

The Westporter



August 2017

THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Westport Historical Society celebrates and commemorates the 19th Century when Americans journeyed West to chase their dream.

4000 Baltimore
Kansas City, MO 64111
816-561-1821 or
913-648-0952

westporthistorical@gmail.com

and on the web at:
westporthistorical.com



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

Thank you for your continued generosity and support

AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The R.CROSBY KEMPER, III Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation, known as *THE CROSBY*, acknowledges continued accomplishments in the promotion and advancement of the National Historic Preservation goals with respect to cultural and natural heritage resources and historic preservation, especially those which add benefit for the states of Kansas, Missouri and the public.

The Westport Historical Society and R. Crosby Kemper, III are pleased to announce that the recipient of the 2017 *CROSBY*, is the Union Cemetery Historical Society. The presentation of the award will take place during festivities at Union Cemetery, 227 E 28 Terrace, Kansas City, MO, on Saturday, August 19 at 2:00pm. The public is invited to attend the festivities. More details will follow at www.westporthistorical.com

In 1857, wealthy businessman and West Port resident, William Bernard donated land for a public cemetery. This piece of land was located halfway between the Town of Kansas on the Missouri River, and the nearby town of West Port. The cemetery was intended to be a "union" between the two towns and so was named Union Cemetery.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Union Cemetery is the

final resting place for approximately 55,000 people of all races and nationalities who shaped the history of Kansas City and helped support the United States Westward Expansion on the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails. Veterans, who fought in every war from the Revolutionary War to the Vietnam War, lie side by side in the hallowed grounds of Union Cemetery.

Realizing the need for restoration of Union Cemetery after many years of neglect, the Union Cemetery Historical Society was founded in 1984 as a 501(c)(3) organization with the expressed intention to restore, maintain, and preserve the history of the cemetery.

Currently, the society is partnering with the KCMO Parks and Recreation Department to oversee tree planting, and headstone restoration and re-setting, in order to enhance the beauty and security of the cemetery.

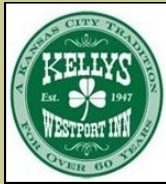
The historical society continues its fundraising efforts so they may maintain this gift from the past for future generations.

Congratulations to the Union Cemetery Historical Society for winning the prestigious 2017 "Crosby" Historic Preservation Award.



Continued on page 2 AWARD

BUSINESS MEMBERS



THE KANSAS CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY Westport Branch



Please support our Business Members!

SHINING STAR COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Continued from page 1

The Westport Historical Society's *Shining Star Community Service Award* is designed to recognize and celebrate businesses, civic organizations, and/or individuals who make a significant contribution to enhance the well-being of the Westport community and its neighborhood.

On Saturday, August 19, R. Crosby Kemper, III will present the 2017 Shining Star Community service award to Mr. Lee Steele during the 2:00pm festivities at Union Cemetery. Lee is being



recognized for his unselfish devotion to the community and its residents.

Over the years, he has made significant contributions to our community through his time, actions, talents and dedication to those who live and work in the place we call home. Lee serves as a role model for compassion, and service, and has a

passion for helping everyone in our community when he sees a need.

We extend many thanks to Lee for his tireless efforts and dedication as he works to improve our community.

THE LOST ARTS FAIR and the WESTPORT ART FAIR



Step back in time and attend the LOST ARTS FAIR on the grounds of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum, 4000 Baltimore, on Saturday, September 9th from 10am to 5pm

Booths of 19th Century Artisans will demonstrate blacksmithing, paper quilling, spinning, weaving, tatting, doll making, quilting, gunsmithing, woodworking, bobbin lace making, and much more.



Many handmade items will be on display and some artisans will have items for sale. Additionally, tours of the Mansion House will be offered at a discounted price! And a horse drawn carriage will take visitors from the Westport Art Fair to the Lost Arts Fair at no charge.

You won't want to miss the two Art Fairs! For more information go to www.westporthistorical.com or call 816-561-1821.



WE NEED YOUR HELP !!! PLEASE VOLUNTEER !!!!

The Westport Historical Society is honored to host the **Westport Art Fair Information Booth** again this year. Located in front of Kelly's, this booth is not only the information booth, but the welcoming center for the Fair, and the Westport Community.

We are asking everyone who is a member or friend of the Westport Historical Society, or a resident or friend of the Westport area to consider volunteering your time to help make the fair a success. The shifts are two hours in length and you may sign up for one or more. **These shifts are for the information booth in front of Kelly's.** No experience is necessary, just a desire to have fun

and welcome visitors!!!

Please pick your slot(s) and email the Westport Historical Society at westporthistorical@gmail.com.

September 8 &/or September 9

9:00am to 11:00am

11:00am to 1:00pm

1:00am to 3:00pm

3:00pm to 5:00pm

5:00pm to 7:00pm

7:00pm to 9:00pm

September 10

9:00am to 11:00pm

11:00am to 1:00pm

1:00pm to 3:00pm

3:00pm to 5:00pm

5:00pm to pack-up

LIFETIME MEMBERS OF THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mayor & Mrs. Richard Berkley
Robert Corbett
Ann Duer
Jim & Caren Hall
Kelly's Westport Inn
Dorine Lowell
Patricia Cleary Miller
Allin & Donna Phister
L. Thorton & Erin Phister
Ray & Sandy Sutton
Torosian Foundation/
Jean Kiene
Cooper Weeks
Doris Yonker



LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT GIFT?

If someone you know is not a member, please consider a membership in the Westport Historical Society for that special gift! Memberships are \$15.00 for students, \$35.00 for individuals, and \$45.00 for a family. The membership includes invitations to special events, the society's quarterly newsletter, free guided tour of the museum house, and a 10% discount on gift shop items.

PLEASE HELP US LOCATE PHOTOS OF THE HARRIS GRANDCHILDREN

The Historical Society is looking for photographs of the John and Henrietta Harris grandchildren. We would be grateful for any donation of photos, or copies of photos which relatives might have in their photo albums. Below is a list of the grandchildren and their respective parents:

Peter and Sarah Harris Behan: Katherine M., Henrietta, John Harris, Laura Smith, Silas Price, Julia Mastic, Susan Ann, Peter Jr., Hugh Gary

Charles Esmond and Josephine Harris Kearney: Francis Esmond, Mary Louise, Julia M., William Bernard, Elizabeth (Lizzy), Charles Esmond, Jr.

James and Henrietta Harris Lipscomb: William Simpson, Nathan, Louisa Simpson, Frances Malcomb, John Harris, Joel Jr., Charles Harris, Rodney Bernard, James Harris, Zachary

John and Anna Wood Harris: Jorine, John Joseph, Arthur, O'Verta, Virginia

Seth and Mary Frances Harris Ward: John Esmond, Hugh Campbell, Mary Frances' step children: Martha, James, Richard

William and Susan Harris Bernard: Henrietta (Nettie), Anna

John J. and Julia Ann Harris Mastin: John J., Jr.

Thomas Hoyle. and Elizabeth Simpson Harris Mastin: John J., Theodora (Theo), Thomas Harris, Jack Adams

Also, we are seeking photos of Harriet "Hattie" Drisdome Kearney who joined the Charles Esmond Kearney Family in 1855.

Please contact www.westporthistorical.com or call 816-561-1821 if you have any photos you would like to share.

BOOK YOUR TOURS NOW !!!

Call now to book group tours of the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum and/or Walking Tours of Old Westport. Group tours may include lunch, if desired.

We are also taking reservations for your special events. If your club, organiza-



tion, or family wants to entertain with a meeting, luncheon, tea, cocktail hour, small wedding or other celebration, please send an email inquiry to westporthistori-cal@gmail.com, or call 816-561-1821 for rates and further information.

If you have not been receiving the monthly e-newsletter, The Mansion House News, please let us know and we will get you added to the mailing list!

WESTPORT

Old West Port is vital to the history of Kansas City. It is known nationwide for the BATTLE OF WEST PORT and its service to the development of the West, as well as the birth place of Kansas City.

The first white man to visit the territory was Daniel Morgan Boone in 1787. The Louisiana Purchase in 1804 included territory to the very doors of Old West Port. The first permanent residence in West Port was a one-story cabin built by Daniel and Rosanna Yoacham in the late 1820's. The cabin at the intersection of what would become Main (Westport Road) and Water Street (Mill Street) became very popular with trappers and traders, so a second story was soon added and the establishment became known as Yoacham Tavern.

The Rev. Isaac McCoy entered a tract of government land in 1831. In the next year, his son, John Calvin McCoy, opened a mercantile business at the northwest corner of what would become Main (Westport Road) and Main Cross (Pennsylvania). Realizing the possibilities of a town site, the young McCoy divided the land adjacent to the store into lots and called the settlement West Port. His town's name choice was chosen as the area was becoming known as the "port of entry" into the Great Western Territory.

With the Indian Removal Act of 1832, the Indian reservations of the Wyandotte, the Delaware, Sac, Fox,

and Shawnee had received government payments of \$4,000,000.00 and each tribe freely spent the money in West Port.

The Santa Fe, California and Oregon Trails business was moved from

Independence to West Port in 1833. Trade with Mexico flourished and gold and silver bullion could be seen piled on the streets waiting for re-consignment and



reshipment.

When gold was discovered in California, the "Forty Niners" traveled through West Port, the "Gateway to the West" buying supplies for the trips west. The advantages of West Port soon attracted various classes of

merchants and trades people. By 1850, West Port became the chief trading and outfitting point for trappers, traders, adventurers, and pioneers who paved

the way for advancing civilization.

Companies and people from all over the country and the world traveled to West Port to organize and outfit caravans for journeys across the plains.

The "Pro-Slavery" party established their headquarters in West Port, in 1856, during the "Border War" strife between Kansas and Missouri. The struggle on the border eventually led to the American Civil War and in 1864, a Civil War battle came to West Port.



Continued on page 6 WESTPORT

PAST WESTPORT PRESERVATION EFFORTS

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, Vol. 96
Tuesday, December 2, 1975 No. 76

Westport Should Have Future to Match Its Past

. . . struggle [to become a] historic district. . . Although Westport is a blending of home and commercial structures . . . [preservation] efforts here . . . in the past have restricted . . . preservation activities to individual buildings of historical or architectural prominence.

The Westport plan is a simple one. Clearly it merits the support of the plans and zoning committee next week and later by the full council. The City Plan Commission has given it the green light.

In brief, the ordinance would impose a 120 day moratorium in that district which is defined by boundaries that extend from 39th street south to 43rd street and from Main to the Southwest Traffic way. The same boundaries have been adopted earlier in work done by the City Development Department and the Westport Historical Society.

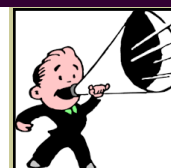
The freeze would prohibit any demolition. Exterior alterations would be illegal and no additional signs could be installed. During the 120 days the city would inventory and study what is left in Westport as a basis for a master plan for the district. An effort would also be made to

have the district added to the National Register of Historic Places.

The designation would do much more than recognize Westport's contribution to the opening of the America West. It would permit the district to qualify for federal loans and grants that are available only to properties on the National Register.

This is not an attempt, as some have suggested, to lower property values or impose some nefarious scheme on the neighborhood. Instead, it is a thoughtful and rational proposal to encourage preservation in a district that played a role in one of the greatest eras in the nation's development.

The long-term goal is to conserve what remains in Westport, as well as to guarantee whatever is built or altered in the district will be compatible with what is already there. A 120-day moratorium in the middle of a Kansas City winter should inconvenience few people, if anyone. It would buy time, however, to take a solid look at Westport as it exists today to determine what role it should have in the future of Metropolitan Kansas City. [Unfortunately, a master plan for preservation was never realized. 2017 Kansas City must take another look and protect its national known history.]



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

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!

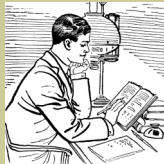
**Call Alana Smith for
more information about
volunteering at
816-561-1821 or
913-648-0952.**

The West Port Seal was used by the early merchants of West Port for promotional purposes. It was in use prior to 1857 which was the year West Port was incorporated. The Seal appears in the 1855 Spaulding Map of West Port which is in the Missouri Valley Room at the Kansas City, MO public library. The Seal is still in use today as the official logo of the Westport Historical Society.



RESEARCH RESOURCES

The library at the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum contains many books and files which may be used as reference material for those seeking information on early Westport, the Town of Kansas, and many of the residents who lived and worked in early Kansas and Missouri. If you would like to do research using our sources, please call the museum staff to make an appointment: 816-561-1821.



THANK YOU!

The Board of the Westport Historical Society would like to sincerely thank our corporate sponsors for their support of the society and the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum. Our mission to preserve the past and educate for the future is enhanced by the generosity of our sponsors. We ask our many members to frequent these businesses and thank them for supporting the society's efforts.

WESTPORT continued from page 4

In October of that year, the "Battle of West Port" took place over 39 square miles in the area in and around West Port.

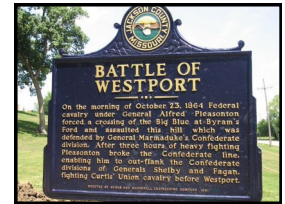
Federal troops, who had been stationed in West Port since 1856, occupied the Harris House Hotel, at the northeast corner of Main (Westport Road) and Main Cross (Pennsylvania), for their headquarters.

During the battle, General Curtis (pictured right) commanded troops from the roof of the hotel watching the fighting on Brush Creek. This battle was the largest Civil War battle west of



the Mississippi and the second largest Cavalry battle in the entire Civil War.

The memory of the brave pioneers and the valor and sacrifice of those in the Blue and the Gray should give everyone who lives in and visits today's Westport, a renewed sense of pride in our great heritage.



From the files of the Westport Historical Society

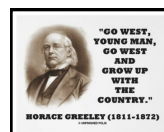
DID YOU KNOW?

◆ The first theatre production in America was the Hallam Theatre Company's *The Merchant of Venice* at Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1752.

◆ The first underwater photograph was made in 1856 by William Thompson.

◆ In 1858, the population of West Port was over 2000 people.

◆ In 1859, Horace Greely passed through West Port and stopped at the Harris House Hotel.



◆ Charles Esmonde Kearney was considered the wealthiest businessman in West Port in 1860-61.

◆ In the mid-1800s, the first airships were being engineered: hot-air balloons and zeppelins.



◆ In 1860 Florence Nightingale documented the health benefits of clean air.



◆ The typewriter debuted on the market in 1874.

◆ In 1884, New York Governor Grover Cleveland narrowly defeated Republican former United States Senator James G. Blaine of Maine by a margin of just 1,047 votes to become the 22nd President of the United States.

◆ 1895 the Kansas City School of Law was founded and located in downtown Kansas City, MO.

2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug 19 2-4pm The CROSBY and Community Awards

Sept 9 10am - 5pm Lost Arts Fair

Oct 14 2pm Saturday Library Speaker Series presents Dr. Eric Anderson with Haskell University

Oct 14, 21 & 28 Paranormal Investigations with S.P.O.O.K.S.

Nov 11 Annual Meeting & Luncheon

Nov 11 2:00pm Saturday Library Speaker Series presents Thomas Hart Benton's "Year of Peril"

Nov 24 & 25 A Prairie Christmas Candlelight Tour

Dec 22 House Museum closes for season

THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2017 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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Alana Smith
913-648-0952

VICE-PRESIDENT
Vacant

SECRETARY
To Be Announced

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Vacant

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Richard Heaviland
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Teddy Wiberg

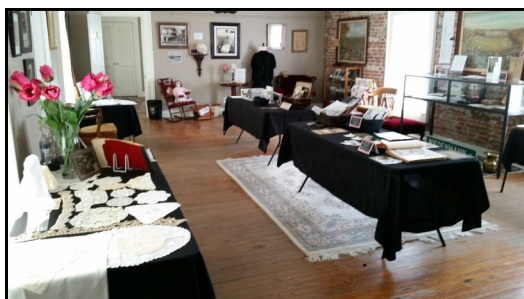
THE WESTPORTER
Teddy Wiberg, Editor

WIEDENMANN EXHIBIT & FAMILY REUNION

Many thanks to the Wiedenman Family for a fantastic exhibit at the museum. The exhibit truly shows the rich history of a German family that came to Westport in 1855. The artifacts share the lives of the family and the impact the family had on Westport and Kansas City, and the impact it continues to provide today.

On June 9 and 10, Wiedenmann descendants from the family's 10 original branches, who are scattered around the country, met at the 1855 Harris-Kearney House Museum for a long over-due family reunion. Members of the family enjoyed meeting, most for the first time, lingered over the extensive exhibit of family artifacts, and exchanged stories from their respective branch histories during a bountiful picnic dinner.

The Westport Historical Society would like to thank all family members who donated or loaned items for display. Special thanks to Marty Wiedenmann Jarvis for planning the family reunion and for mounting the outstanding exhibit. This exhibit will be at the museum until Nov. 1. Don't miss it!



PLEDGE OF LOYALTY

On December 3, 1861, Mr. Jacob Bernard of West Port, MO and cousin to Mr. William Bernard pledged his loyalty to the Union. Below is a copy of the pledge he signed:

TO ALL WHICH IT MAY CONCERN: KNOW, that being assured of the loyalty of Mr. Jacob Bernard to the Government of the United States, I have this day granted to him and his family and property full protection, and hereby warn and forbid all persons from any interference with him and his possessions UNDER PENALTY OF DEATH. This order shall be good so long as the said Jacob Bernard shall remain a good and loyal citizen, and NO LONGER.

*Kansas City, MO. Dec. 3rd 1861. C.R. Jennison Col.
Commanding 1st Kansas Cavalry.*

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