

The Westporter



November 2019



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RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

It is that time of year when we ask for membership renewals. Membership dues are a primary source of funding for the operation of the museum and our events, exhibits, and educational programs. Each year we are pleased to welcome new members, and support our current members as they continue to share their wealth of knowledge and expertise with the society.

In addition to membership dues, we are continually inspired by the tax-deductible gifts to our Endowment Fund which strengthen the society and the future of the museum. We look forward to the continued generosity of our members, business partners, donors, and many friends.

Whether you are renewing or a first-time member, we urge you to join us for 2020. You may mail a check and your membership form, or you can visit our website www.westporthistorical.com and pay online.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT TOUR 2019 *CHRISTMAS in WORD AND SONG*

Friday, November 29 and Saturday, November 30

Entertain your Thanksgiving guests with a Christmas Candlelight Tour of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House.

Visit Col. John and Henrietta Harris and their family as they welcome you and their holiday guests from near and far. Tour the beautifully decorated mansion house, listen to Christmas music, sing Christmas carols, be inspired by the magic of Christmas stories, enjoy holiday festivities and join in a 19th century Christmas dance. Tours begin every 15 minutes from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. Reservations are recommended so please call 816-561-1821 or 913- 231-6749 to reserve your tour time. Cost for the tour: Adults, \$10.00; Retired military, \$8.00; Active military, free; Students, \$6.00 and children 6 and under are free. Refreshments will be served.



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



YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS

In 1897, an eight-year-old girl in New York City wrote to a newspaper, the New York Sun, asking if her friends, who doubted the existence of Santa Claus, were right. An editor at the newspaper, Francis Church, responded by publishing, on September 21, 1897, an unsigned editorial. The response to the little girl has become the most famous newspaper editorial ever printed.

DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.

Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.'

Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

VIRGINIA O'HANLON.

115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET.

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



Visit Our Supporting Business Partners



Lifetime Members of the Westport Historical Society

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- Ann Creveling
- Ann Duer
- Jim & Caren Hall
- Kelly's Westport Inn
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- Torosian Fndn./ Jean Kiene
- Cooper Weeks
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- David W. Jackson
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THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSERS

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.



FLASHBACK:

Why Did the Overland Trails Begin in The Westport Area?

The Missouri River has a bend in it here. In the early days, the travelers would come up the river as far as they could in boats, and then they had to “jump off” the river and travel over land. The bend in the river was a logical jumping-off place.

The western border of Missouri was an early western limit to the United States (it became a state in 1821), and it stayed that way for over 30 years. The Missouri border was the “limits of civilization.” The reason it stayed that way for so long is because of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (which designated the lands west of the Missouri River as Indian territory) established the law that no towns or supply points could be located within that area, and white people could not live west of that border. This changed in 1854 with the Kansas-Nebraska Act. This bit of legislation is probably the major reason for the Kansas City area being a “jumping-off” point at the bend in the river. It wasn’t so much a matter of geography as it was politics. Independence was the first viable jumping-off point for the Overland Trails. But it wasn’t ideal. By the 1840s, the Westport Landing had emerged as the leading jumping-off point simply because it was easier. The landings in Independence were not terribly convenient. The Westport Landing, however, had a nice rock landing right at the river’s edge, which is now at the foot of Grand Avenue in Kansas City.

In addition, Westport was simply farther west than Independence. And every mile counted in a wagon train . . . they went as far west as they could. In addition, no one had to cross the Blue River if they were outfitted in Westport and took off from there. The Blue River was a severe river crossing.

Westport became a resource for wagon trains. Outfitting the wagon trains was a big business: That’s why Westport became such a prosperous town and what drew people to the area, which eventually became so large that Westport and the Town of Kansas eventually evolved into Kansas City. The overland outfitting trade fulfilled all of the traveler’s needs, supplying everything: foodstuffs, wagons, animals and other provisions. Most people took only the most essential needs from their homes back East, and then getting everything else they needed in Missouri.

The other reason (and perhaps the primary reason) for the prosperity of Westport was the Indian trade. The Indians who were removed in the 1830s from the eastern United States and moved to the west were given money in their treaty. That money was spent in white towns and forts.

ANTIQUe SPOTLIGHT:

Hog Scraper

The 1855 Harris-Kearney House displays an antique butchering tool called a Hog Scraper. In excellent condition, the tool sports a wooden handle and stands 5 inches tall. The dome shaped scraper has rounded edges and measures 3 ¾ inches in diameter.

The Hog Scraper was used to remove hair from the hide of a butchered hog after it had been scalded. The scraper had to be sharp. If it was not, it was sharpened by simply using a file or emery wheel until the edges were sharp once again. To begin the hair removal, the scraper was held firmly with two hands and pressure was applied as the scraper was pushed from the front toward the tail. The scraper was angled on the farthest edge and pulled toward the user during scraping. In the most common scenarios, the scraping was started at the head and legs immediately after scalding as these were the areas where the hair was the hardest to remove. In order to keep the skin smooth for scraping, it was stretched or moved to a flat surface. After the hair was successfully removed, the hide was rinsed with warm or hot water, dried, oiled and used as needed.

On your next visit to the Mansion House, be sure to wrap your hands around the old hog scraper.



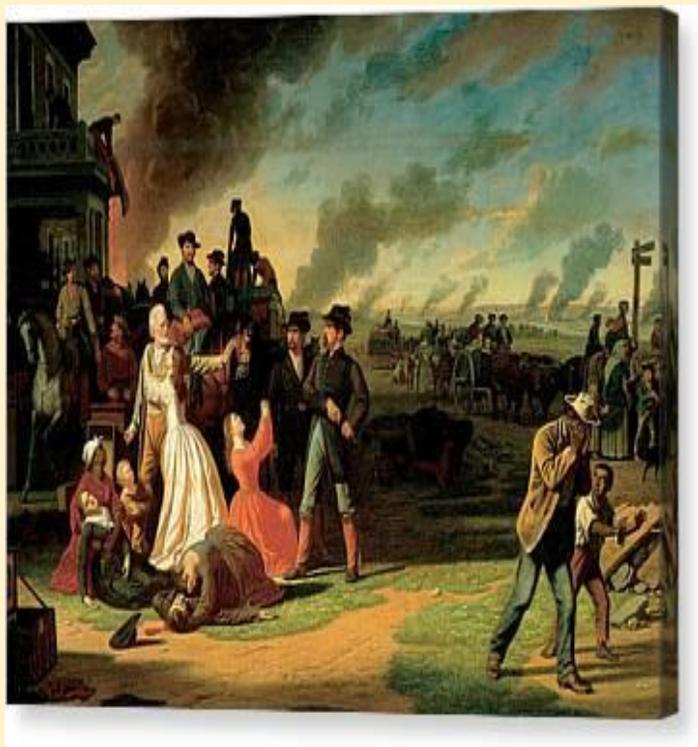
THOMAS J. GOFORTH:
Westport's First Mayor

Squire Goforth, as he was commonly called, moved to Westport from Independence as a young man, and in 1833 when Westport was first organized, was elected mayor. He served in this office at different times for eight terms. Goforth was also the first justice of the peace of Westport. In his little brick residence at 4012 Penn Street, he settled the petty difficulties of the community for 25 years. He performed the ceremony of every Westport couple married in a civil wedding in those years.

Being a Southern sympathizer, Goforth would not take the oath of allegiance during the Civil war and was banished under Order No. 11. This order, which drove hundreds of Missourians from their homes was an aftermath of the Quantrill raid on Lawrence on August 21, 1863 in which many were killed.

Goforth was one of those who were thereby required to move. George Caleb Bingham, artist and military man, objected to the order and his painting depicting the misery created by the edict still is famous. The man standing in the back of the departing wagon in the painting is said to be Westport's first mayor and justice, Squire Thomas J. Goforth.

~*Kansas City Star*, June 22, 1958

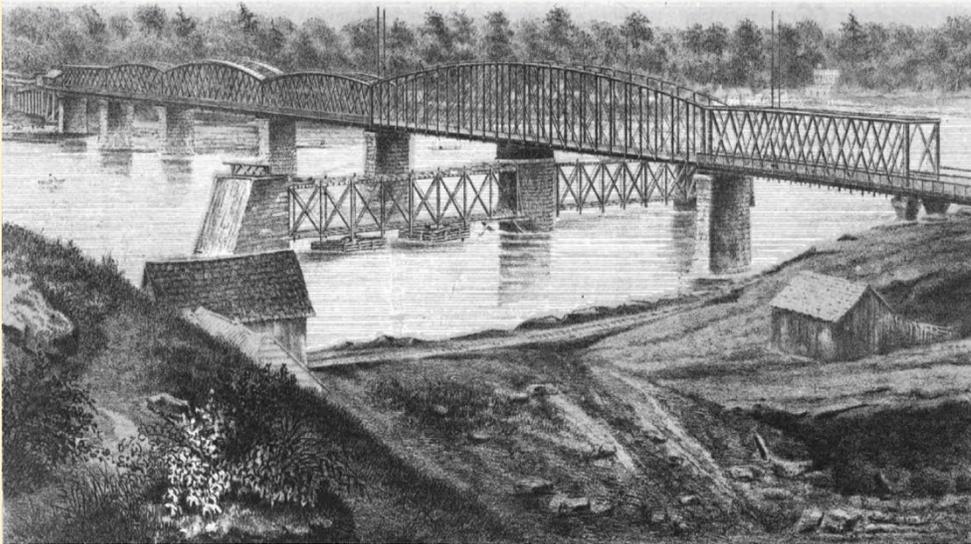


COL. CHARLES E. KEARNEY

The years of the Civil War had been difficult times for everyone in West Port. For Charles E. Kearney, who had not been much involved in the civil turmoil, the years were financially significant. In 1864, he was elected president of the Kansas City and Cameron Railroad and was also a director of the Kansas City branch of the Union Bank of St. Louis which was the largest institution in town.

Since 1860, he had operated a thriving mercantile business on the levee. The growth of Kansas City in a southerly direction inspired him to subdivide the quarter section which he had been holding for many years. Its location, which encompassed most of what is now Hyde Park, was in the path of the expansion and he divided it into eight, twenty-acre rectangles which were sold for a great profit.

In 1867, Col Kearney, Robert Van Horn, Theodore Case, and Kersey Coates were successful in securing a railway path that connected both sides of the Missouri River.



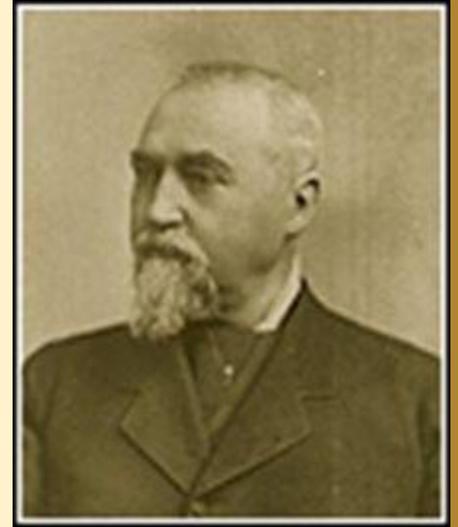
Hannibal Bridge, courtesy Wikimedia Commons

On July 3, 1869, a great day for Kansas City, the first railroad bridge, Hannibal Bridge, was opened with much celebration. Col. Kearney was given the honor of driving the last stake into the rails.

The 1870, the Kearney's built the addition to the Harris House and moved in with their children. This same year, Col. Kearney retired from business, although he was still the Quartermaster for Craig Rifles, a member of the Kansas City Board of Trade and a real estate developer.

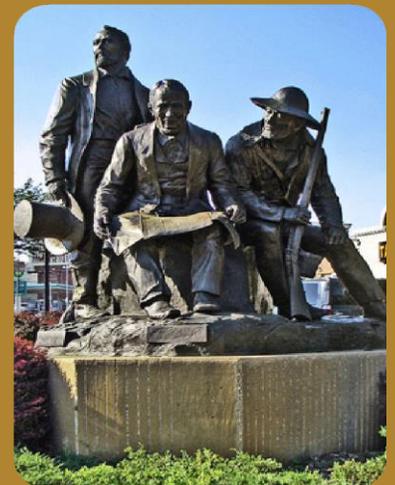
The great majority of the people, who have come to reside in Kansas City, do not know that Kansas City owes her present greatness to Col. Charles E. Kearney. His contributions to the city have never been recognized by a monument, memorial plaque, and no street or park bears his name. Only the Harris House added the Kearney name in 1976.

~ William A. Goff



WHS Membership Levels

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



CIVIL WAR REFUGEE

I was only 6, but, I remember:

The Yankees said we were harboring bushwhackers—and we were. In the daytime we fed Yankees. They crowded around the house where the women and children of three families lived with my uncle, John Muir. The heat poured out of the kitchen as my mother and a Negro dumped out great sacks of flour to make up a kind of salt and water bread for about 300 soldiers. Because he fed them, my uncle was allowed to get provisions at Westport.

At night we fed the bushwhackers. We were never out of touch with Quantrill's men. We were expecting them one morning while the women were busy cooking up all that bread for 200 soldiers in the yard. We heard the bugle and knew the rebels were coming. Shouts and confusion! You never saw anything like it as those Yankees got onto their horses and went into Independence as fast as they could go. There were only thirty bushwhackers, but the Yankees thought there were 500. The thirty bushwhackers got the food intended for the 200 Yankees.

The soldiers came again when all the women of the neighborhood were busy making shirts for the bushwhackers. The calico had come from the Lawrence raid. While the other women were hiding the goods under the floor boards, my mother joked with the federal officers. "If you don't get us some dinner, we will send you to prison," one of them said. "I wish you would. Then I would have Lincoln coffee instead of rye coffee," my mother told him. They never found out we were making the shirts.

*Then came Order No. 11 and the fires. We stood on our front porch and counted the smoke of twenty Southern homes. The soldiers came to our house; but an officer stopped the man with the torch: *This is where we come to eat,*" he said.*

I knew we were going away, but I didn't know how serious it was. . . . That morning the party of sixty-one including women and children and two feeble men, prepared to go. . . . Everybody wept and there was a big crowd to see us off. We were striking out south without a destination. Hardship? Those women who had been reared into lives of ease took hardship for granted. They learned to use their hands till the bones hurt. . . . At the end of three months we arrived at Clarksville, Georgia.

~from the writings of Mrs. James Cabness, Blue Springs, MO

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 wish you, your family, and friends a truly Happy Thanksgiving, very Merry Christmas, and joyous year end however you celebrate. May your New Year be filled with much joy and many blessings!

2020 Calendar

House Opens for the Season on March 6, 2020

May 1 through June 27--- **Doll Extravaganza**

July 3 through August 29----**Music Exhibits and Concerts**

September 4 through Oct 31--**Quilt Extravaganza and Exhibits of Tammy Reid's Quilts**

September 12---- **Lost Arts Fair (during the Westport Arts Fair)**

November 14----**Westport Historical Annual Meeting and Luncheon**

November 27 and 28----**Christmas Candlelight Tour**

House Closes for the season on December 19

House Opens for the Season on March 5, 2021

Announcing New Concert Series:

UPSTSAIRS AT THE MANSION HOUSE and Fourth Friday Musical Concerts

DID YOU KNOW . . .

1. the Indians trading in Westport in the 1840's were from the Delaware, Munsia, Stockbridge, Osage, Shawnee, Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, Wea, Kansas, Kaw, and Peoria tribes?
2. the first man to own a trading house at Westport Landing was Thomas A. Smart in 1839?
3. the distance from Westport to Santa Fe along the trail was 740 miles?
4. in the first nine months of 1857, 725 river boats arrived at and departed from Westport Landing?
5. a "whole" wagon train consisted of 40 wagons and, if mules were used instead of oxen, four hundred mules?
6. in 1857, the Kansas Territory was called the "Great Plains of America", and the "Pasture Fields of the World"?
7. in the mid-1800s, the first airships were hot-air balloons and zeppelins?
8. during the Civil War, President Lincoln invited special envoys of the King of Prussia to Washington, DC so he could study the use of railroads in battle?
9. ketchup was sold as a cure for indigestion in the 1830s?
10. President Abraham Lincoln is in the Wrestling Hall of Fame



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