



# Jefferson Heritage and Landmark Corporation

SUMMER 1988

## MASTODON STATE PARK TOUR

Jefferson Heritage and Landmark has planned a tour through the new Mastadon State Park Museum. The date is Sunday, June 12, 1988 at 2:00 P.M. We are favored as we will have a guided tour by the Museum Curator before the park is dedicated on June 26.

Meet at the Museum at 2:00 P.M. to see not only the big mastadon in the room where the display will be, but also we will be going behind the scenes to see the labs and the library. We will climb down the hill to see where the digs are or you can drive down. We can also see the wild flower trail that is being developed by Albert Heinze who is a very fine botanist.

The whole affair should take about 2 hours and it will be a most interesting experience. We have sent an invitation to Mine au Breton Historical Society of Potosi to join with us.

## GENEALOGY REPORT

The Records of the Fink Funeral Home that was formerly at 220 Main St. in Festus from 1912 till 1943 are now being entered into the computer at the De Soto Public Library. These should be completed by June 30. Becky Mabery, Assistant Librarian, has also indexed several genealogy magazines from various areas via computer so that the information contained in them is now more accessible.

Della Lang and various friends are continuing to work on recording the old cemeteries on the western side of the county. If there is anyone who would like to get busy on the ones in the central part of the county please contact me.

Jean O'Brien 937-3543

## THE STORY OF THE CRADLE

Sadie May Miller Guse

The cradle was a Christmas present from my parents. The new baby was due the first week in January 1940.

An old-fashioned cradle was a dream come true. It was purchased at an antique shop located in the barn on the Old Fletcher-Honey place in Hillsboro, Mo. The estimated age of the piece was seventy-five years. All that was required for restoration was a coat of paste wax.

It traveled many miles with the W.C. Guse family, accompanying a construction engineer father engaged in building projects across the eastern half of the United States.

Traveling, required that the cradle be made portable--knocked down to the four sides, slats and rockers and carried in a luggage trailer. Each night on the road the bed was reassembled wherever the family stopped. The baby, Tim, never knew he had left his bedroom.

The final project was at the Boston Navy Yard. It was the turn-around point back to Streator, Illinois. Here, a second son, Thad, used the cradle in 1943.

In 1949, the family acquired farm property near Glad Chapel in Jefferson County, Missouri. The cradle was again in the Hillsboro area.

It is now 1988. The boys are grown, married, and living on adjoining farms in Callaway County near Fulton, Missouri. We plan to join them in that locality very soon.

The cradle will not move again. It has been given on permanent loan to the Governor Fletcher House to grace the upstairs bedroom. It has come full circle. (The estimated age of the cradle is now 123 years old.)

So many memories revolve about the

Hillsboro area. My grandfather John Eliot Miller, was a physician in Hillsboro in the decade prior to the turn of the century. My father, W. Harley, his brothers, Aubrey and Keating, and his sisters, Angie and Nita, attended the Hillsboro School. They were intimate friends of the Honey family who lived in the Fletcher place at that time.

My father once mentioned that the Honeys had owned a cradle which looked so much like this one. I wonder.....

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### A BOYHOOD ON CRYSTAL HEIGHTS, CHICKEN HILL AND THE BUTTERFLY AREA.

#### Chapter 2

Frank Magre

When I was a child we had socialized medicine, but didn't realize that was what it should be called. Our medical care in our growing-up years on Crystal Heights was taken care of by Dr. Jesse Donnell, the Pittsburgh Plate Glass company doctor. Employees of the factory that signed up for his service paid \$1.00 per month and this included childbirth, setting broken bones, pills and medicines which the doctor mixed himself. His office and home were located at 21 South Taylor, the present home of the Andrew DeGears.

We grew up during the latter part of the steamboat area. The Eagle Packet Company delivered freight twice each week at the Platin Rock/Hug's Landing. The paddle wheel steam boats I remember were the Grey Eagle, the Golden Eagle and the Bald Eagle. When one of these boats whistled for a landing, we dropped whatever we were doing and ran down to the landing. The fastest kids got to the landing by the time the gang plank was lowered. We kids had free run of the lower deck that housed the huge steam engine, the freight and the place where the stevedores slept. The passenger deck was "off limits." Most of the action was along the line where the colored stevedores carried the freight down the gangplank to the warehouse.

The warehouse was managed by Al Coleman, brother of Sam, who ran the Coleman Saloon

on Festus Main Street. The warehouse had specific spaces where each shipper's items were assembled, although on some occasions orders were placed directly in wagons. Since most of the stevedores could not read, the checkers and the warehouse worked out a system to compensate for this. At the Platin Rock/Hug's Landing, shippers names were changed to catchy phrases such as: Festus Mercantile was Funny Man, Long Mercantile was Lazy Man, Forshee & Grieshaber was Foxy Grandpa, Waggoner Store was White Star, Hattershire was Half Moon, and I can't remember what Kerruish Store was called. The stevedores got along beautifully with this system.

We kids found places to watch along the route the stevedores took to the warehouse. The stevedores enjoyed putting on a show for the kids and any other spectators. They danced, strutted, chanted and sung. Whenever tired of their antics; besides they occasionally slipped us an orange or a banana. Living on Crystal Heights these were the first black people many of us kids had ever seen.

Nothing was more exciting to us than the arrival of a showboat. We were usually sitting on the muddy river bank long before the stam callipe had finished its second tune and the boat had docked. We vied for the right to run errands for the show people and crew members. These errands might be picking up cigars, cigarettes, groceries, papers, etc. We had to go all the way to Crystal City for most of the items except those we could get at Reheisse Saloon in Hugtown. They paid us in tickets, and by the second night's performance we knew most of the actor's "scripts."

Al Coleman, the operator of the warehouse, was a unique character. His home was on the hill above the boat landing. Originally this was a 23.6 acre tract belonging to J. S. Dederick. Stephen Hug owned it at this time. One of Al's ventures was raising white leg-horn chickens in considerable numbers. They ranged all over the hill and gave the area the name "Chicken Hill." The name has stayed with this area to this day. Al managed the warehouse and ran a little bootlegging business on the side. This was during the prohibition

era, and Al only sold liquor in half-pint bottles.

A customer wishing to purchase a half-pint of whiskey would give Al the money. Al would then turn to his shepherd dog, "Shep," who was always present and say, "Shep, fetch it." Shep would run as fast as he could up Chicken Hill to (everyone assumed) Al's red-headed wife, Nell. And it is again assumed that she took the money from the pouch on the dog's collar and put the bottle of whiskey in. At any rate, in a very short time, Shep would come back behind the warehouse, not in the warehouse, with the bottle. If everything still looked all right, Al would go out behind the warehouse and take the bottle from Shep's collar.

The families of Lloyd Thuesen, Ray Govero, George Bequette, Joe Cunningham, Tim Herbert, Mrs. Howard Crowe, and Judge Phil Hess now live on Chicken Hill along with some others.

Besides the many chores attached to gardening and farming, we were expected to pick wild blackberries and dewberries for cobblers and canning. We also had to gather tame grapes for canning and wine making. During the prohibition era we took turns at bottling home brew. There was a man named Mr. Gardner who ran the speakeasy from his home which was about where Glen Pullen now lives.

Edmond Pruneau ran a small still in his chicken house, for a more or less neighborhood clientele. But for the "hard-core" drinkers the place to go was "French Louie" Laayson's. For many years he lived with this parents where Constance Hill now lives. He was a crusty old cuss who lived just beyond the law, having had several run-ins with those who crossed his path. He carried a pistol in a wood-woven basket and almost always had a corn-cob pipe in his mouth. He wore an old black felt hat that had a mud dauber's nest attached to it, and lived in a houseboat along the river below the Hug property. His still was in a shack across the river on Calico Island and he rowed to and from his houseboat and distillery in a john-boat. His house boat was a hang-out for those who liked that type of life. There was generally a card game in progress on his boat, with a pitcher of Louie's lightning in the middle of the table. You were expected to pay a

dollar when you left. I do not remember what he charged for liquor, but I do remember that you had to bring your own empty bottle. I was one of the privileged few he trusted to dig up his product. He kept his whiskey in ten gallon kegs under a well-kept garden, and he was the only one who knew where to dig for it.

When French Louie went shopping in Crystal City or Herculanum, he usually hid his shot gun at the edge of town, but always carried his basket with him. On one of these trips to Herculanum, he had to pass the St. Joe Rock Quarry run by John Magre. Ed Hollinghausen, Melon Buckner and A. Reece where the other quarrymen. John was the father of Lorene Reece and Jeannette Barton of Crystal City. John, an excellent shot, had known Louie intimately all his life. One time he picked up his rifle and said, "Let's shake up that old codger."

Here was Louie trudging up the railroad track when suddenly his pipe bowl disappeared as John's bullet hit it. Louie never looked one way or the other, just kept on his way up the track. Some hours later he returned, smoking a new pipe. This time he confronted the quarry workers, opened his basket, pulled out his pistol and said, "You fellows had your fun, now it is my turn." Some chilling moments ensued as the workers looked at the pistol, and then Louie smiled and let them know that he too, was only playing.

"THERE'S AN OLD SPINNING WHEEL  
IN THE PARLOR..."

The words to this old song will soon come true for Fletcher House. The Roop family of De Soto have donated a spinning wheel which is now being repaired and readied to be placed in Fletcher House. This large spinning wheel also has a stool with it that the lady of the house sat on while she was doing her spinning.

The society thanks the donors of the cradle and the spinning wheel for these authentic additions to the furnishings of the Fletcher House.



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**THE HISTORIC FLETCHER HOUSE of 600 block North Main in De Soto is being removed, dismantling having started last weekend. Long a landmark, the house is believed to date back to years of the Civil War or soon thereafter in the period of De Soto's first development.**

Though often referred to as a home of Governor Thomas C. Fletcher, a co-founder of De Soto, the question of whether or not he owned the property or lived there has never been definitely answered. Gov. Fletcher and his family are known to have resided in De Soto, and he was at least a part owner of the nearby brick house removed a few years ago as site for a new home on Second Street. The late Dr. C. E. Fallet said that the brick house in the 700 block of North Second was the Gov. Fletcher home. Abstract held by R. L.

Peeples shows that it also belonged for a time to the governor's mother.

It seems likely the big white frame house was the home of J. W. Fletcher, the governor's brother, who operated a sawmill in the early days of the Iron Mtn. railway and of De Soto in this part of town.

The property is presently owned by North Missouri Oil Co., which operates the Imperial Service Station at 614 North Main. Plans for further use of the lot have not been announced.

The Rankin mansion, home of Gov. Fletcher's brother-in-law, Col. Louis J. Rankin, who joined in filing the first plat of De Soto, has been gone since soon after World War II. Crumbling into decay, it centered the 300 block between North Second and Third streets.

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