

# BOONE'S LICK HERITAGE QUARTERLY



Folk musicians and historians Cathy Barton and Dave Para to perform at Fall BHS meeting

## **The Birch Affair — Civil War Glasgow**

*Architectural Gems in the Boonslick: The Davis Slave Quarters*

**BHS Fall Meeting at Historic Hotel Frederick**

*November 15 in Boonville — page 2*

**Book Review—Author Interview, William Clark Biography**

**VOL. 14 No. 3 — FALL 2015**

**BOONSLICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY PERIODICAL**

# Folk Musicians Barton and Para Highlight of BHS Fall Meeting

## November 15 at Historic Hotel Frederick

Missouri folk musicians and folklore historians Cathy Barton and Dave Para will be the featured presenters at the Boonslick Historical Society (BHS) fall meeting, November 15 at the historic Hotel Frederick in Booneville.

The BHS fall meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour, followed by the dinner at 6:30 p.m. and then the program. Dinner reservations (due by November 6) are required for everyone, including non-BHS members. Contact Cindy Bowen at 660-273-2374 or by email at [gbowen@socket.net](mailto:gbowen@socket.net) or return the reservation form included in the magazine. Cost is \$20 per person.

The title of Barton and Para's presentation is "Telling It Like It Is—and Isn't: History and Folksong." "This talk is based on long-ago discussions we had with [the late] Bob Dyer about using folksong to illustrate historical events," says Barton. "Some songs convey the topic accurately, but many contain errors and moralistic additions, due to the oral nature of traditional culture. As folklorists, we find these errors fascinating in and of themselves for what they tell us about the common man and woman, but historians can find these elements troubling."

Dyer, who was a resident of Booneville, died in 2007 at the age of 68 after an extended illness. He was a well-known Boonslick historian, educator and musician and often performed with Barton and Para at folk music events. He was the founder and long-time editor of Boone's Lick Heritage magazine, published by the Boonslick Historical Society.

Barton and Para founded the Big Muddy Music Festival in Booneville and the Boone's Lick Country Folk Festival in historic Arrow Rock. Married since 1979, they have played folk music together for nearly four decades. They have also been involved in teaching their music and their instruments to young people through master-class workshops at Central Methodist University (CMU) and other area schools.

"Their music comes primarily from the Ozarks and the Civil War—threads of history, religion, and folklore that weave together the history of Mid-America, especially Missouri," notes BHS member and CMU magazine editor Cathy Thogmorton. "Their instruments come from everything—hammered and fretted dulcimers, guitar, banjo, autoharp, mouth bow, spoons, bones, and even a leaf.

"The duo's concerts are enlightening, fascinating, and fun. Their joy in their music is contagious. Their visits to CMU in the past have left lines of students and adults talking with them afterward and trying out the instruments."

In recent years, Barton and Para have received the Missouri Humanities Council Governor's Award, The Lighton Prize for Teaching Artist Excellence, and the Folk Tradition in the Midwest Lifetime Award.

The Boonslick Historical Society was founded at the Hotel Frederick in November 1937. The hotel is a significant local and state historical landmark, and is a classic example of Romanesque Revival architecture in the region. It was built in 1905 by Charles A. Sombart, a local miller and banker. It was constructed by W.J. Cochran and Sons Construction Company for a cost of \$40,000. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. After the completion of the Highway 40 Booneville Road Bridge, an additional 36 rooms were added in 1932.

From 1905 until 1964 the hotel was leased by the Million family, with the Sombart family retaining ownership. After the Sombarts sold the hotel in 1964, it went through a succession of owners. For a while it was operated as a weekend restaurant and Greyhound bus depot, and later served as the Booneville Retirement Center. The retirement center closed in 1994 and the building sat dormant until 2004, when it was purchased by the Haw family, undergoing a \$4-million restoration. The public areas of the Hotel Frederick have been furnished and decorated primarily with 19th century antiques, with an emphasis on regional pieces. The well-known and highly respected magazine MissouriLife maintains its offices in the hotel.



### BHS 2016 Member Fees Now Due

Boonslick Historical Society annual membership fees for calendar year 2016 are now due. The dues year is January through December. Membership dues are \$15-Individual, \$25-Family, \$50-Sponsor, \$250-Patron, and \$500-Life.

If you are not already a BHS member and wish to join, send a check made out to the Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Booneville, MO 65233. You will receive our publication, Boone's Lick Heritage Quarterly, and be able to attend annual Society events highlighting the region's history.

### BHS Board Nominations

The multi-year terms for five BHS board members are up for renewal, effective January 2016. The four are Tom of Fayette, Don Cullimore of Fayette, Sam Jewett of Booneville, Jim Steele of Fayette and Mike Dickey of Arrow Rock. All have indicated their willingness to continue on the board for another two years.

Board membership is open to all members. Anyone wishing to nominate someone for consideration as a board candidate should contact BHS President Cindy Bowen at 660-273-2374 or Email: [gbowen@socket.net](mailto:gbowen@socket.net) before the November 15 fall banquet. A brief bio of the candidate being nominated should be provided to Cindy. Announcement of board candidates will be made at the fall meeting, and members will be asked to vote on them. Ten board members are the maximum allowed.

*Boone's Lick Heritage Quarterly* is published four times a year by the Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Boonville, MO 65233.

We encourage our members and others interested in history to contribute articles or other information of historical interest, including family histories, pertaining to the region. Please address all contributions and correspondence related to the periodical to the editor, Don B. Cullimore, 1 Lawrence Dr., Fayette, MO 65248, or email to: don.cullimore40@gmail.com, phone: 660-248-1732. Editorial guidelines may be obtained from the editor. Publication deadlines are February 1 for the March (Spring) issue; May 1 for the June (Summer) issue; August 1 for the September (Fall) issue; and November 1 for the (Winter) December issue.

The Boonslick Historical Society was founded in 1937 and meets several times a year to enjoy programs about historical topics pertinent to the Boonslick area. Members of the Society have worked together over the years to publish historical books and brochures and to mark historic sites. They supported the founding of Boone's Lick State Historic Site, marked the sites of Cooper's Fort and Hanna Cole's Fort and have restored a George Caleb Bingham painting on loan to The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art at Central Methodist University, Fayette.

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# BOONE'S LICK HERITAGE QUARTERLY

Boonslick Historical Society Vol. 14, No. 3 • Fall 2015

## Contents

### The Birch Affair

Page 4

By Thomas Erskine Birch V and Jim Denny

Thomas Erskine  
Birch, brother of  
Weston Birch



Wartime conflict between wealthy Glasgow citizen Weston Birch and Union Maj. C. B. Hunt reveals North-South divide among Boonslick populace

### Boonslick Architectural Gem: Davis Slave Quarters

Page 8

By Brett Rogers



Circa 1850s family farm structure in Saline County one of few remaining architectural representations of Boonslick slave quarters

### Book Review-Author Interview, William Clark Bio.

Page 13

By Don Cullimore



Marble statuary of famed explorer William Clark sits at his grave site at Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis. Clark is the subject of a new biography by Missouri author Jo Ann Trogon.

Front cover and page 2 photos courtesy of Dave Para and Cathy Barton



# The Birch Affair

## INTRODUCTION

*By Jim Denny*

IN THE “**BIRCH AFFAIR**” **TOM BIRCH** PRESENTS A vivid description of an interaction between Weston Birch, a wealthy and prominent Glasgow, Missouri businessman, and Maj. C. B. Hunt, the leader of Union forces occupying the town during the late summer and fall of 1862, still early in the Civil War. Judging from the acrimony that arose between these two parties, it might be easy to forget that Birch and Hunt were both on the same side.

Although Birch was a slaveholder and staunch supporter of slavery while Hunt was a zealous Yankee from Michigan, both men supported the same Union cause, even if they didn't seem to realize that fact. Birch was overly irksome to be sure. But the degree to which Hunt and his superior Lewis Merrill, another hard-fisted Free Stater, interpreted Weston Birch's irksomeness as treason, they were creating public relations problems for the managers of the Union war effort in Missouri. Such extreme behavior was hardly the way to maintain the trust and allegiance of those Missouri southerners who had thus far still clung to the belief that slavery and Unionism could coexist. If the shaky lid on the ever-simmering pressure cooker that was Missouri loyalty was not to blow, men like Hunt and Merrill had to go.

Birch, a Conditional Unionist, belonged to the constituency that turned out to be the backbone of Missouri Unionism. Lincoln knew that to lose the loyalty of these supporters was to lose the whole cause. He emphatically assured these wavering loyalists that slavery would be protected and the Fugitive Slave Act enforced.

Hamilton Gamble, the provisional governor of Missouri, considered overzealous Free State Union troops to be a genuine menace. Their inability to distinguish their allies from their enemies seemed to be driving heretofore loyal citizens to the secessionist side. Gamble's goal was to replace Free State soldiers with a homegrown state militia that he controlled. Ironically, perhaps, Hunt was in Glasgow enlisting local men in the very kind of enrolled militia that Gamble hoped would allow Free State soldiers like Hunt to be transferred out of the state to other theaters of the Civil War.

The article presented here is the last version of several drafts that Tom Birch prepared during the first half of 2010. Among other historical sources, he relied importantly on the relatively untapped trove of Union Provost Marshal Records for civilians on film at the Missouri State Archives in Jefferson City. His article is a significant demonstration of the usefulness of this valuable set of records, which has only become easily available online to users in recent years thanks to the acquisition by the Office of Secretary of State of microfilm records from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Sadly, shortly after Tom completed this near final draft, he suddenly and unexpectedly passed away.

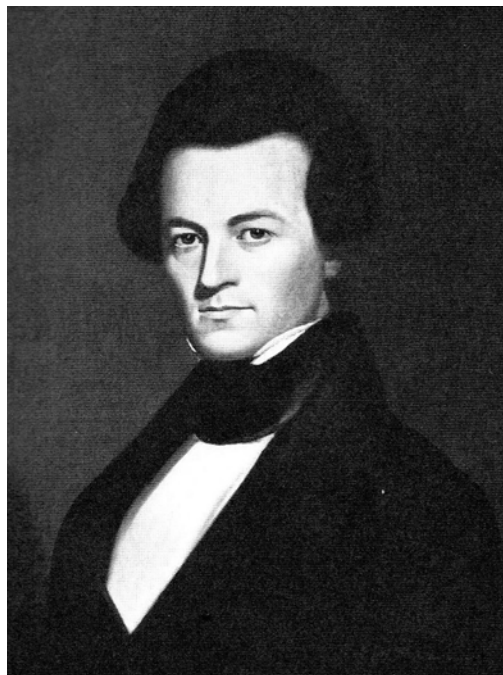
Tom Birch, as might be guessed, was a relative of Weston Birch. Tom was the fifth in a direct line of family members bearing the name of Thomas Erskine Birch. His great grandfather was the second in this line, and also brother of Weston. The elegant houses both brothers built after arriving in Glasgow were located next to one another on the south end of Glasgow. Thomas Erskine Birch II's house, “Riverview,” still stands just south of Stump Island Park. Weston's mansion was demolished a number of years ago. It stood approximately where the Kummel Shelter is presently located in Stump Island Park. —Jim Denny

## THE BIRCH AFFAIR

*By Thomas Erskine Birch V*

DESPITE THEIR BATTLEFIELD VICTORIES AT LEXINGTON and Wilson's Creek, by 1862 Confederate forces had been forced into the extreme southwestern region of Missouri. Federal troops under the overall command of Maj. Gen. John Schofield were firmly in control of St. Louis and were steadily tightening their grip on the Missouri River valley.

These events left thousands of pro-Southern men north of the river. In an effort to bring these men under Confederate arms, Joseph Porter and John



**Thomas E. Birch II, brother of Weston Birch and a resident of Glasgow. Painting by George Caleb Bingham. A portrait of Weston could not be found.**

Poindexter were authorized to proceed north of the Missouri River to recruit and organize resistance to what many Missourians viewed as Federal occupation. Operating independently during the spring and summer of 1862, these two raiders attacked isolated Federal garrisons throughout northeastern and north-central Missouri until they were finally defeated. Poindexter was captured in an action near Edina, and Porter suf-



**Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield**  
Library of Congress Archives

ferred a defeat at Kirksville. His command was scattered, and eventually hounded out of the state. It is against this backdrop of events that this story begins.

Following their participation in the campaign against Porter and Poindexter in northeast Missouri, Maj. C. B. Hunt and a detachment of the 2nd Missouri Volunteer Cavalry, also known as Merrill's Horse, re-

turned to Glasgow in late July 1862. The twenty-seven-year-old Hunt was no stranger to operating in the midst of a hostile population. He had enlisted in the 1st Michigan Regiment at the age of 14 to serve in the Mexican War and saw duty guarding the Vera Cruz-Cordoba Road. Operations in the Boonslick, where pro-southern sentiments ran deep, proved even more hazardous. In July of the previous year, he was leading a detachment of 60 troopers on a horse-gathering expedition near Lisbon, some seven miles south of Glasgow, when it was ambushed. A small detachment of Confederate irregulars under the command of Capt. James Cason loosed five volleys on the unwary Federal column, killing nine, wounding 22, and scattering the remnant.

Hunt established an encampment on the south edge of the city and set about his duties, which included suppressing Confederate recruiting efforts, administering loyalty oaths, and enrolling all able-bodied men between 18 and 45 years of age into the 46th Enrolled Missouri Militia. No sooner had he begun than he ran afoul of one of Glasgow's prominent citizens and thus began what came to be called the "Birch Affair."

Virginia-born Weston Birch was one of three brothers who migrated to Missouri. He first settled in Fayette where he was associated with his older brother, James H. Birch, in several newspaper ventures, most notably as publisher of the *Western Monitor* in 1829-1830. Somewhere along the line, most probably as a result of his brother James's feud with Sen. Thomas Hart Benton, he switched political affiliations to the Whig party, which resulted in his appointment as U.S. Marshall in 1843. He was also elected a director of the Fayette Bank in 1845 and again in 1849.

In 1852 he moved to Glasgow, began construction of an im-

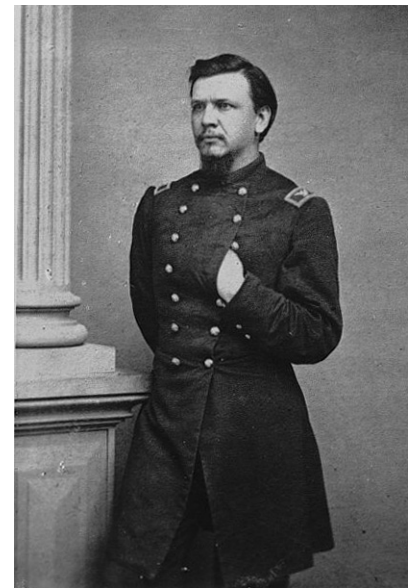
pressive three-story house, complete with ballroom, and established a dry goods company and the Banking and Exchange House of Weston F. Birch and Son.

A slaveholder and an avowed Unionist, he was undoubtedly among the majority of men of his class who shunned both the states-rights party of Breckenridge and the then radical Republican party of Lincoln in favor of the Constitutional Union party of John Bell, who garnered the majority of Howard County votes in the election of 1860. Lincoln's election must have fallen on Weston and his like-minded friends like a thunderbolt.

Far from supporting secession, he and his fellow "provisional unionists" expected the Federal Government to protect their rights as slaveholders but viewed the subsequent investment of the state, and Glasgow in particular, by Federal troops with some alarm, in spite of the fact that roving guerrilla bands posed a serious threat to their livelihoods and personal safety. This is doubly ironic when one takes into account that Weston had written Maj. Gen. [Henry] Halleck, the commander of the Department of Missouri in December of 1861 saying, "I consider the money of the Western Bank of Missouri unsafe at the various points of doing business in this state and request an order for its removal to this city (St. Louis) or New York during the existence of martial law in Missouri."

This request seems logical if somewhat tardy in that little more than three months earlier Weston was in the company of two officers of the Fayette Bank attempting to take several hundred thousand dollars of that bank's money to St. Louis by rail for safe-keeping, when they were apprehended by a unit of the Missouri State Guard who promptly relieved them of their burden.

A proud man, jealous of his rights as a citizen of the United States, Weston Birch immediately fell to odds with Major Hunt over the placement of a forage lot for the encampment on the grounds of his home. In a letter to General Schofield, Commander of the Department of Missouri, dated September 1, 1862, he complains, "Something over four weeks ago the camp was located immediately adjoining my property. The forage lot was most wickedly and wantonly placed on my grounds beyond his encampment." He goes further in his complaint by adding that the Federal troops "made a privy of my blackberry patch, in my yard and my corn patch, in my garden until both had to be destroyed by me. They have robbed my hen house, destroyed my garden, ruined my well, taken a large portion of my poultry, and most wantonly located some six or eight wagons and teams in some seventy yards of my door, until their offal became offensive and immediately at my yard gate."



**Brig. Gen. Lewis Merrill**  
Library of Congress Archives



Later in this letter he alludes to a cabal of personal enemies who have ingratiated themselves with the Major Hunt for the purpose of defaming him and calling into question his loyalty, to wit: "And I desire you to know that I would feel myself disgraced to have my loyalty and devotion to my country compared to such sycophants as B. W. Lewis, J. N. Lewis, and T. J. Bartholow.\* They compose a business firm, and I tell you, gave more to secession, at the time Gen'l Price was likely to occupy this section than any three men in this city." This last statement did nothing to enhance his credibility as later that year the same T. J. Bartholow was the general commanding the 46th Enrolled Missouri Militia.

In addition to this letter, he had twice written to provisional Gov. Hamilton Gamble about the conduct of Major Hunt and his men. These letters were undoubtedly forwarded to General Schofield, for on September 3, 1862, Schofield sent a terse note to Gen. Lewis Merrill, the commander of the 2nd USVC and Major Hunt's immediate superior officer: "Respectfully refer to Brig. Gen. Merrill. If the accusations against Major Hunt are true Major Hunt should be arrested. At least the matter should be investigated."

Not surprisingly, shortly thereafter, Major Hunt placed Weston Birch under arrest for "disloyalty and interfering with the enrollment [of recruits]." Upon hearing this, one of Weston's friends commented that while he had no doubt of Weston's loyalty, "He will talk."

For Major Hunt's part, having ridden over the state chasing guerrillas and dealing with, if not a disloyal population, a lack of cooperation with his efforts, he regarded Birch's complaints as more of the same. Upon finding that Birch had taken his complaints to General Schofield, he defended himself, stating: "In reply to Mr. Birch's accusations, I pronounce them almost totally false. The camp was located here under direction of Capt. Baird (the day I returned from St. Louis). As a military necessity the forage was placed in one corner of his pasture because it was the only suitable place men and horses and forage were perfectly safe in case of an attack, which was expected every moment and with good reason." As to the damages alleged, he continues, "The fence was old and rotten and sustained some damage though nothing worth talking about. On one occasion a light ambulance started down the hill alone and ran through the fence without any damage to the ambulance."

In closing this letter he fired his final shot by saying: "No word of complaint has ever come to me from him. His letter to Gen. Schofield is the 1st intimation I had that he was so inhumanly treated. I have no malice towards Mr. Birch but have always condemned his Cause, as I would any other disloyal man." This opinion was shared by his commander, Gen. Lewis Merrill, who replied to General Schofield in a letter dated September 5, 1862: "...the respective characters of Weston F. Birch and Major Hunt are so well known to me that I have no doubt of the falsity of the charges. Mr. Birch was arrested by Major Hunt for disloyalty and interfering with the enrollment, hence the charges against Major Hunt." Then, in a more sarcastic tone he continues: "As the dispersal of Federal troops seems to be offensive to Mr. Birch near his present residence and as he has several times long since publicly stated that he would use all his influence to have them removed from Glasgow, I would suggest the possibility of providing Mr. Birch with apartments at McDowell College or at Alton [both Federal military prisons] where he can compare the conduct of Major Hunt's men with that of other troops and doubtless would find the comparison favorable to them when he is the first one in Glasgow to complain." (General



**Known as Riverview, this elegant house was built in the early 1850s by Weston Birch's brother, Thomas. It still stands just south of Stump Island Park in Glasgow. A similar house built nearby by Weston was demolished many years ago. Photo by Jim Denny**

Merrill's out-of-hand dismissal of the charges levied against Major Hunt would seem to be little more than an attempt to shield a subordinate, as Birch's first letters to Governor Gamble predate his arrest by more than two weeks).

That an investigation of sorts was conducted is affirmed in yet another letter from Birch to General Schofield dated September 10, which begins, "This morning Maj. Hunt, in company with an apparent officer unknown to me, came upon my grounds, and, at some distance hallooed that he was examining my damage." Birch concluded, "Without any knowledge of its character, you will scarcely expect me to be satisfied with a report emanating from the accused party."

After this "investigation," Merrill again wrote to General Schofield that Major Hunt "has only erred in permitting a double dyed traitor, one Weston F. Birch, to be at large. He should be confined at Alton during the war for interfering with the enrollment, discouraging recruitment, and taking pains to bring all his influence to bear" to obtain the release "of every bad man who was arrested from that county, including the notorious Sartain" (who

was captured, indicted, and subsequently executed by firing squad for his part in the attack on the steamboat White Cloud in August of 1861). Birch had, in fact, written to Governor Gamble the previous April attesting to the character of some men from Howard County who had been arrested and taken to St. Louis but offered in his defense a letter from Richard Earickson which stated, "Understanding that one of the charges made against you by Major Hunt was bringing your influence to bear for the release of Calvin Sartain, I will say that during the time efforts were being made for his release on oath & bond, I heard you say that you would interpose for no such man- that you did not know him sufficiently to justify you in so doing, and said you had doubts whether his character & acts were of the description which would justify his release."

Fortunately for Birch, these calls for his imprisonment went unanswered. James T. Birch, Weston's son and partner in the bank, wrote General Merrill on October 1, 1862, inquiring about the status of his father's case and the progress of the investigation, but it appears that, for all practical purposes, the matter was dropped when Major Hunt was transferred to another post in mid-September and his father's arrest was lifted.

There are indications that while Weston Birch ceased to be considered a threat to the peace and tranquility of Glasgow, he was only grudgingly tolerated by the Federal authorities, likely because his prominence and political connections made prosecuting him more trouble than it was worth. This view is substantiated by his obituary as it appeared in the Columbia Missouri Statesman, dated June 24, 1881, which stated he was "at first denounced by zealous southerners, and finally became obnoxious to the radical element of the other side." Eventually, he became disenchanted with living under Federal martial law and left Glasgow for New York late in the war. He returned only to sell his interest in the bank to his younger brother, Thomas, in May 1865. He and his son, James, moved to New York and entered a partnership with Byron Murray, forming Birch, Murray, and Company, Bankers, at #12 Wall Street. He stayed in New York only a few years before returning to Glasgow in the early 1870s. He died at the home of his son, James, June 18, 1881, one month and a day before his 77th birthday.

In the end we are left with almost as many questions about Weston's true loyalties as we began with. On one hand we have his professions of loyalty to the Union, supported by several letters written on his behalf by unquestionably loyal peers. On the other, we have a picture of a man who went out of his way to hinder the Federal authorities at every opportunity.

Copperhead or eccentric? The question remains. While there is no mention of him or his activities in the Federal records after October 1862, it is interesting to note that his younger brother, Thomas Erskine Birch II, also came to the attention of the Federal military authorities at the same time. This led to an order for his banishment from the state in November 1862. This order was later overridden. There is also evidence that in the latter half of 1863, Thomas ran afoul of Maj. Reeves Leonard, commander of the Enrolled Militia for the district. Were the brothers colluding to distract and hinder the Federal war effort or were their troubles merely coincidental? Whatever the case may be there can be no doubt that there is more to the Birch Affair than meets the eye.

## FOOTNOTE

\*In addition to Federal military authorities, Weston Birch's unconditionally loyal neighbors, especially Benjamin W. Lewis, no doubt questioned Weston's brand of the loyalty as well. Lumped into the same basket was his brother, Thomas Erskine Birch II. These suspicions were likely shared with military authorities. One of Tom Birch's unfinished projects was to look more deeply into Weston's assertion that he was falsely accused by business rivals and personal enemies such as the Lewis brothers, especially Benjamin, and Bartholow. It turns out there probably was justification for Weston's suspicions. While no direct evidence implicates Benjamin W. Lewis in the disloyalty charges against Weston, later in the war, there is stronger evidence that Lewis kept some kind of list of "disloyal" persons that was shared with Federal military commanders, such as Maj. Reeves Leonard. On August 21, 1864, he wrote to Gen. Clinton Fisk in St. Joseph, "I am well pleased at the assessment [of \$5,000 per "disloyal" person] you have ordered to be made on Monroe and Shelby Counties. . . . If this is done all over our State there will be no more recruiting. [In Howard County] this assessment would fall on the worst kind of rebels and sympathizers, and Major Leonard would be the man to proportion and place this assessment properly by your order, as he knows every rebel and sympathizer in the county." As Tom Birch's article indicates, Thomas Erskine Birch II was likely already on Maj. Reeves Leonard's "enemy" list. Almost two months to the day after Benjamin Lewis sent this communication to Fisk, the savage guerrilla chieftain, Bloody Bill Anderson, showed up at Lewis's elegant Glasgow mansion, Glen Eden. The Battle of Glasgow had just been fought and the town was completely undefended. Bloody Bill subjected Lewis to a savage beating that nearly killed him. Anderson demanded no less than \$5,000 for Benjamin's life, which partially had to be raised amongst the townspeople by his distraught wife. The suggestion is strong that the tables had been turned and some "disloyal" person had made sure Bloody Bill Anderson knew of Lewis's hearty approval of Gen. Fisk's policy of placing huge fines on good, long-suffering southerners. Bloody Bill demanded of the bloodied Lewis a "fine" of the same amount. Weston could not have been the informer. He was no doubt in New York by then, as far away from Glasgow and its nasty war of neighbors as he could get. —Jim Denny

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Jim Denny was a historian with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for thirty-three years before retiring in November 2009. He received his education at the University of Missouri, where he earned a Master's Degree in American History.

Denny is co-author, with James D. Harlan, of the *Atlas of Lewis and Clark in Missouri* (2003). His latest book, co-authored with John Bradbury, *The Civil War's First Blood: Missouri 1854 – 1861*, was published by Missouri Life (2007).



## Architectural Gems in the Boonslick: The John T. Davis Slave Quarters

Article and photos by Brett Rogers

In 1851, John T. Davis, a recent immigrant from Virginia, purchased a 180-acre farm just three miles east of Greenville (later renamed Miami) in northern Saline County. In the years that followed, Davis expanded the existing single-pen log cabin into an impressive central hall I-house and added a barn and an array of dependencies, including a frame slave quarters to match the big house. Architecturally, the small log-frame quarters built by Davis in the shadow of the family home and remaining in situ today is typical of many others that were constructed throughout antebellum Little Dixie and the U.S. South; but in 2015, the Davis quarters stands as an extremely rare architectural type that has all but vanished from the architectural landscape of the Boonslick.

John Davis was born in Cumberland County, Virginia, in 1806, the son of the Rev. Benjamin Davis and Ann Wilbourn. In 1829 he married Elizabeth Salee of neighboring Powhattan County, where they settled and began raising the first five of their seven children. Eight years later (1837), Davis left Virginia and moved his family to the developing river town of Greenville, in Saline County, Missouri. He found employment first with a local merchant and later worked as an overseer on the hemp plantation of P. D. Booker, where he and his family lived until mid-1847.

<sup>1</sup> At that time he purchased a 180-acre farm of his own from Singleton Vaughn for eight hundred dollars.<sup>2</sup> At this point the three eldest of the Davis sons—John Benjamin, Thomas E., and James Oscar, were in their teens and already experienced in farming. The three youngest sons—William J., Ira Virginia, and Charles H. (the latter two born since arriving in Missouri)—were not far behind. He had one daughter, Mary.<sup>3</sup>

Favorable growing conditions, fertile land and the economically crucial institution of slavery made for the rapid development of a localized hemp culture in Saline, Lafayette, and Clay counties, as well as other pockets within Little Dixie. More than any other

single commercial crop in the region, hemp elevated enterprising farmers and their families to varying degrees economic prosperity. As early as 1840, farmers in Saline and neighboring Lafayette Counties were shipping raw hemp and finished rope downriver to markets at St. Louis and beyond. Since an average of two acres of land could produce one ton of hemp, even most small farmers in Saline County grew at least a small amount as a part of their diversified farming.<sup>4</sup> The agricultural census of 1860 lists Davis as producing a variety of crops—corn, wheat, oats, hay, a minimal number of cattle and pigs, and just under three-quarters of a ton of hemp.<sup>5</sup> Davis was originally employed by P.D. Booker, a noted hemp producer in the county, and he was well versed in the production process. Due primarily to the meteoric rise of labor-

intensive hemp culture in Saline County, by the eve of the Civil War slaves constituted just over 40 percent of the total population of the County and collectively accounted for a good deal of Saline County's antebellum prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

Although there were large slaveholders throughout Missouri's hemplands, resulting in the development of something of a "planter" class, a significant number of slaves were owned by smaller farmers like John Davis. Davis had grown to adulthood in the slaveholding society of Virginia, where slave ownership had long been a mark of social position; in Missouri's Little Dixie, even minimal slave ownership elevated farmers like Davis to success beyond his yeoman



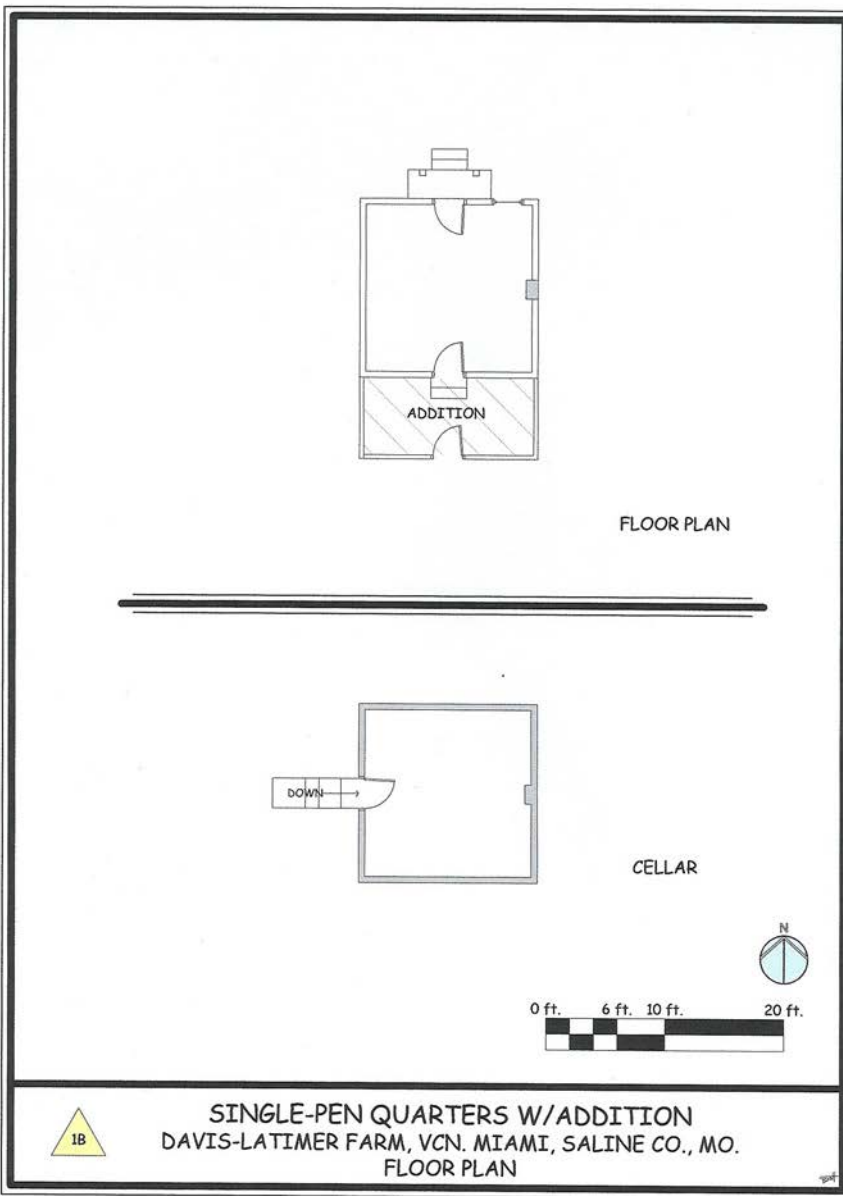
**A small log-frame structure built in the 1850s as slave quarters by farmer John T. Davis. The unused building still stands near Miami in Saline County.**

neighbors. Clearly, Davis rapidly developed a large enough operation to necessitate and afford at least a minimal amount of slave labor, even with all his sons. Although the 1850 Slave Schedule for Saline County does not list Davis as a slaveholder, ten years later he possessed three enslaved persons—a twenty-two year-old mother and her daughter and son (four and one years old, respectively) and declared one slave quarters in the census of 1860—the structure that remains today.<sup>7</sup> With only one daughter, Davis must have felt a need for more domestic labor. Additionally, the oral record supports the fact that John Davis had one female adult slave living on the property through the Civil War.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, no matter how successful Davis' operation might have seemed to his yeoman neighbors, he was not among Saline County's agricultural

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Brett Rogers is an architectural historian with deep roots in Little Dixie. He holds a graduate degree in history and teaches at area colleges.





aristocracy; his social and political influence, it seems, never extended much further than the local Masonic lodge.<sup>9</sup>

The built environment of transplanted Southerners like Davis invariably reflected tradition and varying degrees of prosperity. In building their homes and farmsteads, these planter/farmers articulated established architectural norms and spatial arrangement originating in the upper south. Their homes ranged from the simple single- and double-pen log and milled frame structures, based largely on square or slightly rectangular modules, the basis for practically all Southern vernacular structures, to more spacious I-houses. Davis's initial purchase also included a log dwelling, probably the Vaughn cabin, which Davis soon incorporated into the eastern portion of his new I-house. Built in the early 1850s (probably 1852-1853), the Davis I-house is one of only a handful of extant antebellum frame houses of this type left in the county and has retained much of its architectural integrity despite relatively conservative additions and modifications. Davis's central hall I-

house reflects a form that was replicated in the region for well over a century—two story, two rooms wide, one room deep, with a central hall, a plan duplicated on the second floor.<sup>10</sup> The oral record maintains that Davis and his sons not only designed, but built the house and the dependencies that remain today. I-houses like this one gave the practical farmer an appearance of relative success, and Davis's house was no exception.

Located southeast of the big house and visible from the public road and front entrance to the property, the contemporaneous slave quarters is a simple 16' X 16' hewn log frame structure sheathed in quarter-sawn clapboard and designed to architecturally blend with the big house; the basic side-gable form was designed to match the big house. Although more recently covered in tin, the roof was originally shake-shingle, as is still evident from the small attic, and fenestrations included a solitary double-hung six-over-six window on the facade. As in almost all frame dwellings of the time, the roughly 14' 6" x 14' 6" interior is finished in plaster-and-lath with simple utilitarian trim and plank floors of irregular width. The simple plan included a centrally positioned entrance door and rear door opposite. A brick chimney, designed to vent a wood stove extends through the roof at the east gable. Beneath the structure is a shallow (approximately 5' deep) brick walled root cellar where foods were stored, with access is via covered steps and entrance on the west side of the structure. At a later date a well-integrated 16' X 7' addition was built on the south side, but it was never plastered or insulated and thus never really utilized as an extension of the basic living space. Fronting the south doorway and facing the yard, it was likely the entrance that was most often used. Thus, the addition served as an antechamber or entrance to the other dependencies and workspace of the yard. Inside the Davis quarters where the young woman and her

children slept and worked, furnishings were undoubtedly Spartan and probably consisted of no more than beds, a stove, and a work/dining table and chairs.

The Davis quarters reflects a specific architectural type, deeply rooted in Southern architectural tradition. Since most slaveholders in Little Dixie "were small farmers who needed extra labor beyond that which the family could provide to move from subsistence to commercial agriculture,"<sup>11</sup> a fact which translated into ownership of fewer than five slaves on the average, the single-pen quarters became a commonly replicated form. Although slaves were housed in a variety of spaces, including basements and attics, the "typical" slave quarters in Missouri, as in the South, was a single-pen log cabin. In his celebrated, *Back of the Big House—The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, John Michael Vlach describes these structures as they appeared on Southern plantations as "rude, one room boxes."<sup>12</sup> They utilized the same construction techniques

as a pioneer cabin, varied little from the traditional 16' x 16' vernacular module, and could be either side or front gable. The WPA narratives taken from ex-slaves in Missouri describe these simple structures. Former slave Charlie Richardson, interviewed in Jasper County, described "log cabins...made of good old Missouri logs daubed with mud and the chimney was made of sticks daubed with mud." Emily Camster Green, a slave in Missouri's Bootheel region explained: "de white folks had a big house, made o logs wid chinkins in 'tween 'den dobbed over...us cullid folks had little cabins, we had a good livin dar." The typical slave cabin had small fireplace in one of the gable ends, a dirt floor, and often lacked for windows. Aunt Hannah Allen described her quarters as having "slip doors for windows," adding: "man what you talkin' about we never saw a window glass."<sup>13</sup> In light of the descriptions from the WPA narratives, the Davis quarters was somewhat upscale. To be sure, in the 1850s, as sawmills were slowly established in Little Dixie and milled lumber was increasingly available throughout the region it became economically feasible to build frame structures covered in clapboard, just like the big house, although hewn log frame was

common. In the case of structures that were less visible, more inexpensive board and batten might be used to cover the exterior instead.

Whether plantation or small farm, the quarters were especially important spaces in a slave landscape. As George Rawick explains, the quarters, in particular, is where a distinct African American culture was intergenerationally fostered and nurtured by the institution of family.<sup>14</sup> In Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example, elements of black culture are manifested inside the single room of the cabin, and both Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe are humanized within it; Aunt Chloe takes great care in the appropriation and arrangement of space and material objects. For Uncle Tom and his family, as for real slaves, the cabin space was a small oasis of a kind of "freedom" that was at best conditional and in reality illusory. Important here as well is the understanding that the quarter was a central feature of a larger landscape that was as much black as white; the work environment included the master's house and barn, an array of other dependencies and even the space in between the structures. The material, psychological and social dimensions of slave space were no different on the farms of Little Dixie than

on the plantations of the cotton-belt South, and the remains of such landscapes in Little Dixie are paramount to the understanding of slave life. Vlach, too, noted that enslaved persons appropriated the environments which they were assigned and shaped their own living space through improvisation to meet their needs. In the process, they created for themselves a marginal sense of empowerment and of place.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond the slave schedule for 1860, there is no formal documentation of the quarters' occupants. However the oral record confirms their presence as well as John Davis's fondness for the young woman, whom he regarded as family. She was primarily assigned to the domestic chores for the Davis family. She cleaned the house,

tended the chickens, and fed some of the livestock, washed clothes, processed vegetables and fruits from the nearby gardens and orchard and cooked meals for the Davis family over the fireplace in the kitchen, located in the ell of the big house.<sup>16</sup> Her experience was undoubtedly not unlike that of Isabell Henderson, who was enslaved on Judge Gilliam's farm approximately twelve miles south of the Davis Farm: "My work was in the house of my master and mistress"... "I

was taught to sew and had to make clothes...and one time I was hired out to the white preacher's family to take care of his children when his wife was sick."<sup>17</sup> The presence of an enslaved woman with such young children is somewhat problematic. Since the children were both of such a young age, it would not have been uncommon for this woman to have had a "spouse" on a neighboring farm.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the oral record makes no mention of Davis ever owning a male slave other than the mother's young child, although it is not improbable that Davis purchased the young woman while [she was] pregnant.

According to the Davis family, the young mother and her children who were enslaved here continued to work for the family as domestics and resided in the quarters after Emancipation. A rare photograph (c. mid-1870s) of the Davis family—John and Elizabeth, their sons and spouses, and their only daughter—in front of the home includes the image of an African American woman standing in the shadows of the ell porch in the far background. Evidently she continued to labor for the Davis family after emancipation. Like many former slaves in Central Missouri, this woman simply redefined the terms of her labor, and remained an integral



Side view of Davis slave quarters shows the additions made to the side and back of the original structure.





On left is circa 1870s photo of single-pen log cabin that John Davis remodeled into an impressive central hall I-house. Davis, his wife and children are in the photo. More recent photo, right, shows house as it now looks, with slave quarters structure still visible on the left side of the house.

component in the Davis household.<sup>19</sup>

A curious passage in the will of John T. Davis may allude to the long-time occupant of the structure: “After all my debts are paid I give and bequeath Mary Davis who has been a faithful friend of my family—the yearly interest on six hundred dollars during her natural life. Said money to be paid to J. O. Davis and Ira V. Davis as trustees who will keep it loaned out and pay her the interest annually and at her death pay her funeral expenses out of said money.”<sup>20</sup>

John Davis continued to work the farm until his death in 1899, at which point ownership was passed to his son Ira, who continued to farm the land until the mid-1930s, when economic conditions prompted Davis’ decision to sell the farm.<sup>21</sup>

The antebellum success of families like the Davises owed a great deal to the people who lived a considerably more marginal existence behind the big house and who shared and helped to create and use these rural spaces, a people whose story is fragmentary and not as readily accessible as the white side of the equation. Thus, the quarters provides a lens through which we may more clearly define and fully understand the lives and experiences of a people.

For obvious reasons, chief among them inferior construction and eventual neglect, many of the once relatively com-

mon single-pen quarters in Missouri have not survived.<sup>22</sup> And farm landscapes, with assemblages of original antebellum structures, as exhibited here at the Davis site, are becoming increasingly rare. Although currently in poor condition, the Davis single-pen quarters remains almost completely in situ and is one of the finest remaining examples of a frame, single-pen quarters in Boonslick, and indeed, in all Missouri.<sup>23</sup>

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## NOTES

1. *History of Saline County, Missouri* (Marshall, MO.: Saline County Historical Society, 1983) 122ff.

2. Deed of sale from Singleton Vaughn to John T. Davis, Saline County, 9, June, 1849, Saline County, Missouri, Deed Book P, Page 421, County Recorder's Office, Marshall, Missouri.

3. *History of Saline County, Missouri*, 122ff. Seventh United States Census, 1850, Miami Township, Saline County, Missouri; p.21, family 288, transcribed. John D. Davis, interview by author, tape recording, July 22, 2000. J.D. Davis (1911-2004) was the son of Ira V. Davis and grandson of John T. Davis.

4. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri's Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992) 233.

5. Seventh United States Census, 1850, Agriculture, Miami Township, Saline County, Missouri, transcribed.

6. Dwayne Meyer, *The Heritage of Missouri: A History* (St. Louis: State Publishing Co., 1973) 411. Also, Miles W. Eaton, "The Development and Later Decline of the Hemp Industry in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 43:4 (July 1949).

7. Eighth United States Census, 1860, Slave, Miami Township, Saline County, Missouri; p.18, transcribed.

8. John D. Davis interview.

9. *History of Saline County, Missouri*, 122ff.

10. See Howard Wight Marshall, *Folk Architecture of Little Dixie: A Regional Culture* (Columbia, MO.: University of Missouri Press, 1982) 62-71. The typical central hall I-house of this pattern displays an array of stylistic variations, none deviating too much in basic size or degree of ornamentation. The style is notable for its symmetry and practical arrange-

ment of interior space: two rooms wide, one room deep, with central hall and more often than not an attached ell. Frequently called "farmer's mansions," these I-houses were the architectural standard on larger farms in the region through the first decade of the twentieth century.

11. Hurt, 219-222.

12. See John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: the Architecture of Slavery in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) 33-38.

13. George P. Rawick, ed. *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972) Missouri, 344 ff.

14. George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972) 77-78.

15. See John Michael Vlach, 38-40. Also see Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-century Virginia" in *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern U.P., 1988) 357-369.

16. John D. Davis interview.

17. George P. Rawick, ed. *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972) Missouri.

18. Slaves with "spouses" living apart under separate owners on neighboring farms was not uncommon. On Oak Grove Plantation, in Central Saline County, at least one of George Murrell's thirteen slaves had a "wife" living on a neighboring plantation and was granted visitation privileges twice weekly. Notation by George Murrell in personal Ledger, 1859, private collection, Napton, MO.

19. John D. Davis interview.

20. "Last Will and Testament of John T. Davis," October, 1899, Saline County, Missouri, Probate Court Records, Marshall, Mo.

21. During the Great Depression era, Ira sold the property to the present owners, the Robert Latimer family. John D. Davis interview. Robert Latimer, interview by author, June 11, 2000.

22. Of 120 sites addressed in a Missouri Department of Natural Resources architectural survey of hemp plantation districts in the heart of Little Dixie, only two sites still had slave quarters that were at least partially intact. A similar survey of antebellum structures covering Lafayette, Johnson, Pettis, and parts of Saline Counties yielded the same disappointing results and further highlighted suspicions about the loss of slave architecture in the state. At best count, only six slave quarters in Missouri are on the National Register of Historic Places, two as individual nominations (this excludes houses in which rooms quartered domestic slaves, which are, by nature, more difficult to identify and are not likely to have been identified in survey information). The remaining structures are listed on the Register simply as outbuildings associated with a specific individual nomination or are included in a district nomination.

23. Along with two duplex slave quarters at Sappington's Prairie Park, the Davis example is one of the very few rural-detached quarters known to have survived in Saline County and among the scant handful remaining in the Boonslick.

(This article was "carved from a disertation" the author prepared when in graduate school as a history student some years back.)



## The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark

### Q&A Interview with Author Jo Ann Trogdon

By Don Cullimore

*Jo Ann Trogdon's extended project to write a biography of famed explorer William Clark, using primary sources containing previously unpublished information about his life during a three-year period (1798-1801), was revealed to me during a long evening of conversation my wife and I had with Trogdon and her husband at a downtown Columbia restaurant in June of 2014. I mentioned that when the book was published, I would be interested in interviewing her and writing a review of it. A review copy of the book came from the University of Missouri Press in June, and Trogdon and I completed the interview presented here between Aug. 22 and 25 by telephone and email exchanges.*

—Don Cullimore)

**Q** – Tell us a little about yourself: where you grew up, went to school, when you moved to Columbia.

**A** – I grew up in St. Charles, majored in Spanish and English at the University of Arizona, studied law at St. Louis University, and became a licensed attorney in 1980. I moved to Columbia in 2003.

**Q** – What influenced you to undertake this book and how many years did you devote to it?

**A** – In 1992, just after publication of my first book, *St. Charles Borromeo: 200 Years of Faith*, I came upon William Clark's 1798-1801 Notebook in the State Historical Society [archives] in Columbia. I realized right away that the notebook – a poorly understood log of Clark's travels those years – contains a vivid, virtually unknown story of a trip he made in 1798 to Spanish New Orleans. As I checked other sources, most of them previously unconsulted regarding Clark, I found a wealth of detail about him and activities he'd written little or nothing about. Further, much of this information appeared at odds with his reputation as an uncomplicated icon of American expansion. The more I looked, the more ambiguity I found. Penetrating it and writing about my findings have taken two decades, although during many of those years my law practice allowed little time for work on his story.

**Q** – Was your formal education and training as an attorney useful to you as you did your research and wrote the book?

**A** – My legal training was indeed useful but so was my education in Spanish (which for me and my classmates began in the fourth grade), as was my instruction in cursive penmanship. I fear that unless young people receive a thorough grounding in cursive writing, much of our early American legacy will become difficult or inaccessible to them.

**Q** – Your book takes on an icon of American history. Were you concerned about the reaction of other historians to a work that raises serious questions about the ethics and character and motives of someone as honored as William Clark?

**A** – Yes, but I would have been more concerned had Clark not written explicitly in his journal about giving Spanish customs officials wine, hams, money and two bribes of a few dollars. Similarly, the facts of Clark's committing to paper details of an illegal money-running operation he participated in – which benefited

three Americans conspiring against the United States – also helped relieve my concern about how other historians might react to *The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark*.

**Q** – Did this influence your decision to do such extensive research of primary and secondary sources of information about Clark and that period of history and to include sizable bibliography and notes sections in the book, as well as four appendices?

**A** – From the beginning I decided that, to do justice to the wealth of information I was turning up, my book must include comprehensive notes and a bibliography. There being no book-length biography of Clark until 2004, I also believe my research will prove useful to other historians.

**Q** – In addition to Clark's 1798-1801 notebook, what were your most important primary and secondary sources of information?

**A** – Aside from sections of the Spanish Archives concerning Louisiana, West Florida, and the intrigues of [James] Wilkinson, [Benjamin] Sebastian, and their accomplices, a particularly helpful source has been a little-known Army order book Lt. William Clark apparently took with him in 1793 and later used to draft sensitive letters in. Other important sources include the papers of U.S. Boundary Commissioner Andrew Ellicott; of Daniel Clark Jr., a New Orleans businessman who grew wealthy from shipping cargoes laced with illegal caches of Spanish silver dollars to the United States; of Daniel W. Coxe, Clark Jr.'s Philadelphia partner; and of an unscrupulous Indian agent named John McKee who spied for the federal government.

**Q** – The latter 18th century through the early 19th was a turbulent and complex period filled with international intrigue as Spanish, French, British and American governments engaged in competing efforts to control the old Northwest frontier (east of the Upper Mississippi River and northwest of the Ohio), the Louisiana Territory, New Orleans and the Floridas. Trying to sort out and make comprehensible this period of history and its cast of characters must have seemed daunting at first.

**A** – Two lively, well-researched books, both of them written more than 80 years ago by Arthur P. Whitaker, were of immense help: *The Mississippi Question* and *The Spanish-American Frontier: 1783-1795*.



**Q** – What did you learn about Clark – his upbringing, his personality, his character that surprised and intrigued you most?

**A** – The depth of Clark's complexity was always intriguing and often unexpected. Even now I wonder how he maintained his stolid, uncomplicated facade despite participating in bribery and smuggling and associating with conspirators. He evidently had practice in keeping an unremarkable front: During his first stint in the Army (1792-1796), Clark disobeyed orders while on a secret mission to Spanish territory, thereby causing such alarm among the Spanish that they reinforced their defenses in the lower Mississippi Valley and almost precipitated an armed conflict with the United States. Even so, Gen. Anthony Wayne hailed Clark as a hero for his handling of the operation.

**Q** – What surprised and intrigued you most from your research into other high-profile individuals noted in the book: Gen. James Wilkinson, Kentucky Court of Appeals Judge Benjamin Sebastian, Aaron Burr and Spanish-Louisiana authorities such as Governor of Natchez and Louisiana Manuel Gayoso de Lemos?

**A** – I had no idea the extent to which associating with Wilkinson seemed to poison everyone with whom he dealt. Sebastian – whom Wilkinson had led into the conspiracy – eventually confessed his complicity and lost his judicial appointment and good name. Although Burr was acquitted of treason and other charges, his reputation and career were also ruined as a result of his association with Wilkinson. Gayoso is perhaps the most sympathetic of all, for although he perceived Wilkinson's perfidy, he dealt with him only to prolong the Spanish regime in the Mississippi Valley. As for Wilkinson, arguably the most complete American traitor ever, I still marvel that although he was known in the U.S. as the general "who never won a battle or lost a court martial," he managed to keep proof of his perfidies buried in the Spanish Archives until they were uncovered in the 20th century.

**Q** – In light of Clark's many connections to Wilkinson, Sebastian, and others involved in the Spanish Conspiracy, do you think he was aware of their complicity? That is, do you think his gathering of sensitive, military intelligence, or his collaboration in the money-running scheme, might have been motivated by a desire to further their illegal projects?

**A** – Although there is yet no absolute proof Clark knew that Wilkinson, Sebastian, and others with whom he dealt in 1798 were conspiring with Spain, or that Clark realized the Spanish silver dollars he helped smuggle to Kentucky were the ill-gotten lucre of at least one conspirator, his intricate ties to these and other shady individuals, and numerous gaps in the records, make it possible that further research might uncover such proof.

**Q** – How much of the 1798-1801 period in Clark's life do you think influenced his thinking and actions later in life – during the 1804-06 Corps of Discovery expedition to the Pacific Northwest and his following years in St. Louis as territorial governor and superintendent of Indian affairs?

**A** – Clark's travels in 1798 enhanced his practical skills, especially in navigation, command, cartography, and survival in a foreign country, making him Meriwether Lewis's ideal partner in discovery. During Clark's 1801 journey to Washington, D.C., he no doubt informed Lewis of those accomplishments, and may well have showed him the journal. But when Lewis, Clark, and the

Corps of Discovery returned from the Pacific Ocean in 1806, they found the Spanish Conspiracy, as well as Wilkinson, Sebastian, and Burr, were all under investigation. I think Clark's earlier proximity and connections to Wilkinson and Sebastian influenced him from 1806 until the end of his life to distance himself from those and other questionable individuals.

**Q** – During your extended period of research and writing, did you visit any of the physical locations along the Mississippi River that Clark visited? Or other parts of the country?

**A** – My husband and I have visited a number of locations Clark wrote about in 1798, including the sites of the earliest U.S. Army forts at Memphis and Natchez, of the New Orleans boarding house he stayed in (which later may have become the notorious brothel known as the House of the Rising Sun), the New Castle, Del., landing place of the ship Clark took from New Orleans, and the site of the Indian Queen, a luxurious Baltimore hotel he patronized during his homeward travels.



**Nine-foot-tall bronze sculpture of William Clark by internationally known artist and sculptor Sabra Tull Meyer. It is part of a larger work including representations of Meriwether Lewis, the slave York, George Drouillard, and the Newfoundland dog Seaman. Dedicated in 2008, the monument sits on the grounds of the Capitol at Jefferson City. Photo by Don Cullimore**



***The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark*  
By Jo Ann Trogdon (University of Missouri Press)**

Review by Don Cullimore

*"Oh what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practice to deceive."*

—Sir Walter Scott, epic poem *Marmion*, 1808

Every now and then a notable book comes along that challenges conventional wisdom or cultural heroes. Such a book has recently been published by the University of Missouri Press. Appropriately, it was written by a native Missourian about a Kentucky transplant to Missouri who played a larger-than-life role in the early nineteenth-century history of the Colonial Louisiana Territory and Missouri.

Columbia resident Jo Ann Trogdon has bravely taken on an icon of American history in a 469- page major work provocatively titled *The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark*. Containing a foreword by Kentucky historian James J. Holmberg, the book promises to stir new debate among historians focused on events and personalities from the latter eighteenth-century history of the middle and lower Mississippi Valley corridor, the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and the westward expansion – what some have called the “Manifest Destiny” – of a young, restless nation.

This is a timely book – appearing after the Bicentennial Celebration of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery expedition of 1804-06 to the Pacific Northwest and just before Missouri prepares to celebrate in 2021 its 200th anniversary of statehood—epic events that were influenced to a significant degree by William Clark.

This revealing biography of Clark garnered the attention of the State Historical Society of Missouri which asked Trogdon to keynote its fall conference with a discussion of what she discovered while researching and writing it. Missouri historian William E. Foley, who also has authored a well-received biography of Clark, participated in the discussion at the meeting, held Oct. 17 in Columbia.

It was in State Historical Society archives that Trogdon discovered a largely forgotten notebook, a personal daily journal Clark kept during the years 1798-1801. He had resigned his military commission two years earlier and returned to civilian life to help manage the family tobacco farm in Kentucky and resolve serious financial problems incurred by his famous brother, George Rogers Clark. The journal prompted Trogdon's interest in Clark and set in motion a two-decade effort to research and write a book about that period in his life, one largely neglected by other historians who had concentrated on his western expedition years and later life in Missouri as military officer (brigadier general), Indian agent and territorial governor.

What especially interested Trogdon were notebook entries about a 1798 trip Clark undertook from Louisville, Kentucky, to Louisiana. He traveled down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers with two flatboats carrying tobacco and furs to sell in New Orleans. Between March and mid-August of that year, when he left Louisi-

ana, he was involved in a number of questionable activities. These included bribing Spanish port authorities in New Orleans, smuggling of Spanish dollars (pieces of eight) out of Spanish-Louisiana, a secret Spanish payoff to a corrupt American official (more than likely Gen. James Wilkinson) and the gathering of intelligence on the military defenses of New Orleans and Spanish installations above and below the city.

Among other primary sources used by Trogdon in researching the book were the *Archivo General de Indies* (the General Archives of the Indies), a collection of documents concerning the governance of Spanish holdings in the New World. She had turned to these same archives when researching a previous book she wrote on the 200-year history (1791-1991) of St. Charles Borromeo Church.

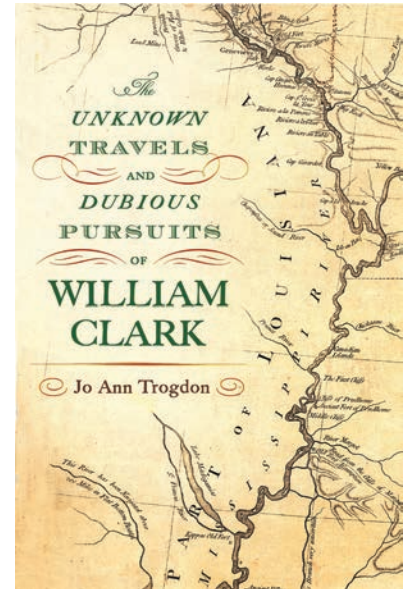
Information in the archives and related sources dovetailed with Clark's dated entries in his journal, including contacts with individuals connected to the Spanish Conspiracy, a tangled international intrigue to separate Kentucky from the Union and place it under the influence of Spanish-Louisiana. It involved American General James Wilkinson, Kentucky Appeals Court Judge Benjamin Sebastian and Spanish authorities in St. Louis and New Orleans, among others.

Trogdon's book is what you would hope for from an attorney-cum-historian with grounding in the Spanish language and intimate knowledge of Spanish-Louisiana history. Drawing on credible circumstantial evidence discovered through her extensive research, she presents an interesting study in possibilities – if not probabilities – regarding Clark's involvement in nefarious and possibly treasonous activities.

Was Clark an unwitting pawn or a complicit participant in schemes to part Kentucky from the Union and in money smuggling to conspiracy participants and in other questionable activities between 1798-1801? Trogdon says that's a determination to be made through further historical research as new sources possibly come to light that bear on Clark's life at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th.

*The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark* is a well-written, well-researched book rich in detailed American history. If the reader takes time to cross-reference the copious footnotes with each chapter and review the extensive bibliography, he or she will be rewarded with a substantial learning experience and a pleasurable read.

*The interview with Jo Ann Trogdon and book review were first published in September 13, 2015, Columbia Daily Tribune and are presented here with permission.*



## **Boonslick Historical Society**

P. O. Box 426

Boonville, MO 65233



**The historic Hotel Frederick in Boonville will be the site of the annual fall meeting of the Boonslick Historical Society, which was founded in the fall of 1937 during a meeting at the hotel of area historians and other interested citizens. See page 2 for fall meeting information.**

*Photo by Don Cullimore*