a position as a schoolteacher. Three months later he went to Boston, where he became a driver on a mule car. In that way he worked long enough to pay his passage on a vessel, which was about to run a federal blockade. The vessel sailed for the Bermuda Islands, where Mr. Mastin hoped to secure passage on an English vessel that would take him south. In Bermuda, he became violently ill with yellow fever and did not recover for several months. At length, however, he secured passage on an English ship and in the course of time again reached his regiment. He was especially distinguished in the battles of Shiloh and Chickamauga and at the close of the war was serving on President Davis' staff with the rank of lieutenant colonel."

Mastin came to Kansas City in 1866 with his brother, J.J. Mastin, another early Midtown settler. They formed a financial institution, J.J. Mastin and Company, but the bank failed in an 1878 run. Thomas brushed himself off and entered the real estate and mining business, where he recovered his fortunes and became a prominent member of Kansas City business circles.

In 1866, Thomas Mastin married Elizabeth (Lizzy) Harris, daughter of Col. John and Henrietta Harris, one of the original Westport settlers. In 1888, Mastin began building their beautiful mansion home on ground that had once been part of his father-in-law's farm.

Mr. and Mrs. Mastin had five children: John J., Jack Adams, Josephine, Theo, and Thomas Hoyle. Unfortunately, Josephine died in 1885 at the age of fourteen. She was at recess when it began to rain. Since her home was close to the school, Josephine decided to run home and get her raincoat. On her way back to school, a cyclone (known as the Lathrop School Cyclone) struck, and Josephine was killed.

Mastin also made a big splash in the 1880s when he struck natural gas on his property. Hundreds of people made the trip south to look at the well which was sending up a column of flame. For a while, Mastin was so excited about the gas that he and others discussed plans to lay pipes across Midtown to pipe the gas into homes. By the 1920s, the rapid development of Midtown and the popularity of the Main Street streetcar line was rapidly changing Main Street into a commercial, rather than a residential, thoroughfare.

In 1923, Mastin's heirs sold the home to grocer Fred Wolferman. The Mastin home came down in 1927 and Wolferman built a one-story building which he leased to Crown Drug Store. Later a gas station was erected on the site.

~Taken in part from Midtown KC Post, May 19, 2017, and the Westport Historical Society files



**Mastin Mansion once dominated the block at Armour and Main Streets, Kansas City, Missouri**

### JIM BRIDGER'S STORE STILL STANDS

Jim Bridger once owned the building at 504 Westport Road. He purchased it and part of the lot from Cyprien and Nancy Chouteau in February 1866. He opened a mercantile in the building which was operated by his son-in-law, Captain Albert Wachsmann.

The building stands on the west half of Lot 9 of McCoy's West Port. The entire lot was sold to Captain Joseph Parks by John Calvin McCoy in December 1839 for \$36.00. The building was constructed in 1851 and evidence of that build can be seen on the second floor. There are massive beams supporting ceiling joints which were pegged. All the rough work shows adze and axe-blade marks, and some of the rafters and ceiling joists are warped. On either side are four flue-holes once used in heating the elongated structure, the lower floor of which was once used as a store, and the second floor was once a dancehall.

The distinctive bricks, were no doubt made in one of West Port's brickyards, are in evidence, and the crumbling mortar here and there on the inside have nothing in common with the new kiln-dried bricks covering the front of the building.

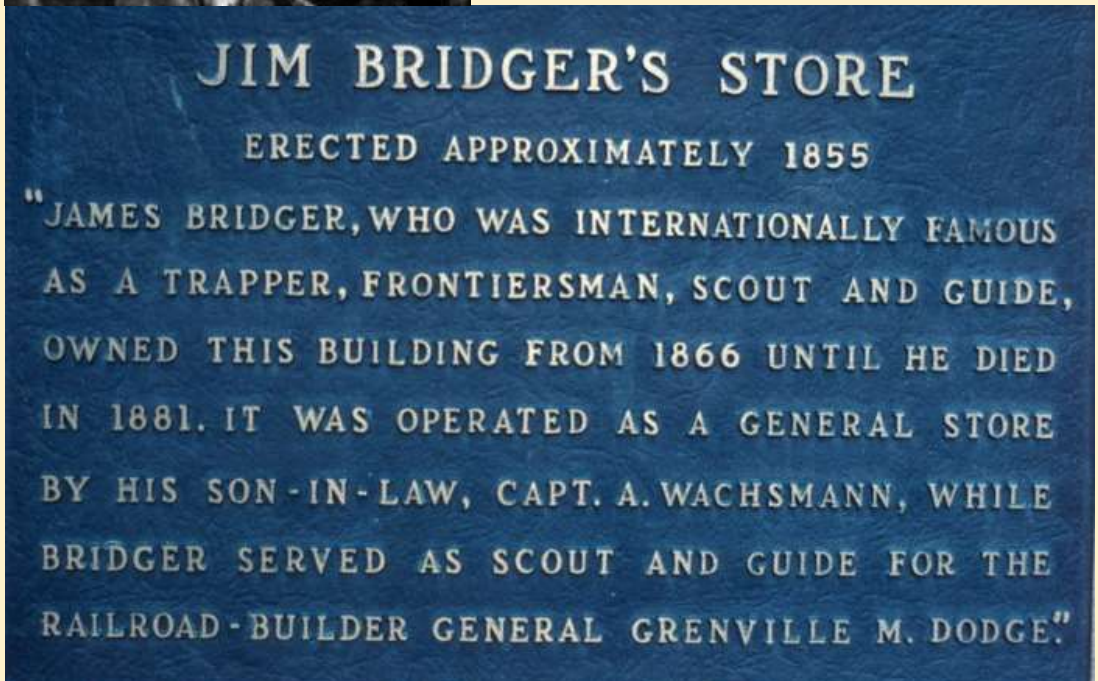
Jim Bridger paid Cyprien Chouteau \$1,500 for the same part of the lot and the building in February 1866. Bridger had moved his family to the West Port area in 1853, but his services as a guide were in such great demand, especially during the 1860's, that he spent little, if any time, "minding the store." His son-in-law, Captain Albert Wachsmann, who had been sworn in as Town Clerk in November 1865, took over the business and also supervised the dances held on Saturday nights on the second floor.

In the fall of 1868, Jim Bridger made his last trip from the West to his farm near Dallas, eight or nine miles south of West Port. His wife Mary had passed away ten years before, and his eyesight was failing; he never returned to the West. Three years later, in 1871, Bridger sold his store building and the half-lot to Samuel Rucker for \$1, 580.00.



Regardless of the age of the building, its one-time owner achieved fame which spread further than that of anyone associated with West Port during his lifetime. Who else has mountains and a mountain range, towns, creeks, passes, lakes, and roads named after him? Bridger's ownership of the building will assure its continued recognition.

~taken in part from [Jim Bridger's Store Still Stands](#) by William A. Goff



### 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!

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## THE BATTLE OF WESTPORT

The Battle of Westport was the decisive phase of a Confederate raid into the State of Missouri during September and October 1864. The raiders, under the command of General Sterling Price, entered Missouri near Fredericktown in mid-September with St. Louis as their immediate objective. After failing to seize it, they were pursued across Missouri by Union forces under General William S. Rosecrans until delayed and defeated by Samuel Curtis' Army of the Border which was headquartered in Fort Leavenworth. Elements of the two Union armies then chased the Confederates until they crossed the Arkansas River on 7 November 1864.

The stated object of the raid was to recruit soldiers for the Confederate forces and seize horses, cattle, and military supplies. St. Louis was to be promptly captured as a means to this end. However, the raid also had wider political purposes. These included inaugurations of a Confederate Governor in Missouri, relieving some of the military pressure on Lee and Hood by drawing Union reinforcements to the West, and influencing the impending Federal elections by embarrassing the Lincoln administration.

By the end of September Price clearly understood he could not capture St. Louis. His move west through eastern Missouri had been too slow, permitting "Old Rosy" Rosecrans to concentrate and reinforce his command. In addition, Price had committed a colossal blunder by splitting his army after the indecisive fight with Ewing near Pilot Knob on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Thus, he arrived before St. Louis with far less forces than he needed to overcome its reinforced garrison.

After coming no closer than forty miles of the city, Price turned west and made a futile effort to seize the State Capital at Jefferson City. Finding it well defended, he moved to a friendlier welcome at Boonville where he remained over a week enjoying the inhabitants' hospitality, destroying railroads, and raiding the countryside.

By this time, both Union commanders had bestirred themselves. Rosecrans had put Pleasanton's cavalry and an infantry force under Andrew J. Smith in pursuit of Price. Farther to the west, Sam Curtis was trying to rally the Kansas militia to reinforce the regular cavalry he had placed under the command of James G. Blunt.

The opposing Armies first met at Lexington on 19 October where Blunt began a stubborn delay at the Big Blue River east of Kansas City. On 22 October, the same day that Price outmaneuvered Curtis and forced a crossing of the Big Blue, Pleasanton caught the rear of Price's command near Independence.

The Battle of Westport was in fact several almost independent actions. Blunt and Shelby waged a fierce cavalry and artillery duel along Brush Creek just south of West Port, thus giving the battle its name. Simultaneously, Pleasanton and Marmaduke faced one another along the Big Blue at Byram's Ford. When Pleasanton finally forced a crossing, he appeared on the flank of the Confederate main body and in conjunction with Curtis' command, drove the invaders from the field of battle. Meanwhile, a minor engagement occurred near Hickman Mills as McNeil's Brigade attempted to seize Price's wagon train and block the Confederate line of retreat. The Confederate brigadier, William L. Cabell, used his small command and about 1400 unarmed troops in such a manner as to deceive McNeil into believing he faced a far larger force. This ruse permitted the escape of Price's wagon train and left open the escape route of the Confederate forces at West Port.

Curtis tried to wage a vigorous pursuit of the fleeing Confederates and in a series of brief engagements did succeed in capturing Marmaduke and Cabell and forcing the destruction of most of the wagon train. However, Union personality conflicts and command problems rendered Curtis' attempt ineffective, and "Pap" Price safely recrossed the Arkansas River in November.



Thus ended the biggest Civil War engagement and cavalry raid west of the Mississippi and any further threat of Confederate action in the area.

~ by James Abrahamson and  
Kermit M. Henninger

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY, 1853**

Dr. John W. Parker was a leading physician of West Port, Missouri circa 1850 to 1870. In 1847, he purchased a home at 557 Main (Westport Road). The house stood at the west end of the bridge over Water Street. The Civil War drove Dr. Parker and his family from West Port sometime in 1862. They went to Nebraska and stayed there till after the war when he returned and resumed his medical practice. He traveled the countryside with horse and buggy, on horseback, and walking to take care of the sick. A letter written to Dr. Parker in 1853 requesting his medical service follows:

*Ottawa Mission  
September 19, 1853*

Dear Sir:

*Col. Moore is now here. About four o'clock this afternoon his buggy upset half a mile east of us. We brought him here in a wagon. His left ankle bone is broken, and I fear he is badly hurt otherwise. He has spells of chilliness, drowsiness, fainting, and flighty symptoms [sic]. He wishes you to come immediately with medicine, instruments, and (unreadable). The bearer, Daniel Drake, starts this evening for you. He will probably get to West Port by breakfast time, and we shall look forward for you on tomorrow evening. In case Daniel's horse should fail, and you come alone, you will keep the Santa Fe Road from West Port to Bull Creek, 30 miles, and ten miles farther to Black Jack Point. There, you will take a left-hand fork, the Sac and Fox Agency road, eight miles farther you come to Jones's, two miles from our house. West Port is called 50 miles from here.*

*Respectfully yours,  
/s/ Jotham Meeker*

The cover of this letter read: "If Dr. Parker is not at home, some other physician will please open and read this letter at once." It is unknown if Dr. Parker attended or if another physician took the case. ~The original of this letter is in Missouri Valley Special Collections Department of the Kansas City Public Library, Central Branch.

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

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](http://www.westporthistorical.com). Thank you for your consideration and continued support. Our generous donors to date:

- |   |                           |
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**WORLD DOLL DAY at the Plaza Library (1-4 p.m.)**

Sponsored by The Plaza Library and the Westport Historical Society. Additional partners: The Doll Cradle, the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum, the Kansas City Chiefs, and the Toy and Miniature Museum

Special guest speaker: Elizabeth C. Bunce, Edgar Award-winning author of the *Myrtle Hardcastle Mystery* series. Every year on the second Saturday in June, World Doll Day celebrates the idea of dolls delivering a universal message of love and happiness. The day encourages the giving of dolls to those who might not have one, because dolls invite curiosity and are a positive influence. This year, along with our love of dolls, we want to highlight the importance of reading and how dolls can encourage inquisitiveness and promote the imaginative spirit side by side with the written word. Educators and parents agree that the combination of reading and dolls is an effective way of learning and taking readers anywhere they want to go. Reading about the history of dolls and the various kinds of dolls around the world can introduce the reader to different people, societies, and customs which can help children make sense of their world, builds social-emotional skills, and open the door to resourcefulness. Books encourage young children to read to their little doll pal and tell a story as they imagine it in their minds. Parents know that the simple fact that children are not "alone" with their books makes reading activities fun and allows children to make the stories their own to share with their "friend."

Special guest for the event is Elizabeth C. Bunce author of the extremely popular *Myrtle Hardcastle Mystery* series. Ms. Bunce will discuss how and why she authors books, answer questions, and entertain the audience with fun facts about Myrtle.

As a special bonus, the one-of-a-kind, **Myrtle Hardcastle Doll** will be introduced, and information will be given on how **Myrtle** may be purchased. Also, everyone will have an opportunity to join *the Myrtle Hardcastle Detective Society*.

The sponsoring organizations and partners of the World Doll Day event are committed to reading and the imaginative spirit of children everywhere. The sponsors, partners, and clubs will have information tables at the event. A variety of 250 dolls will be given away.

## OUR 2022 CALENDAR

## Civil War Wednesday and Special Presentations

Hours are 11:00 am to 3:30 pm; Special presentations begin at 1:00 pm

<b>March 5 through December 17:</b>	House open for tours. Check Facebook for latest information.
<b>May 6 through July 2:</b>	FINDING A HIGHER GROUND: <i>Forgotten Treasures of Kansas City</i> with R. Greg Summers, artist
<b>May 18 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Women in the Civil War</i> - Alisha Cole
<b>June 15 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Civil War in the American West</i> - Jeremiah Thalheimer
<b>June and July:</b>	Music Concert on the Lawn Each Saturday afternoon in June and July
<b>June 10 through August 6:</b>	"A Tale As Old As Time" Celebrating World Doll Day & National Doll Day
<b>July 13 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Blacks in Blue at the Battle of Westport</i> - Dan Smith
<b>August 17 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Order Number 11</i> - Dick Titterington
<b>September:</b>	Visit the Westport Historical Society booth at the Westport Art Fair
<b>September 14 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Civil War Medicine</i> - Alisha Cole/Jennie Thalheimer
<b>October:</b>	Paranormal Investigations—Fridays and Saturdays in OCT
<b>October 19 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Civilian Life in Jackson County during the Civil War</i> -- Dick Titterington
<b>November 5 through December 17:</b>	Mansion House Decorated for Christmas
<b>November 9 -</b>	Civil War Wednesday: <i>Marines in the Civil War</i> - Jeremiah Thalheimer
<b>December 4:</b>	CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE: <i>Deck the Halls</i> (Special Exhibit)
<b>December 17:</b>	Mansion House Closes for the Winter Season
<b>March 1, 2023:</b>	Mansion House reopens for 2023

## INTERESTING LETTER FROM SANTA FE

The following letter is from a highly respectable and intelligent gentleman, now in New Mexico, to his friend in this place, corroborates the statements theretofore made by us representing the actual condition of commerce with that country. (Franklin Missouri Intelligencer, November 4, 1825)

Santa Fe, August 25, 1825

Dear Sir,

Before I left Franklin I promised on my arrival at this place, to give you an account of the state of trade in this country. From my own observations, and conversation which I have held with a number of individuals, some of whom have been trading throughout the upper provinces of New Mexico, I think I shall be able to draw a pretty correct picture of the present state of commerce in this and neighboring states.

The importations for this year have been so great, the market for goods is completely overstocked. Many who brought but few goods, and who left families behind, have been compelled to sell; some at a loss, others for about enough to save themselves. In this way the trade for cash has been ruined.

Every village is crowded with goods, and it would be difficult to find a place within 300 miles where any more could be sold. There is a large amount still in Santa Fe, and the owners are completely at a loss how to act. The little cash that was in the country has been expended, and to think of bartering altogether for mules, at high rates, they cannot.

In Sonora, goods may yet be disposed of on pretty good terms for mules; but the great fatigue and still the greater hazard attending a traffic of that kind, deter many from engaging in it. Several persons, however, have left here for that Province, and necessity I expect will compel others to follow them. There is no cash in the country except in the hands of a few individuals, who are already supplied with more goods than they can consume in two years.

The great mass of the people is extremely poor, and except here and there a ninepence which they get from our traders, they have not the handling of a farthing from one year's end to another.

The sales that have been affected this year, have been principally at wholesale; and I hazard nothing in saying that more than two thirds of the amount imported still remain to be distributed to people who have nothing to buy with, is a calculation too nice for me to make. It is reasonable, however, to suppose that it will take some time.

Goods are entered at the customhouse without any regard to their invoice prices. They are valued at from 10 to 150 per cent above cost and pay on that valuation a duty of 22 per cent which, on a common assortment, amounts to about 35 per cent on the actual cost; and yet several sales have been made here at 50 per cent advance, the vender paying the duty.

Those who are acquainted with the country and can speak the language, may possibly keep up a small trade for two or three years longer, but new adventurers generally must suffer.

On the whole, it appears that there is but little prospect of a successful trade being kept up between the United States and this Province, except on a limited scale indeed. The country has but few resources, and the people in general are too indolent to call even those few to their aid. They are very poor, but very contented.

# 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 welcomes your participation in the 2022 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](mailto:westporthistorical@gmail.com).**

***Thank you for your continued, generous support!***

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Kansas City, MO 64111**