

Jefferson Heritage and Landmark Society

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ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Historical and Ecumenical

"Summer is icumen in"
Early English lyric,
c. 1240

Spring and Summer will soon be here and with their coming comes the desire to be outside and to enjoy the promise of nice weather. The following is sight-seeing for a Sunday or a Saturday or any day of the week when the urge comes to get out and do something.

For all intends this tour will start at Ste. Genevieve. As you turn left off U.S. 61 at the blinking light to go into town, you are on the end of the Plank Road, built around 1852-1853 to bring the iron and lead ores to the river for exporting to the world. It was 40 miles long and ran from Pilot Knob and Iron Mountain to Ste. Genevieve, following what is now Highway 32. It was the longest plank road in Missouri and was in use for about 9 years until the railroads began to take materials north. There were toll gates along the way-2 being on either side of Farmington.

There are many places and things to see in Ste. Genevieve, such as the Bolduc House, the church which is the third church in the parish and second on this spot, or the oldest brick house west of the Mississippi. There is now a winery and across the street is Lucretia Ann's restaurant and gift shop. This restaurant is open only during the day but a nice place to eat.

To me one of the most interesting places in the town is the Green Tree Tavern and carriage stop which is on the river road out of town. It has a fireplace that open into 3 different rooms. The fireplace also has a well in the middle big enough for several people to hide from the Indians, perhaps.

Just before you get to the tavern and are about to cross the low water bridge there is a little old house on the left of a knoll. This is the house that Moses Austin built when he first came to Ste. Genevieve.

Following along the river road about 2 miles you pass along the "common fields" with the old pecan trees. This was the garden area for the townspeople. Also in this area there are the remains of the first Ste. Genevieve before the town was forced to seek high ground away from the floods. Also you can still see the remains of Indian Mounds.

Just before crossing the bridge into St. Mary's there are huge hand-cut limestone blocks between the railroad tracks and the road. These are the leftovers of the ones used to build the piers for Eads Bridge in St. Louis.

In the middle of St. Mary's, Route U goes off to the left over a bridge, taking you to the island of Kaskaskia, which is in Illinois. The bridge goes over a slough which is the old river bed of the Mississippi. One time the area of Kaskaskia was a finger of an land on the east side of the river, surrounded by the river on three sides with only a very little span of land between



the Mississippi River and the Kaskaskia River which flowed into the big river. This all changed with the floods of the 1800's when the Mississippi broke through leaving a little piece of Illinois attached to the Missouri side. The old town is now under a sand bar off the Northeast part of the island.

There are many things of note to be seen in the church on the east side of the island - the altar stone brought from France by Father Marquette, the hand-carved altar of native black walnut and cottonwood, the hand-made organ, still in use, which was the first pipe organ west of the Alleghenies. Next to the church on its own little brick shelter is the Kaskaskia or Liberty Bell of the West. The corner stone in this building came from the first capitol of Illinois which was at Kaskaskia for a short time. The bell of silver and bronze was cast at LaRochelle, France in 1741 and sent to the church by King Louis XV. It took two years to get the 650 pound bell from France, across the ocean, and pulled up the river. It was used to celebrate the capture of Kaskaskia in 1778.

Back to Highway 61 at St. Mary's and down through Perryville to about 10 miles south at Uniontown. Turn left on Highway A and enter the world of East Perry County. This area is the roots of the Concordia Lutherans in Missouri. There were a series of villages, each with its own church, set about a 6 mile walk from each other - Uniontown, Frohna, Altenburg, and Wittenberg still remain. German is spoken almost exclusively in this area and in the 1960's it was necessary to get an order from the Supreme Court of Missouri making the teaching of English in the schools mandatory.

At Wittenberg, on the Mississippi River is the "Plymouth Rock" of the Concordia Lutherans from Saxony, showing where they landed in 1839. Also in this little village are the cooling chambers of Mr. Brenner's Brewery. He came to Missouri with Adolphus Busch. The Brewery now has a house on top of it. Mr. Brenner eventually sold out and bought the Cherokee Caves and Beer Garden in St. Louis. His 84 year old granddaughter still lives near Altenburg on a century farm.

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As you start back and before you go up the hill there is a well graveled road going off to the left. This leads about 2 miles down to Tower Rock which is an 85 foot high tor in the river. At one time there were 7 across the river, but the Corps of Engineers blew up all but this one, to improve the navigation. This spot is mentioned by the Indians of the area, the early explorers and missionaries and even Mark Twain saw fit to take note. It was set aside in 1871 for public purposes by President Grant. One of the National Boy Scout Trails starts here and runs back to Wittenburg. This would be a fine place to have a picnic.

As you leave this area, notice the "over-the river" pipe line going across the Mississippi River. It is the world's longest pipeline suspension bridge.

In Altenburg the remains of the first Concordia Lutheran school is in the town park. This was the beginning of the Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis.

The last stop on our Sunday tour is at St. Mary's Seminary in the west side of Perryville. Turn off U.S. 61 at the junction onto "51". It is the Provincial Headquarters of the Vincentians monastic order. It was here that some of the more notable Catholic Prelates began their career in the United States - Bishop DuBorg and Bishop Rosati. The parish was established by a group of Catholics who left Lot Baltimore's community in Maryland and went to the Barrens in Kentucky. Evidently the area was just as bad as the name implied because they soon left and came to Perryville.

Their idea was to build a church copying the church at Monte Citorio in Rome, Italy. Which is where Bishops DuBorg and Rosati had been. It soon became evident that the congregation was not large enough to support such a large affair and the building was scaled to 1/3 the size of the original. There is a beautiful sundial on the south wall of the church. There is a fine museum with collections of paper weights, porcelins and books from the 12th century. Most of the things were donated by the widow of Edward Douhenny, of the Teapot Dome Scandal.

From here it is back around the corner to I-55 and the present day World.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Gerlach, Russell L. Immigrants In the Ozarks. Columbia U. of Mo. Press c. 1976
Franzwa, Gregory M., The Story of Old Ste. Genevieve. St. Louis, Mo., Patrice Press, c. 1967
Archives of Frank Magre.

ANY SUGGESTIONS: We are looking for suggestions for a new major project. There seems to be a feeling that it is time to move on a little bit not to abandon Fletcher House but to turn our attentions to something new as a project.

Annual Membership Meeting

The annual meeting of the Jefferson Heritage and Landmarks Society will be held March 9 at 2 p.m. at the Thomas Fletcher home in Hillsboro. An election of board of directors and officers will be conducted. Other nominations will be accepted either by mail or during the business meeting. A short program will be held following the business meeting. We hope you will make an effort to attend. We invite you to see the additional furnishings in the house.

Two of our faithful board members who have spent many years and much effort have asked to be replaced this coming year. It is with much sadness that we will no longer have Mr. R.K. Barton, Jr., or Mrs. Jeanne Cook serving on the board of directors.

The nominating committee has asked that the following people be elected to our board.

1. Mrs. Betty Olson, DeSoto Public Librarian, 2 year term 1986-88
2. Mr. Jules Porchey, Director Jefferson County Department of Parks and Recreation, 3 year term 1986-89
3. Mrs. Chandler Crawford, DeSoto, retired librarian from Jefferson College, 3 year term 1986-89
4. Mr. Frank Magree, Historian, Herculaneum, 3 year term 1986-89

We know that these new additions will serve admirably.

Membership to Landmarks is now due on March 1. New members are most welcome. Yearly dues are \$10.00; Corporate membership is \$35.00; Life membership is \$100.00. Those with yearly memberships should check this mailing for a dues notice.

FLETCHER HOUSE BARN

The old barn at the rear of the Fletcher House will soon be removed. At one time there were plans to restore this barn and perhaps make some use of it for display of antique equipment or perhaps a curio shop of sorts. But much has happened since that time. The foundation is nearly rotted away causing structural weakness and vandalism to interior supports has caused the building to shift and lean over very far. At present the liability for exposure to personal damages is very great. Estimates are that it would require in excess of \$18,000. to dis-assemble and re-build the barn to safe, useable condition. Mr. Gerhardt Kramer has stated that in his opinion the barn has no historical significance as regards to Governor Thomas Fletcher.

As a result neither the Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Board nor the Jefferson Heritage and Landmarks Society feel inclined to spend a great deal of their funds to rebuild the barn even though there was a possibility of a \$3,000. donation toward this project.

There has been recent discussions of the possible construction of a historical Museum for Jefferson County on the site of the old barn as a joint project with the county Department of Parks and Recreation.

Hope to see you all on March 9.

President Betty Mueller