

# The Westporter



August 2021

Our doll Exhibit runs through August



4000 Baltimore  
Kansas City, MO 64111  
(816) 561 - 1821  
(913) 648 - 0952  
westporthistorical@gmail.com  
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## Civil War Slang

1. **Tennessee (or Virginia) Quick Step:** A soldier's urgent "potty break"
2. **Lucifers:** Nickname for matches; the first-ever small-sized explosive material for starting fires
3. **Sawbones:** Military surgeons who amputated limbs from thousands of injured soldiers
4. **Balderdash:** A beverage made from a mixture of random, available liquors
5. **Secesh:** Secessionists in reference to Southerners and Confederates
6. **Open the Ball:** Starting the battle
7. **Tight = Drunk**
8. **Bust Head / Pop Skull:** Moonshine, or cheap, strong whiskey
9. **Light Out:** To leave in haste
10. **See The Elephant:** To experience combat up-close and look at impending death
11. **Contraband:** Anything that was "illegally used by the Confederacy"
12. **Housewife:** A portable sewing kit used by soldiers to fix-up rips and tears in their uniforms; the kits were often embroidered by the soldiers' housewives with sweet words of love
13. **Skedaddle:** A soldiers' quick departure from a confrontation
14. **Somebody's Darling:** Any dead soldier was "somebody's darling,"-- paying tribute to the wives and family members suffering with a new loss
15. **Forty Dead Men:** A full cartridge box of bullets since each box generally held forty rounds
16. **Play Old Soldier / Hospital Rat:** Soldiers who faked injury or disability to avoid battle
17. **Grey Backs:** Lice; also, a derogatory term for Confederate soldiers, whose uniforms were grey
18. **Long Sweetening:** Molasses, which soldiers would put on pancakes or add to their coffee
19. **Whipt Syllabub:** A popular drink that was sweet, not very strong, and a little thick; it also referred to some people's meaningless conversations
20. **Shipwrecked:** Drunk
21. **Wake Snakes:** To provoke intensely
22. **Gigglemug:** An ever-smiling face; this includes shady fellas, perpetual liars
23. **Oil of Gladness:** A beating
24. **Owl in An Ivy Bush:** Someone drunk or with messy hair
25. **Arsey Varsey:** To literally fall head over heels.



### DID YOU KNOW . . .

- \* The first American fair was in Pittsfield, MA, in 1807 and only had sheep shearing demonstrations?
- \* The first State Fair was held in 1841 at Syracuse, NY?
- \* The world's largest pumpkin was grown in 2019 and weighed 2,294.5 pounds?
- \* American football was started in 1879 at Yale University?
- \* Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam brought the first tea to America in the early 1600s?
- \* Louis Wolferman opened his first bakery and store in 1888.
- \* In 1986, President Ronald Reagan declared the rose the National Flower of the United States?
- \* The 13<sup>th</sup> original colony was Georgia?
- \* In 1870, M. Lemma Barkeloo was the first woman lawyer in Missouri, the first woman trial lawyer in the \* United States, and the first woman lawyer to try a case in federal court?
- \* In 1873, Susan Blow, of St. Louis, opened the first public kindergarten in the United States

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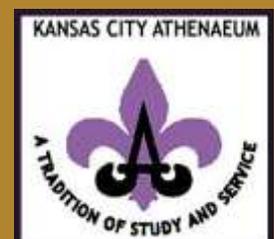
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## Indians, Blacks Helped Union Cause Kansas among first to recruit minorities

Kansas was one of the first states in the Union to recruit minorities to serve in the military during the Civil war. Gen. (U. S. Sen.) James H. Lane was the instigator who repeatedly urged officials in Washington, D.C., to allow him to field regiments of Indian and Negro troops. Although his early requests were denied, officials relented in 1862.

The Confederacy had no such reservations about placing Indians under arms. Early in the war a battalion of Cherokees was organized in Indian Territory south of Kansas. Under the leadership of Stand Watie, these Cherokees fought alongside regular Confederate troops at the northwest Arkansas Battle of Pea Ridge, then made raids into Kansas on their own.

It was the spring of 1862 when President Lincoln authorized the recruitment of two Indian regiments in Kansas to counter Stand Watie and protect the southern border. These Indian Home Guards, made up of refugee Cherokee and Creek Indians from the Indian Territory were restricted to engage tin combat with Confederate Indians.

Indian soldiers in Kansas continued to be segregated from white troops until the next spring when some were integrated into other units, most notably Company L of the 5<sup>th</sup> Kansas Volunteer Cavalry.

Capt. James Young of Olathe recruited mainly from Johnson and Wyandotte and Leavenworth Counties. Among the names found on the roster are 15 Indian s from this area. Due to the Anglicizing of some the names, there may be more who were overlooked.

The roster included the sur-names of several prominent Shawnee families from Johnson County: James Bigknife, Isaac Fish, Colin Ironside and Lucas Paschal . . . others from Wyandotte County: Four Miles, John Moonshine, Little Shanghai, and Christian Snake.

While the main body of the 5<sup>th</sup> Kansas Cavalry was transferred to Arkansas in June 1862, Company L remained in the Johnson County area throughout the war. It was one of the small detachments given the job of protecting the border from guerrilla raids. At various times, the company was garrisoned at Olathe and Shawnee.

Company L participated in the operations against William C. Quantrill in August 1863 after Quantrill and his rebels raided Lawrence, and it was a part of brief expeditions into Missouri that year and in 1864.

The main action the men of Company L was during the Price Raid in October 1864, which resulted in the Battle of Westport, the largest engagement west of the Mississippi River.

Company L, which joined Col. Thomas Moonlight's Brigade during that campaign, took part in the fierce combat at the Little Blue River.

After the defeat of Gen. Sterling Price at Westport, Company L was part of the Federal pursuit force that continued to engage the rebels in a running fight southward through eastern Kansas. Those skirmishes included the Battle of Mine Creek in Linn County, the largest [Civil War] fight on Kansas Soil.

After the war, the men of Company L were retained in the army and reassigned to the 15<sup>th</sup> Kansas Cavalry regiment to campaign against hostile Indians farther west. Most of the Indians in this company saw no need to continue military service and consequently, in July 1865 they deserted while in Lawrence, placing a blot on what was otherwise an excellent service record.

~Gregory Hermon, *The Northeast Johnson County Star*, February 20, 1987

## 1830's

One day in the 1830's, a man with a problem made his way along the rugged bank of the Missouri River. His eyes lit up when he realized he had found a solution. What he did not realize was that he had found much more.

The man's name was John C. McCoy . . . And what he saw was a natural outcropping of rock not far from the trading center Francois Chouteau had established in 1821, just below the great bend in the river.

Perfect . . . for a landing levee for boats. Here was a place where people and supplies could be unloaded at the river's edge without instantly finding themselves ankle-deep in mud. Steamboats could unload the things McCoy needed for his store in Westport. . . a whole day's journey getting his supplies by ox cart from the landing . . . . . John McCoy had found his natural levee and he went to work making a wagon track through the wild countryside from that spot to Westport. From that moment on, the growth of a metropolis was virtually inevitable. . . because this, in the early 1800's was the staging center for the explorers, the hunters, the trappers, and the indomitable men and women who built the American West. Their "road" . . . was the mighty Missouri River. And this was the last outpost reachable by river or valley road. Now that all-important stream of traffic began to move to McCoy's rock and they called it Westport Landing.

McCoy and others prospered, doing business with the westbound settlers and the nearby Indian communities. In 1838, McCoy led a group that hammered together a new organization called the "Kansas Town Company." . . . they pooled the grand sum of \$4,220 to purchase from the state of Gabriel Prudhomme the land running south from the river to Independence Avenue, and from Troost west to Broadway. It was only fitting that the new town should have a name. The early day "civic leaders" gathered to take up the problem . . . . The debate was spirited, and according to reports, the city only narrowly missed being called [Rabbit Run or] "Possum Trot." The winning name turned out, was "Town of Kansas," later shortened to "Kansas City." . . . [McCoy] was the community's first city planner, laying out a system of streets . . . . the area McCoy contemplated was a dense and forbidding forest, thick with undergrowth and cut through with deep gorges, interrupted only by a small clearing. . . . a narrow little path wound maddeningly from what is today 12<sup>th</sup> and Walnut across a small public square and down to the riverfront. [Also, there] was a "one way" street; there was just room for a single horseman. It ran . . . through the bottom of Main Street and then twisted upward to reach along the bluffs. A man [McCoy] who planned streets and city blocks in such a wilderness had to be a dreamer.

~taken in part from *Through the Years with Kansas City*, copyright by Stine and McClure

### Early Westport History: "A Woman's First Impression"

Julia Gaugh, wife of early Kansas City architect Percival Gaugh, gave her first impression of Kansas City, as she saw it in 1857— "Well, when I landed from the boat and gazed at the frowning bluffs, I thought it was the most forlorn and uninviting spot I had ever seen. The levee was crowded with white covered wagons, to which were harnessed the most diminutive mules, while the hideous faces of the Mexican 'greasers' made me shudder. There was only one road that led up to the top of the bluff. The first house that I lived in was on the bluff overlooking the river, and we climbed up there on long steps. My only neighbor was Mrs. Chouteau, who had lived on the frontier all her life and seemed quite contented. I wondered what Mr. Gaugh would ever accomplish in his profession here. It surely would be many years before a building of any size would be built. But it was not long before I was surrounded with neighbors, avenues were opened, stores began to multiply, churches were erected, and the dream of the Kansas City enthusiast seemed a fixed fact. Then the war came on and there was a gloomy outlook for a few years, but when it ended houses sprang up as if by magic, hills and hollows began to disappear and the whole contour of the city soon changed." ~Julie Gaugh, remembrances

## 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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## EDUCATION

Established in St. Louis in 1774, the first private school in the Missouri Territory. It was known as a subscription school. An individual family would hire a man or a woman to teach their children the fundamentals of an elementary education. Usually, the teacher lived with the family and was treated as a member of the family. As the need for more children to be educated, several families or a whole community shared the cost of hiring a teacher. Then, a schoolhouse would be constructed to be used by all families, again, sharing the cost of the building.

School was in session between the fall harvest and the spring planting, which could be a time span of 2 to 4 months. The short term depended on the financial condition of the community, the need for the children in the fields, and the availability of the teacher. School was in session from sunup to sundown with a short recess in the morning and afternoon, and a lunch break.

Students were taught spelling, ciphering, penmanship, reading, and geography. Paper was rough and unlined, and pens were fashioned from goose feathers. The early schools had few books. McGuffey's Reader was used universally in the Midwest from 1840 to 1870. For spelling, students either used Wilson's or Webster's spellers; when they mastered these spellers, they graduated to the dictionary as text. Arithmetic books were designed to be practical. Nearly everyone had a section on surveying an important skill in a growing nation.

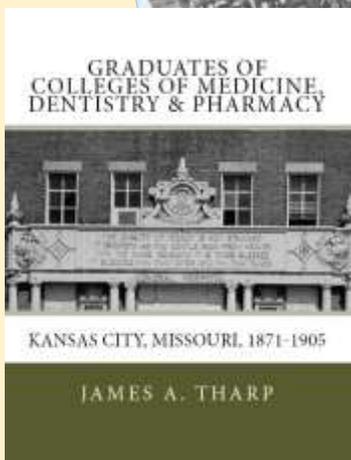
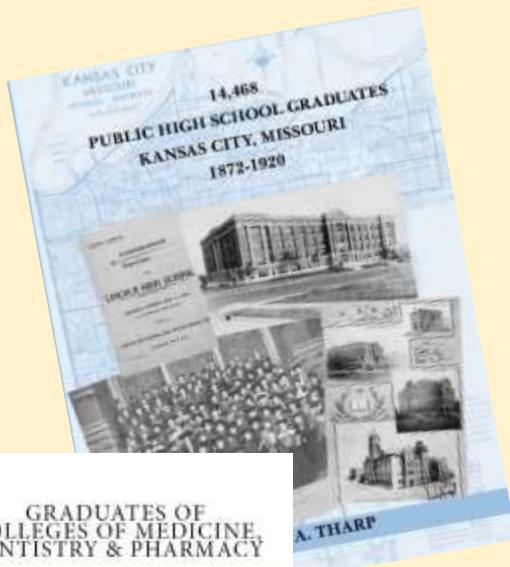
An overlying principle in all the lessons was that of moral virtue. The world created by 19<sup>th</sup> century textbook writers was an ideal one where virtue was always rewarded, and vice was punished. There was no pretense of neutrality in the books. Writers took a firm and unanimous stand on basic beliefs of love of country, love of God, duty to parents, virtue of thrift hard work, honesty, and the superiority of the United States. Children were trained to be moral citizens: girls to be good mothers, boys to be productive members of the community.

The teaching technique was rote memorization with lessons recited in a singing rhythm. Students were grouped according to level, but performed individually. If a student missed a day, he did not advance with his group until he recited his missed lessons. The teacher relied on anxiety and fear as learning aids and for discipline. The rod or cat-o-nine-tails was ever present.

Higher education was for preachers, lawyers, and doctors. Their future education was a classical one with emphasis on Latin, Greek history, and classical literature.

It was not until after the Civil War that Missouri began to enforce laws requiring children to attend school.

~Westport Historical Files



Records of Kansas City school children are quite limited. Pupil Records division of the School District provides former students with copies of their transcripts. The School District's official records are archived in the Missouri Valley Special Collections at the Kansas City Public Library. But nothing exists before 1872 when the KC school system organized. [For country schools--that is, those throughout Jackson County outside of Kansas City city limits--some school records are archived in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives in the Truman Jackson County Courthouse on Independence Square.]

Until now, the earliest, regular source of information about students has been through annuals, or year books. Those only date to around 1900. How to find a graduate between 1872 and 1900?

Now, a **new book by James A. Tharp, *14,468 Public High School Graduates, Kansas City, Missouri, 1872-1920***, is helpful to those researching a Kansas Citian who may have graduated here during that timeframe. Check out this new resource, available on Amazon.com.

Ancestors or subjects of research who graduated from a Kansas City medicine, dentistry, or pharmacy college, are indexed in the book, ***Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy, Kansas City, Missouri: Names of 3400 Graduates, 1871-1905***, by **James A. Tharp**, available on Amazon.com.

## NEWS ITEMS from *The Border Star*, 1859

January 28, 1859. Saturday last (January 22) the temperature in Westport was 12 degrees below zero at 7:00 AM

February 25, 1859. Returned—We are pleased to see among us again our illustrious predecessor in Border Newspaperdom, Captain H. Clay Pate, who has been on a visit to the Old Dominion for some months past. The Captain is one of our most energetic and public-spirited citizens, and we are pleased to welcome him home.

Friday, February 25, 1859. FOR SALE. A house and lot on the west end of Main Street in the town of Westport. Said house and lot is situated in a very public and is calculated for a grocery or provisions store as it is on the Great Santa Fe Road leading out west into the Territory. For particulars inquire of James T. Swartz or Solomon Frederick, who will show the house and give any information on the subject.

April 22, 1859. MARRIED, on the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. by the Reverend Thompson Perry, at the residence of J. Calvin McCoy, Esq., Miss Nellie McCoy of Jackson County Missouri to Dr. William W. Harris of Kansas City, Missouri.

June 28, 1859. Four wagon loads of fur from the region of the Rocky Mountains arrived. The furs belong to A. Drips, Esq., and are consigned to Colonel Robert Campbell of St. Louis.

September 2, 1859. We learn that Ira Emmons will run on omnibus (horse-drawn) from Westport to the Fairgrounds at Independence every morning during the Fall Fair. Mr. Bevis will run a hack on the same schedule.

October 8, 1859. Died, Mary Bridger on Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> at her residence near Little Santa Fe, Missouri. (Mary was Jim Bridger's third wife)

December 31, 1859. GREAT CONFLAGRATION. Destructive Fire in Westport. Thirteen Houses Burned Down. \$30,470 worth of property damage.



### 4 Windows to the Past...or, Future 2021 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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Mr. and Mrs. Robert Russell, in memory of Nancy K. Russell

## The 1855 Harris-Kearney House is a Nationally Certified Site on the Historic Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails

A part of the big three historic westward trails lay directly in front of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House. The owners of the Mansion House saw thousands and thousands of pioneers trudging past their front porch on route to new beginnings. Mr. and Mrs. Harris may have paused in wonderment as they witnessed the massive movement west.

As the big three trails, the SANTA FE, CALIFORNIA, AND OREGON, wound through Westport, they looked the same, but there were yet unseen differences: The Santa Fe trail was used for trade and the Oregon and California trails were primarily used for transporting people. The travelers on the challenging 900-mile Santa Fe Trail were mostly male traders who continued to travel back and forth between Santa Fe and America to buy and sell American goods. Although the Santa Fe Trail was a trade route, it did see its share of emigrants, especially during the California Gold Rush and Colorado's Pike's Peak Gold Rush. The Santa Fe Trail also became an important route for stagecoach travel, stagecoach mail delivery, and as a mail route for the famed Pony Express.

The pioneers who traveled on the California and Oregon Trails were mostly families who wanted to settle in a new land and forge new lives. Born along the Missouri River and running parallel with the Oregon Trail, heading west, the California Trail split off from the Oregon Trail and headed south to the numerous paths and "shortcuts" over the Sierra Nevada mountains and into California. Over 250,000 emigrants traveled the 5,000-mile trail to the gold fields and rich farmlands of California.

The Oregon Trail was a 2,000-mile route from Independence and Westport, Missouri, to Oregon City, Oregon. The trail was used by hundreds of thousands of American pioneers in the mid-1800s who were emigrating to the west. The Oregon trail was exhausting and treacherous as it snaked its way through Missouri and present-day Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and finally into Oregon.

The greatest mass migration in American history was driven by dreams of gold and rich farmlands, but the pioneers were also motivated by unfavorable economic times in the east and by decimating diseases like yellow fever and malaria. The history of these trails, and the settlers who traveled them, significantly influenced the content and character of our great nation.

~taken, in part from history.com; NPS; Wikipedia



# 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 open for the 2021 tourism season. The House Museum is 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!***

**Westport Historical Society  
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