

The Westporter



November 2021

WESTPORT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



4000 Baltimore
Kansas City, MO 64111
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(913) 648 - 0952
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Congratulations to Ken Shoemaker, 2021 International Autoharp Champion!

Congratulations to WHS Board member Ken Shoemaker, who won first place in the International Autoharp Championship in Winfield, Kansas this past September. Ken's winning arrangements included Scott Joplin's "Mapleleaf Rag" and Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World."

Music is one of Ken's passions, and he plays a number of musical instruments besides the autoharp. He combines his love for music and history in his volunteer work on the WHS Board. Last summer he organized "Music on the Green," a two-month series of free concerts held on the back lawn of the Harris-Kearney House, which we hope to reprise in 2022.

Ken is always looking for ideas that combine music and the history of the greater Kansas City area. Under the Society's auspices, he is at work organizing upcoming lectures, concerts, exhibits and workshops. To be placed on the email list for upcoming events, make your request at kshoemaker99@gmail.com.



The Executive Board, the Board of Directors, and Staff of the Westport Historical society and the 1851 Harris-Kearney House Museum wish you, your family, and friends a Bountiful and Joyous Thanksgiving; a Hanukkah of Hope, Happiness, Love and Health; and a Merry, Blessed Christmas with an extra measure of Comfort, Joy and Hope.



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 Westport Historical Society Board of Directors would like to express sincere gratitude and many thanks to Alisha Cole, Marty Jarvis, and Ken Shoemaker for the outstanding 2021 events and programs which exceeded all our expectations: *Show Me Missouri In Dolls*, *The Tammy Reid Quilt Extravaganza*, and the *Music on the Lawn Concerts*.

Thank you for your professionalism and well-coordinated efforts in staging each event and program. Your creative approach to the development of the program concepts, your efficient manner of work, and your desire to make something special was impressive to us and all in attendance. A stunning array of dolls telling their little-known Missouri stories were presented; exceptional, beautiful quilt exhibits, and a special and entertaining TAMMY'S TALK; and the multi-talented instrumental groups gave us a slate of beautiful, memorable music. We have heard nothing but praise for the successful events designed, coordinated, and presented by you! Next year, we will have our hands full trying to equal the quality of this year's special offerings.

We would also like to thank all committee members, experts, and volunteers for their help, responsiveness, ability to instantly react to changing circumstances, and for the desire to make something special out of each event and presentation. We could not have accomplished our goals without you. We look forward to future successful events.

Special thanks go to Kyle Kelly and the historic *Kelly's Westport Inn* for hosting TAMMY'S TALK, and to the *Beer KC Restaurant Group* for providing the most scrumptious and delicious desserts to our guests. Both companies are Lifetime Members of the Westport Historical Society, and the support the society receives from them is unparalleled.

IT IS TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

As we begin to look to the new year, it is very important that we continue facing the challenges of preserving our area's rich heritage and maintaining the character of the beautiful 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum. 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.

Finally, we hope everyone (including life members, who, of course, owe nothing in annual dues) might 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 fund-raising. 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.

Thank you for your consideration, and we hope you will visit the museum very soon.

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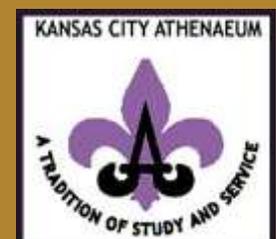
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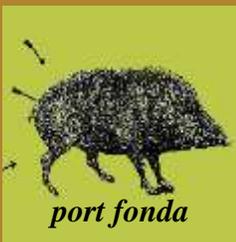
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WAGON MAKER

A tall, reticent, hardworking, Irish man named Joseph Murphy from St. Louis rolled a million wheels westward.

Murphy's factories are said to have turned out more wagons and conveyances than any other single manufacturer. But the task of making wagons was prosaic, and Joseph Murphy does not occupy much space in Missouri history. Joseph was born in Ireland and at the age of 14 he, three uncles and an aunt, immigrated to St. Louis. He found work on a farm at \$4.00 a month. A short time later, in October of 1819, Joseph was apprenticed to Daniel Caster, a wagon maker. The boy was given menial tasks, but he watched and learned fast. His eager eyes and agile mid missed nothing, and one year later, he was rewarded by being given his own bench.

Joseph Murphy was only 20 when he informed Caster, he was starting his own wagon-making business and with meager savings he rented a barn and bought enough wood for a couple of wagons and the iron fittings. The young man did not depend on any "luck of the Irish." He was hardworking, serious, and industrious and had learned to "read" wood, to know by feeling it which would make the strongest wagons. Soon he rented another barn and then he bought three lots and built a large factory and home.

Murphy built almost every kind of vehicle but concentrated on the Conestoga wagon and the Mississippi prairie schooner. This wagon was somewhat smaller, was square and boxlike, and its bows were vertical. Both wagons were covered with various kinds of canvas, but Osnaburg sheeting made of flax or tow was popular because waterproof and cheap.

The first wheeled vehicles to penetrate the Western mountains came from Murphy's factory. One was a mountain cannon on wheels drawn by mules in 1827, and the other was a wagon, in 1830, used by William Sublette, a St. Louis mountain man and trapper who paid Murphy \$200 for it. In addition to wagons, Joseph Murphy also made carts drays, plows and farm tools and established a large repair business.

Capt. William Becknell, "father of the Santa Fe Trail, established the first trading with Santa Fe merchants in 1821. He and his group of almost 25 men rode horses on the first trip, but on the second in 1822 they had three wagons. Gov. Manuel Armijo began to worry about the wagons brought in by the Missourians and others who took back sacks of silver dollars, donkeys, and horses in exchange for goods. So, in 1839, he levied a \$500 tax on each wagon. So, Murphy built wagons to carry 5,000 pounds instead of a mere 1,000. The new wagons were monstrous conveyances with wheels 7 feet high and wheel rims 8 inches wide, spokes bigger than a man's leg and tongues 50 feet long.

In the war between the United States and Mexico, the War department needed thousands of strong wagons to carry provisions and weapons to the Southwest, and Murphy supplied many. After the war there was a tremendous expanse to be governed, settled, and maintained. The Army still was a big buyer. Then came the gold rush and an even larger demand for wagons, which continued as the West was settled.

Joseph Murphy may have earned a million dollars in the almost 70-year existence of his company.

January 27, 1968

~taken in part from Missouri Heritage by Lew Larkin, 1968

THE LYKINS INSTITUE

Opening of a First-Class Female Academy Near This City

The pleasing announcement is made this morning of the opening of a new institution of learning within sight of Kansas City. Mrs. Mattie A. Lykins, widow of the late ex-Mayor Lykins of this city, has opened an educational institution for young ladies in one of the most attractive localities in Western Missouri. The institution is situated upon a high commanding eminence of a few hundred yards east of the Kansas City and Westport turnpike, upon which the street railway is running from morning to night. The building is a handsome three-story brick structure, standing in the center of forty acres of the most attractive grounds. It receives the fresh, cool breezes from the open prairies within plain view toward the south, and from its windows a picturesque view of Kansas City may be had upon the north. The accommodations of the Institute are of the most improved and the best that art and science could provide. The rooms are light, cheerful, and well ventilated, bathrooms have hot and cold water accessible to every floor. Mrs. Lykins with her considerable experience will prove a most valuable preceptor and guide to the young ladies under her care and charge. The best of tutors and instructors will be provided, and nothing left undone to make the Lykins' Institute the equal of any educational establishment in the West. To the citizens of Kansas City, this Institute offers unusual facilities and conveniences. Young ladies may here obtain a first-class education without going far from home. The Institute can be reached by street railway by way of the Westport Line at any hour of the day.

~*Kansas City Times*, Friday, July 20, 1877

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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Dr. Johnston Lykins,
courtesy Kansas City Public
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Jackson County (Mo.)
Historical Society Archives



MISSOURI, 1820
First Constitution

Historical documents written by men are seldom as interesting as the framers themselves. The first state constitution of Missouri, approved by delegates in 1820, was an exception. The test of time proved it one of the most solidly written documents ever prepared.

Of the forty-one delegates, the principal framers were David Barton, president of the convention and later to be the first United States Senator from Missouri; Edward Bates, who later became attorney general in Lincoln's cabinet; and John Rice Jones. Sixteen members of the first convention were from Virginia and eight were from Kentucky, so it was no surprise that in general overtones, the first Missouri constitutions resembled the documents of those two states.

Missouri became a territory in 1812 and began applying for statehood almost immediately. Indiana was admitted in 1816, Mississippi the next year, Illinois in 1818, Alabama in 1819, and Missouri not until 1821. The constitution's preamble stated:

"We, the people of Missouri, inhabiting the limits hereafter designed by your representatives . . . do mutually agree to form and establish a free and independent republic by the name of the 'State of Missouri.'"

What did the phrase, "Do mutually agree to form and establish a free and independent republic" mean? Was the state ready to become independent? It was more self-sufficient than most of the other states, but it could not have "seceded," although historians fairly well agree on the point that "a free and independent republic" has intriguing overtones.

The forty-one delegates came from fifteen counties. Actually, the state was born in a tavern for the first sessions were held in the Mansion House, in St. Louis. There were thirteen articles in the first constitution, totaling about 10,000 words.

The provision that stayed the longest on elected officials, limiting the governor to a single 4-year term, was repealed only last year. The "Declaration of Rights," taken mainly from the U. S. Bill of Rights, resists the erosion of time. A few provisions:

- That all political power is vest in and derived from the people.
- That the people of this state have the inherent, sole, and exclusive right of regulating the internal government and police thereof, and of altering and abolishing their constitution and form of government whenever it may be necessary to their safety and happiness.
- That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; that no man can be compelled to erect, support, or attend any place of worship, or to maintain any minster of the gospel, or teacher of religion.

The original framers had ideas about the freedom of the press and assembly and provided "that in all prosecutions for libel the truth thereof may be given in evidence."

The original constitution was not changed until 1865, standing the test of time and people longer than similar documents of other states. It was born in the crucible of the so-called "Missouri Compromise," ad the slavery question. The framers were from states where feuding and fighting was a pastime, and they decided to mold a tough cons1830titution.

Maybe the best evaluation of the document came from Dr. Floyd Shoemaker, the director of the State Historical Society for 45 years when he said: "In this study of the Missouri Constitution of 1820, several points stand out quite clearly. It was fundamental compared to later documents that got wordy: It was neither radical nor retrogressive, but conservative. It speaks well that the work stood the test of time for over half a century."

July 23, 1966

~*Missouri Heritage* by Lew Larkin, 1968

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. Thank you for your consideration and continued support. Our generous donors to date:

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Mrs. Mary Jane Smart
1810-1892

Mrs. Mary J. Smart, one of the pioneers of Kansas City and the widow of Judge Thomas A. Smart, one of the architects and builders of the city, died at the home of her nephew, Thomas Hunter, in Olathe, Kansas, about 11:00 pm, Wednesday, July 13, 1892.

The cause of death was old age and cerebral paralysis. Mrs. Smart was 82 years of age and had been in feeble health the past two years. About six weeks ago, she left her home on Oak Street in this city, to spend the summer with her nephew at Olathe, to whom she was very much attached, thinking that the change would benefit her health. . . .

Mrs. Smart was born in the eastern portion of Ohio, her maiden name being Miss Mary Jane Latimer. Married to a gentleman of the same name, she continued to her residence in that state until the death of her husband, a very short time after their marriage. She then removed to Jackson County, MO where she had relatives. In 1852, she became the second wife of Judge Thomas A. Smart, whose first wife had died of cholera during the terrible year of '49. Judge Smart was at that time, as he continued until the time of his death, one of the first, oldest, wealthiest and most influential citizens of West Port Landing and Kansas City.

There are no citizens in the city of those days who do not remember the Smart homestead, embracing the eighty acres lying between what is now Ninth Street on the north, Twelfth Street on the South, and from Baltimore Avenue across the Main Street ravine and the hills and hallows of Charlotte Street. The family's old brick house, which was built on a hill south of the southwest corner of Tenth and Main Street, gave entertainment and enjoyment to so many in those days. The estate was made of several large fortunes and much of the original tract of land is still in the name of Mrs. Smart and the direct descendants.

The judge and Mrs. Smart were among the builders of the First Christian Church located at the corner of Eleventh Street. They were resolute supporters, both financially and through personal labors until old age made it impossible to continue.

The couple had no children, but Mrs. Smart was a wonderful stepmother to her stepchildren: Mrs. E. P. Graves of the city, Mrs. Dr. John Bryant of Independence, and to Mrs. Dr. I. M. Ridge who preceded her in death. The services for Mrs. Smart were conducted on Sunday, the 17th of July 1892, at 3:00 pm by the Rev. Dr. Alexander Proctor, of Independence. The reverend, from the First Christian Church, had been a lifelong friend of the deceased. The burial was at Union Cemetery.

~taken in part from the Westport Historical Society files, and the *Kansas City Journal*, July 15, 1892

DID YOU KNOW ...

1. In 1866 Tennessee was the first U.S. state to be readmitted to the Union following the American Civil War?
2. Dynamite was invented by Alfred Nobel in 1866?
3. The United States Congress overwhelmingly passed the 1866 Civil Rights Act on March 13?
4. In 1867, William "Buffalo Bill" Cody was paid to hunt buffalo to feed the construction crew of Kansas Pacific Railroad.
5. Laura Ingalls Wilder, the author of the LITTLE HOUSE series of books, was born on February 7, 1867?
6. In 1867, Nebraska became the 37th State admitted to the Union?
7. Elizabeth Blackwell established the first Women's Medical College in New York in 1868?
8. President Andrew Johnson was acquitted during his impeachment trial, by one vote in the United States Senate in May of 1868?
9. General William Tecumseh Sherman brokered the Treaty of Fort Laramie with the Sioux in the spring of 1868?
10. The second U.S. President from Ohio was President Grant who was elected the 18th President in 1868.

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*Donations are welcome.
Your donation is tax deductible as The
Westport Historical Society is a 501c(3).*



Sarah Poff and Alana Smith, WHS mainstays



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.

Thank you for your continued, generous support!

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