

The Westporter



August 2022

WESTPORT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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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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MANY THANKS

*How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
(The Merchant of Venice, 5.1.63-66)*

Thank you to our music director, Ken Shoemaker, and his amazing staff of volunteers who made it possible for us to enjoy a second fabulous year of outstanding music concerts on the lawn at the 1855 Harris-Kearney House. Each week Ken presented incredibly talented musicians performing wonderful music. The concerts successfully highlighted the talents and unmistakable harmonies of the musicians in our area and shared the vitality of the music.

AN EXCITING PLACE

Westport was in its heyday for about fifteen years beginning in 1848. This was primarily due to its location on the Missouri River and as a point of departure for trade on the Santa Fe Trail; and the point from which the California and Oregon Trails migration started overland. Because of this geographic centrality, the town of Westport developed an enormous mercantile trade, providing supplies to thousands of men, women, and their families who were all part of this country's western migration. Wagon trains by the hundreds originated from and passed through Westport relying on the town's trade to outfit them for their long journeys. Between 1853 and 1859, the outfitting business of Kearney and Bernard, alone, outfitted over 11,000 wagons. Westport became a popular stopping place for mountain men and Mexican traders. It was both an exciting wild place: "Whiskey circulated more freely in Westport than was altogether safe in a place where every man carried a loaded pistol on his person." Besides pioneers, fur traders, and mountain men, "Westport was full of Indians, whose shaggy little ponies were tied by the dozens along houses and fences. Sacs and Foxes with shaved heads and painted faces, Shawnees and Delawares flaunted calico frocks and turbans; Wyandottes, dressed in buckskin; and a few Kansas wrapped in blankets—were strolling about the streets or lounging in and out of shops and houses." (Francis Parkman, 1846) In 1859, it was estimated that trade in Westport was in excess of \$10,000,000.00. The *Westport Republican*, local newspaper of the day, reported that between March 1 and July 31, 1859, 2,300 men, 1,970 wagons, 840 horses, 4000 mules, 15,000 oxen, 73 carriages, and over 1900 tons of freight left from or passed through Westport on the Trails.

~taken from Westport Historical Society files

DID YOU KNOW . . .

1. In 1821, French fur traders, led by François Chouteau, were the first permanent settlers in the area now known as Kansas City?
2. The Town of Kansas was formed in 1838?
3. In 1846, the population of the Town of Kansas was 700 people?
4. The Kansas City Stockyard opened in 1870?
5. Quality Hill is the oldest established residential area in the Kansas City metropolitan area to remain continuously inhabited?
6. In 1882, the first electric lights were used in Kansas City?
7. The Kansas City Art Institute opened in 1885?
8. The Kansas City style of jazz music emerged during the 1920s and '30s?
9. The Liberty Memorial Tower is 217 feet tall?
10. Kansas City has more fountains than any other city except Rome?

DOLLS AND BOOKS EXHIBIT

The Westport Historical Society hosted a third annual doll exhibit at the 1855 Harris-Kearney House. Visitors were treated to "A Tale As Old As Time..."

Featuring centuries of dolls and books for all ages and sharing the Mansion House Doll Collection, our Education Director, Alisha Cole, highlighted the love of dolls, and the importance of reading in the fabulous exhibit. Dolls can encourage inquisitiveness and promote the imaginative spirit side by side with the written word. Books children enjoy were paired with dolls that represented the various books and each pair was then placed on display in the rooms of the Mansion House.

Educators and parents agree that the combination of reading and dolls is an effective way to learn and takes readers anywhere they want to go. 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."

If you missed this year's exhibit, we invite you to attend the 4th Annual Doll Exhibit in 2023. Next year's theme will be announced in December.



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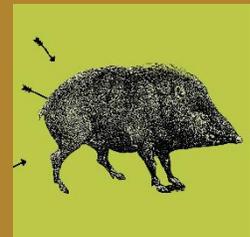
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IN MEMORY



Left to right: Beverly Shaw, Olga Marr, and Olga's sister

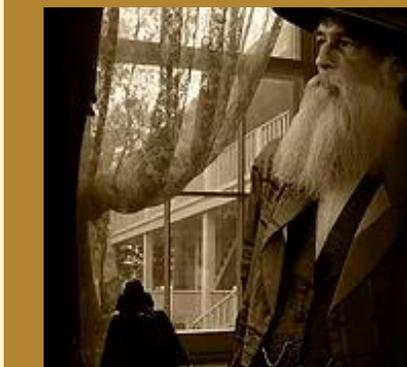
August 17 - Civil War
Wednesday: Order Number 11 -
Dick Titterington

September 16-18 Visit the
Westport Historical Society
booth at the Westport Art Fair

September 14 - Civil War
Wednesday: Civil War
Medicine - Alisha Cole/Jennie
Thalheimer

October 19 - Civil War
Wednesday: Civilian Life in
Jackson County during the Civil
War
-- Dick Titterington

November 9 - Civil War
Wednesday: Marines in the
Civil War - Jeremiah
Thalheimer



Westport Historical Society's Honorary Lifetime Member, Olga Marr passed away on July 25, 2022, just days short of her 99th birthday. She was a beautiful lady with a big heart who will truly be missed by all who knew her.

Olga Marr grew up in Chicago and later moved to California where she met her husband, Gaylord Marr. The couple moved to Kansas City and bought a home in Hyde Park. Gaylord began a professorship in the Communications Department at UMKC. At the same time, Olga started work as a legal secretary at the corporate headquarters of Price Candy Company. Later she worked for Watson Ess as a legal secretary. Olga liked to tell stories about her journeys on Kansas City's transportation system which she relied upon to get to work because she never learned to drive. She was a wonderful storyteller and always left us with a smile on our faces and our laughter in the air.

Olga loved to collect antiques and displayed many of her "finds" in her home. She enjoyed entertaining and was known for her Sunday night dinner parties, which brought together friends and adopted students from UMKC. Olga and Gaylord did not have children, so spending time with the young people was a delight. Olga enjoyed her many friends, and after her husband passed away in 2006, they kept her busy with outings for breakfast or lunch at Andre's.

In 1986, Olga and Gaylord transferred their extensive musical library, known as the MARR SOUND ARCHIVES to UMKC. The collection is nationally and internationally acclaimed for its history of American music in sound recordings.

Olga was a longtime member of the Westport Historical Society. She enjoyed quarterly dinners with speakers who spoke on various historical topics, and she liked to visit the Mansion House and view the various exhibits.

IN MEMORY

Richard Heaviland, history reenactor (pictured at the left), Society Board Member, Westport business owner, father, and friend passed away on May 28, 2022.

Richard served on the Westport Historical Society's Board of Directors for many years. His expertise on the history of our area was invaluable to the society. As the Chair of our Reenactment Committee, he organized many fun, successful events at the 1855 Harris-Kearney House.

Richard truly enjoyed Civil War reenacting. He was interested in gaining historical perspective on the turbulent war and times that gripped the nation. He was always in character no matter if he marched for miles upon miles, was riding his horse over rough terrain, or sitting around the campfire discussing strategy. Richard was a proud member of Kelly's Irish Brigade, but if there weren't enough reenactors present on the opposing side, he, and others, would change sides to "galvanize" the event.

Whenever a reenactment was planned for the 1855 Harris-Kearney House, we could always count on Richard and his wife Kathy. They enjoyed each project and task in which they were involved. Richard especially delighted in portraying Albert Gallatin Boone, and he was passionate about making sure that each child on a school field trip learned the history of Westport, the Town of Kansas, Kansas City, and the Battle of Westport.

Richard owned the FRAME SHOP in Westport for many years. He is survived by his son Miles, family, extended family, and many friends.

Rest in peace, dear friends~

KIDNAPPING IN KANSAS

Amanda “Anna” Belle Brewster Morgan (Civilian Captive) 1844-1902

Amanda “Anna” Belle Brewster was born December 10, 1844, at Atlantic City, New Jersey. She went to live with her brother Daniel A. Brewster, who lived near Delphos, Kansas. She married a man named James Simeon Morgan on September 13, 1868, then her world changed.

Mrs. Morgan’s capture by a raiding band of Sioux Indians told, in her own words, to Mrs. Lavinia Gates Chapman in 1872: Just before the Fourth of July, Mrs. Morgan gave me an invitation to eat dinner with her on the Fourth as she was going to be alone. I accepted the invitation and we conversed on different subjects but not Indians and as we were eating dinner she said, “Did you know I had been captured by Indians”? I told her “Yes” and she thought I was the strangest woman she had ever met not asking her a word about it and asked me if I would care to hear about it. I said, “Yes, but I hate to pain you by making fresh in your memory of what you had to go through.”

“I was a bride,” Mrs. Morgan began. “My maiden name was Brewster. My brother and I were orphans, and as a very young girl, I went to live with him near Delphos, Kansas. Mr. Morgan and I were married Sept. 24, 1868, and I always went with him to the field. On the morning of October 23, it being very foggy, Mr. Morgan thought there was no danger so he told me that I could stay at the house and do what work I most needed and while I was busy at work I heard the clatter of horses’ feet and rushed to the door to see what was the matter and there was our horses right near the door, snorting and looking back. I could not see anything and thought that Mr. Morgan might have been hurt and managed to free the horses, so I slipped the harnesses off at the corner of the house and strapped on my revolvers and mounted one horse and lead the other and started in search of him. I came to the river and the coast seemed clear and I rushed down into the river and started up the opposite bank. The Indians saw me coming and lay flat on the ground until I was right among them then they jumped and grabbed my horse by the bridle. They had all risen to their feet and there seemed to be a regiment of them. Everything turned dark to me and when I came to consciousness I was in a strange country among hills, bound tight to my horse. They traveled until night then camped on a creek and another band of Indians came in soon after, having a Miss White as their captive, having captured her near Concordia [Kansas]. They then took us to their village and put a guard over us and made us do menial service as carrying wood from the creeks or the more favored squaws. We obeyed all orders and gained the confidence of the Indians and during this time we were laying by a supply of dried buffalo meat so we could escape for civilization the first opportunity presented. The warriors came in one day from the war-path and had a big powwow and when all was quiet we crawled out past the guards unnoticed, then we struck the Indian trail and traveled until morning and then hid in some secluded spot where we could see the Indians passing to and fro on the trail seeking for their lost captives. When night closed in, we again took the trail and repeated the same until one morning we saw a light on the hill and knew it must be Fort Dodge. We thought it best to keep hidden until the soldiers came out, but we were so hungry to see a white face that we agreed to pass on and had not traveled over a half hour when the Indians recaptured us. I fought hard and said I would not go back but they took me by main force and whipped me and bound me onto a pony and took us back to the Indian village and they were more strict with us, giving us no privileges whatever—and we felt that we would never gain our liberty so we settled down to hard work. An Indian Chief proposed to me, and I married him, thereby choosing the least of two evils and never expecting to see a white person again. My Indian husband would come in from the warpath bringing me many things he thought would please me. The squaws now waited on me, bringing me wood, and laying it down at my door and all my Indian husband expected of me was to tend his horse; when he came in off the warpath, he would throw the lariat to me, and I would picket his horse. I began to think much of him for his kindness to me and when they brought the news that there were two white men in camp, I did not care to see them, and I was surprised to see them, and I was surprised to see my own brother walk into the tent. I had on Indian garb.

The government had captured five Indian chiefs and were going to hang them. Only on one condition would the government free them and that was to free myself and Miss White. The Indians took Brewster and White down to their village where they found us. There were many things that I have not spoken of. As we were piloted back to the Fort where officers’ wives took us in charge and furnished us with clothing from their own wardrobes and we were sent to our former homes. After I came back the road seemed rough, and I often wished they had never found me.”

Mrs. Morgan returned to Delphos and her husband James. There, she gave birth to a half-Indian son, Ira Arthur. Within two years, the little boy took ill and died in April of 1871, just ten days after the birth of the Morgan’s daughter, Mary.

Mrs. Morgan bore James two more sons, Claud, and Glen, but their marriage was not a happy one. Eventually Anna, with her three children, left James, and went to live with her brother Daniel. At this time James divorced her.

Mrs. Morgan lived under a lifelong stigma and became a recluse because of what happened to her. She died in 1902 at the age of 57 and was buried in Delphos next to her son Ira.

WILLIAM GILLIS

Born in Somerset County, MD, William Gillis left home in 1797 at the age of fourteen and found a job as a seaman aboard a costal freighter. After four years at sea, he went to Cincinnati, where he became acquainted with future president of the United States, William Henry Harrison. Their association continued during military service in the Indian Wars and were lifelong friends.

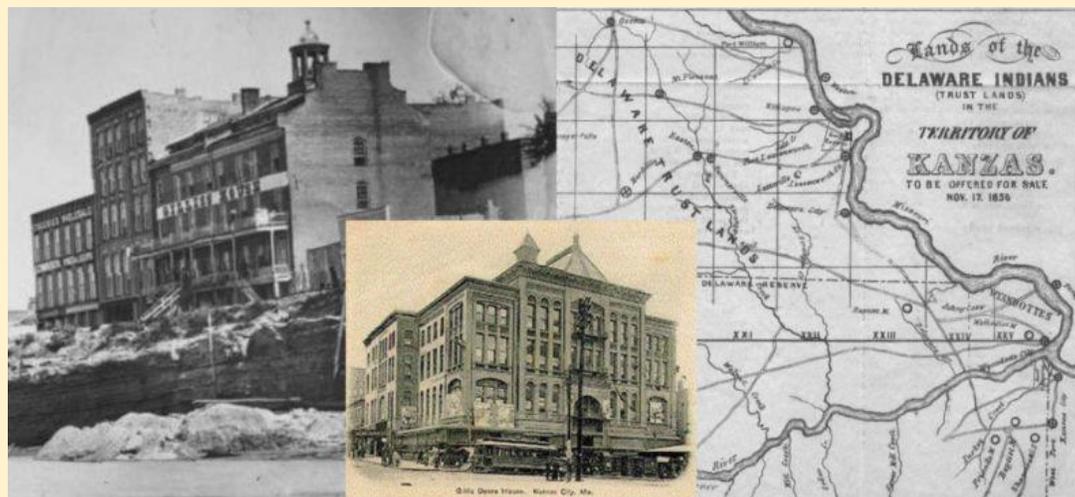
After military service, Gillis moved to Illinois and started a lucrative business trading with the Indians. In 1820, he relocated his operation to Missouri, and in 1830 he once again relocated his business to Kansas City. His business continued to be a success and provided him with the financial basis for the second phase of his business career: land speculation.

By 1833, Gillis owned more than 1,000 acres in the Kansas City area including extensive farmland in the East Bottoms. Depending heavily on unpaid labor, he profitably operated his various farms while continuing to add to his property holdings. In 1842, Gillis built a mansion on 640 acres near 37th and Holly streets. In his home, he frequently hosted some of the city's largest parties.

~taken in part from "Mystery still surrounds life of one of city's founders" The Kansas City-Jackson County Star, April 13, 1988

"When you came to trade with him, he generally had the best of the trade," a longtime acquaintance said of William Gillis after his death on July 19, 1869. Just a few days earlier, Kearney, Van Horn, Coat and Gillis had driven ceremonial spikes into the Hannibal Bridge. Kansas City's development into a major Midwestern city depended upon the completion of this first railroad span across the Missouri River, and that day Gillis had been honored as a town founder and one of its wealthiest, most urbane citizens. However, the words of his acquaintance remind us that Gillis' fortune was amassed over a long career as an Indian trader and recall the importance of Native Americans in the history of Kansas City. Gillis was born in Somerset County, Maryland, around the year 1797, possibly to a French mother and Scottish father. At age 14 he sailed from Baltimore as an assistant to a ship's carpenter, acquiring the skills of his trade, fundamentals of the written word, and a sailor's knowledge of the world during his next four years at sea. At 18 Gillis disembarked at New Orleans and made his way up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to Cincinnati, where he was hired by William Henry Harrison, whose extensive estate needed a carpenter. In later years Gillis often spoke of Harrison, who became the ninth U.S. President, as a mentor and hero. During the early 1820s, Gillis established several trading posts in southern Missouri, supplying manufactured goods and rations to Indians in exchange for the annuities they had been awarded in treaties with the U.S. government. He cultivated close relationships and was made an official member of the Delaware tribe, also trading extensively with the Shawnee, Peoria, Piankashaw, Wea, and Creek Indians who lived in the area just south of Springfield, Missouri. When federal legislation relocated the Delaware and Shawnee to reservations just west of Missouri's border, Gillis moved with them, arriving in Jackson County in 1831.

Continued on page 7



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 continues to show our nonprofit organization!

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FREDERICK HODGES CONCERT

On Sunday June 5th the Westport Historical Society, the Kansas City Ragtime and Beyond, and the Village Presbyterian Church presented internationally renowned pianist, Fredrick Hodges in concert. “Hailed by the press as one of the most entertaining concert pianists in the world, Frederick Hodges is sought after by today’s foremost orchestras, festivals, conductors, and collaborative musicians. His artistry, virtuosity, and charisma have brought him to the world’s most renowned stages, leaving audiences around globe captivated. Classically trained as a concert pianist, Frederick Hodges has established a reputation as a truly versatile artist equally sought after as soloist, singer, guest soloist with the California Pops Orchestra, and dance band pianist with Don Neely’s Royal Society Jazz Orchestra. His extensive repertoire includes all the best ragtime, stride, and novelty piano solo pieces. He has appeared on national television, radio, and in several Hollywood films. He is also a much sought-after silent film accompanist for live performances and DVD. He performs regularly at the Niles Essanay Silent Film Festival.”

The Kansas City audience was spellbound for 2 hours listening to brilliant renditions of the jazzy-ragtime compositions by little known or forgotten music geniuses.

We are hopeful that Mr. Hodges will once again grace our Kansas City stage in the very near future.



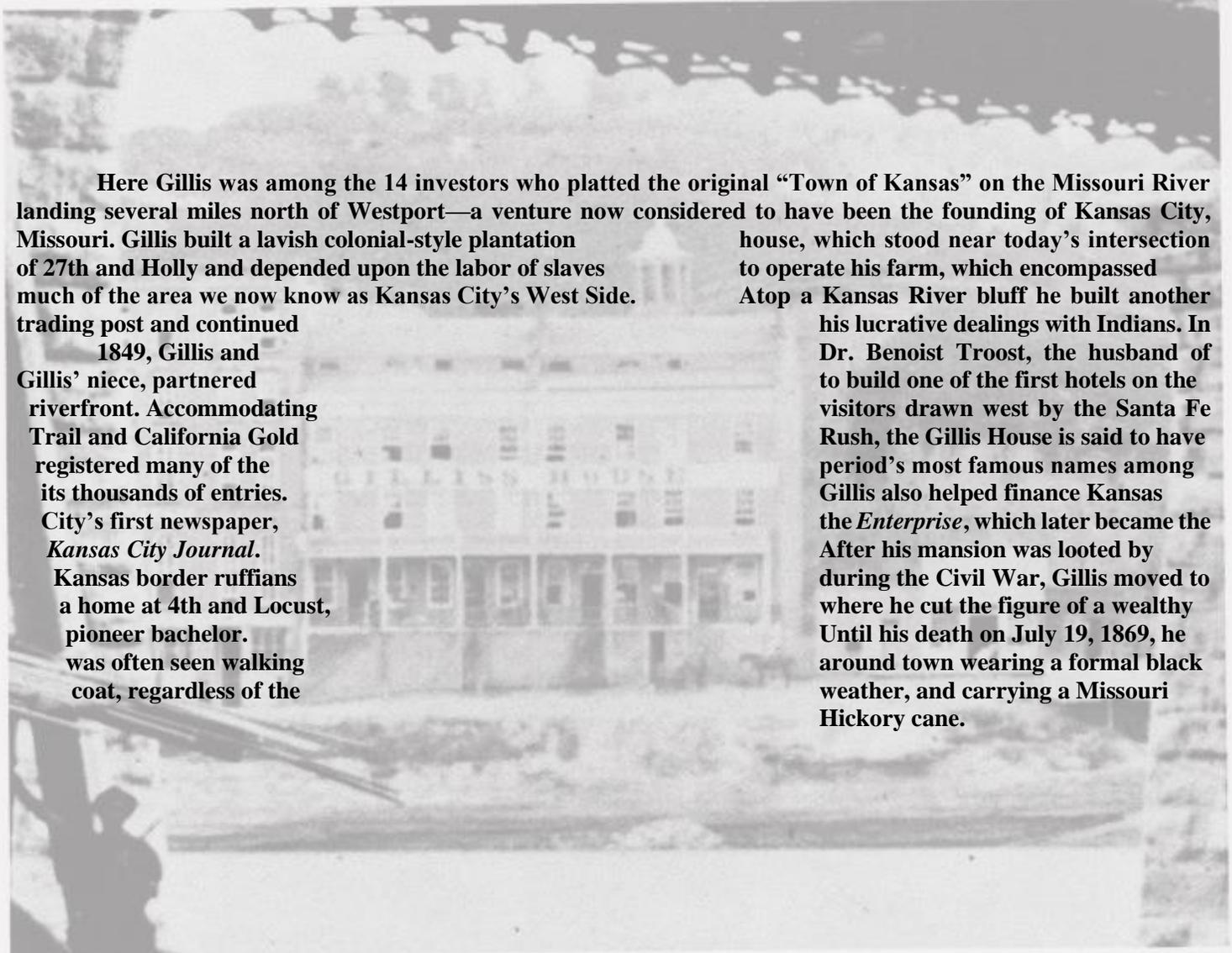
WESTPORT CARTOON CAPITAL

Friz Freleng was born Isadore Freleng on August 21, 1906, in Kansas City, Missouri. His father was an immigrant who entered the United States in 1900. In Kansas City, his father worked as a peddler, then later, a farmer near Raytown. The 1910 and 1920 census reflects that the family lived at 4543 Mercier, a block or two west of Roanoke Blvd on the north side of the Plaza. Friz attended Westport High School from 1919 through 1923. While there, he published his drawings in the high school paper, the Westport Crier.

In 1924, at the age of 17, with no formal training in drawing, his first job was as an animator with United Film Advancement Services. Friz’s first credited work was for Disney Studios when he worked as an animator on the "Alice" series in 1927. While working for Warner Brothers, his career as an animator and director rocketed, producing some of the most beloved cartoons in America's golden age of animation. Fritz worked as the head animator, and oftentimes producer, on the two main animation subdivisions established by Warner Brothers, Looney Toons, and Merrie Melodies. Fritz enjoyed great success with his “Pink Panther” television series. He also, wrote scripts for Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny, and directed a number of specials, such as Daffy Duck’s Quackbusters and Porky Pig in Hollywood. He won 5 Oscars including one for Tweetie Pie, and another for Speedy Gonzales. He also won three Emmy Awards for his creative work.

On May 26, 1995, at age 88, Friz Freleng passed away at his home in Los Angeles due to a heart ailment.

“Gillis” from page 5



Here Gillis was among the 14 investors who platted the original “Town of Kansas” on the Missouri River landing several miles north of Westport—a venture now considered to have been the founding of Kansas City, Missouri. Gillis built a lavish colonial-style plantation of 27th and Holly and depended upon the labor of slaves much of the area we now know as Kansas City’s West Side.

trading post and continued

1849, Gillis and Gillis’ niece, partnered riverfront. Accommodating Trail and California Gold registered many of the its thousands of entries. City’s first newspaper, *Kansas City Journal*.

Kansas border ruffians a home at 4th and Locust, pioneer bachelor. was often seen walking coat, regardless of the

house, which stood near today’s intersection to operate his farm, which encompassed

Atop a Kansas River bluff he built another his lucrative dealings with Indians. In Dr. Benoist Troost, the husband of to build one of the first hotels on the visitors drawn west by the Santa Fe Rush, the Gillis House is said to have period’s most famous names among Gillis also helped finance Kansas the *Enterprise*, which later became the After his mansion was looted by during the Civil War, Gillis moved to where he cut the figure of a wealthy Until his death on July 19, 1869, he around town wearing a formal black weather, and carrying a Missouri Hickory cane.

~William Gillis, Indian Trader, Kansas City Town Founder circa 1797-1869 By Daniel Coleman

MVSC, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

GILLISS HOUSE.

WEST LEVEE—KANSAS CITY, MO.

SIX LINES OF STAGES leave this house daily for all points in Kansas and Missouri.

Omnibusses and Hacks leave this house twice a day for Westport and Wyandot.

165

HOPKINS & STARR, Proprietors.

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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.

Thank you for your continued, generous support!

**Westport Historical Society
4000 Baltimore
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