Reminiscences of Pioneer Days

Section 9, Pages 241 - 270

These reminiscences tell the early history of Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri as written by Mrs. Nelly McCoy Harris. The stories were published in Kansas City newspapers.

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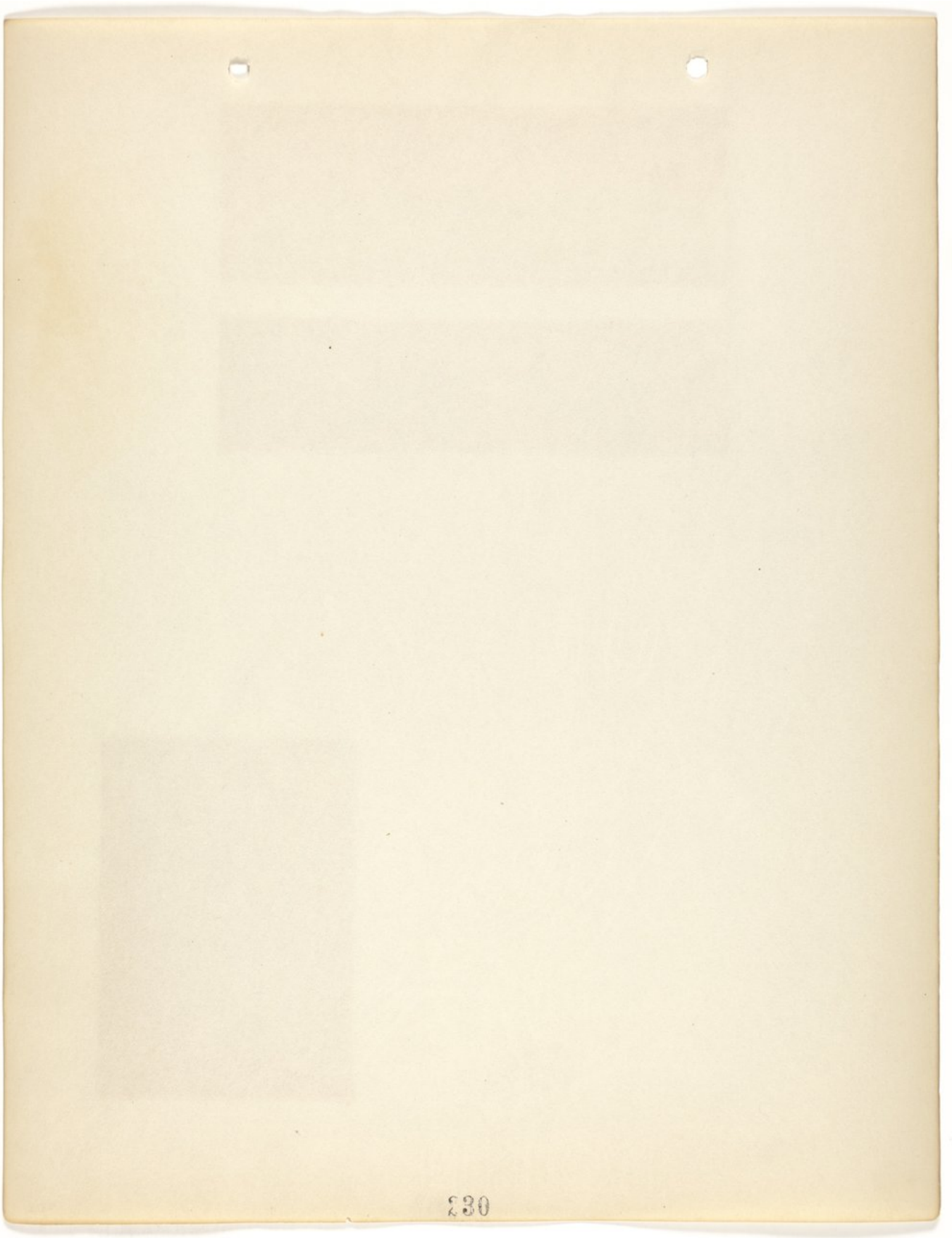

THE BEAUX AND BELLES of EARLIER KANSAS CITY.

A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE AT A PERIOD WHEN THE CITY WAS YOUNG

(Published in the Kansas City Star, Sunday, June 21, 1908)

A faithful and solicitous old servant in our family used to quote, when she detected evidences of vanity in the young girls of the household, the homely, rhyming adage:

Beauty is but skin deep; ugly reaches to the bone;
Beauty fails and fades away, while ugly holds its own.

"But," she would add with a shake of her turbaned head, "dat jes' goes in one yeah and out de otheh."

We young folks must have put a different meaning on the moral lesson from old aunty's understanding of it, or we merely pretend we did, for we told her that this seemed a very unfair arrangement. It was hard enough to be superficially homely, but to be uncomely clear through was worse and more of it, and those so distinguished were welcome to all the comfort and glory this assurance of the lasting qualities of ugliness could give.

ROBERT T. BASS, IN MIDDLE LIFE.

A long life and an observant one has demonstrated to me that beauty of face and form alone never makes a maiden a belle, though I confess it is a powerful auxiliary. An insipid, frivolous beauty is a mere passing show. One girl, Matilda Chick, though not exactly in my generation of Beaux and Belles, having married before the town was Kansas City, but simply Kanzas, deserves especial mention in the list. Matilda had neither marked beauty of face nor figure, yet I never knew a girl in the early days who was more admired.

Matilda was lithe and graceful, jolly and witty, sometimes unintentionally sarcastic. I remember one time when her keen appreciation of a situation prompted her to utter a surprising bit of irony though she meant only good natured banter.

"HE PROPOSED THAT THEY LEAP FROM THE BRIDGE INTO THE ROCK CHASM BELOW AND END THEIR DISAPPOINTED LIVES."

"A Fine Voice and Fond of Using It."

Price Kellar was a gallant of the period, a popular and progressive young merchant of Westport. Price had, like the widders Samival Weller's father warned him against-"a fine voice and fond of usin' on it," and when Mr. "Jimmie" Hunter, a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher, read the hymns in the old Union church at the edge of the forest east of town (now Westport avenue and Central street), it was Price Kellar who led the singing. A favorite hymn with this pioneer preacher was, "How Firm a Foundation," and the unction and zest with which Price would toll off the notes of that fine old hymn was something worth listening to.

At the wedding of Mary Polk and Menard (Mack) Chouteau, Price was the escort of the handsome Harris girls, Mary, Frank and Julia. From all accounts, Mr. Kellar's devotion wavered- it evidently was a case where "I could be happy with either, were t'other dear charmer away."

Price did not walk with his usual grace and firmness as he entered the reception room. It may have been that his progress was impeded by a charmer clinging to each arm. Anyway, Matilda observed

his fluctuating footsteps and as he passed she said:
"You could hardly sing 'How Firm a Foundation' this evening, could you?"
Mr. Keller was very angry, though Matilda protested she was merely bantering.

When John T. Crisp was a Young Gallant.

Among the carefully groomed early day beaux was John T. Crisp, who was hard to beat in his young manhood. There was a singular but becoming style of man's apparel in that era. This consisted of a dark blue coat, claw-hammer fashion, and decorated with brass buttons, trousers so tight a man's limbs looked like they had been melted and poured in them, high heeled boots, white waistcoat, an ample expanse of white plaited shirt front and high, stiff stock that looked like it certainly would choke the wearer. Mr. Crisp was thus attired in broad day and at evening functions as well.
There were coquettes, and plenty of them in the old days. I think Betty Stone, a pretty, care-free girl, carried off the laurels if any were deserved in such transactions. In the winter of 1857 a group of girls were in the parlor at Woodside discussing that subject "ever old and ever new". One, who was the belle par excellence of her day, said:
"I enjoy the company of gentlemen until they begin to talk 'soft'- then they cannot take their departure too soon to suit my pleasure."
"Why, you unappreciative, ungrateful creature," exclaimed her sister. "That is when they become interesting to me and I wouldn't discourage them for worlds."
"Nor I," joined in Betty Stone. "I like to listen to soft nonsense above all things, and besides I haven't the heart to bluff a fellow before he gets to the point- the proposal. Even then I never send them away altogether hopeless. It is much easier and far more agreeable to send a kindly worded note with some trumped up reason for changing my tactics."

Brilliant, Handsome Martha Boggs.

Who of the old timers does not remember Martha Boggs? She was a brilliant, handsome girl, regal of mien and manner, apparently cold and unemotional and exasperatingly flirtatious. Yet, though indications pointed the other way, Martha really was a generous, warm hearted girl, a loving, helpful daughter and a firm friend. She could have numbered her admirers by scores. The beaux in the early days largely outnumbered the girls. That Martha led them a dance there is no gainsaying. Young Dr. McMortuary (not his name exactly, but nearly) was almost distraught for the love of Martha and his persistent, ardent wooing continued several years. She accepted his devoirs, indeed, encouraged the doctor at intervals, but she would not consent to marry him.
In old Westport there was a high bridge crossing a deep

ravine with bottom and sides of jagged rocks, down by the mill. One moonlight night as this couple strolled across that bridge he repeated the story of his devotion- a theme she told me that had become as monotonous as "The Harp of a Thousand Strings." Again he entreated her to consent to be his wife. This time, just for a change, I suppose, Martha told her persistent adorer that she did really care for him, yet, though life was not worth while without him, she must grieve his fond heart and wring her own by a refusal; insuperable barriers barred a consummation of their hopes. She added that she was willing to die with him. The alacrity with which the doctor accepted this suggestion almost took the girl's breath and when he proposed that they leap from the bridge into the rocky chasm below and end together their disappointed lives, Martha replied that she was inexperienced in that line, so she would kindly request him to go first to show her how. Disillusioned at last, Dr. McMortuary piloted Martha to her home with precious little ceremony. Martha was not even obdurate, however, when a pleading suitor begged for just one strand of her lovely hair, though she had a scant supply of "woman's glory." She reached beneath the coil from which it would be least missed, extracted the coveted strand and handed it to him- and he took it!

Other Belles of The Older Days.

Another belle of the older days who is remembered with unabated affection was Julia Lykins. She was superior to most of us intellectually; her beauty of face, genial nature and fine sense of honor drew about her friends who never faltered in affection for her, and attracted suitors by the score. I mention one only- the first; Captain James Kennedy, a fine, frank, good looking young man, at that time a clerk, afterwards a captain on one of the steamboats which plied the Missouri river.

I dare take liberties with the name of another belle, Cora Lee. Her charm of person and manner rendered her very alluring; she apparently had not an atom of coquetry in her nature- at least she got credit for possessing none. She looked so demure and smiling. She was fair and rosy with a great amount of womanly dignity, her chief characteristic to this day. Elizabeth and Agnes Boone, Florence and Jennie Price, Kate and Margaret Bernard were others of Westport's charming girls.

SALLIE MAGRAW OF INDEPENDENCE, AFTERWARDS THE WIFE OF GENERAL J. B. REID AND THEN OF T. B. BULLENE.

Juliette McCoy was another belle of early days. Beaux she had, dozens of them, but I wondered that she had any. She was exceptionally handsome, intelligent and accomplished, but while she was neither conceited nor coquettish she seemed exasperatingly indifferent to the blandishments or sincere devotion of her beaux who were the flower of our early day manhood. One of her devotees, who "loved not wisely but too well," fainted (think of it?) actually fainted on three different occasions when ushered into her presence. Numerous odes

were written to Juliett's charms.

Mary Stuart of Independence in my day was not a beauty, but she had the animated expressive face people like to look at. Mary was bright and genial and witty- indeed, her banter might have rendered her "cake all dough" on one occasion if her beau had been less in earnest. Thomas Campbell, a splendid man, whom she afterwards married, was fond of reading aloud poems or other matter that interested him. Mary grew tired of "too much of a good thing." Resting her head upon her hand she appeared oblivious to what was going on. When the reader reproached her she replied that it was a weakness with her to fall asleep when anyone sang to her. Elocution was not a part of one's education in the old days and perhaps the reading was rather sing song.

Bachelors Nearly a Half Century Ago.

I regret that space permits a mere passing notice of the beaux of the old days, for much could be written of those fine fellows. There were the Woodsons, William C., whom we called long Will, and William H., a handsome, hearty, enthusiastic, gallant of the day; John C. Gage, who first suggested to us "hog and hominy" Westerners the delights of baked beans; Joseph Hodgson, the young editor of the Border Star; Doctor Theodore Case, intellectual and genial, and Bob Hale, who evidently considered "one of the name as good as the same," for when rejected by one maiden in a certain family he "set to" the next and on down the line; John R. Balis, aesthetic and quiet; John and James Byers, pleasant and smart young Marylanders; George Baker and Jacob Connors, and Frank Foster, our hearty, cordial young postmaster; Doctor Harris, whose cousin told that the doctor "coted up one side of Jeems river and down the other without success."

Bob Bass and John Gillespie, students of William Jewell college, were numbered with the early day beaux. There are others I remember well.

This theme is very pleasant to me and thrills my old heart as no other can. Memory teems with delightful incidents, with dear forms and faces of comrades of my young years.

"When Time, who steals our years away,
Shall steal our pleasures, too,
The memory of the past will stay,
And half our joys renew.

N. M. Harris.

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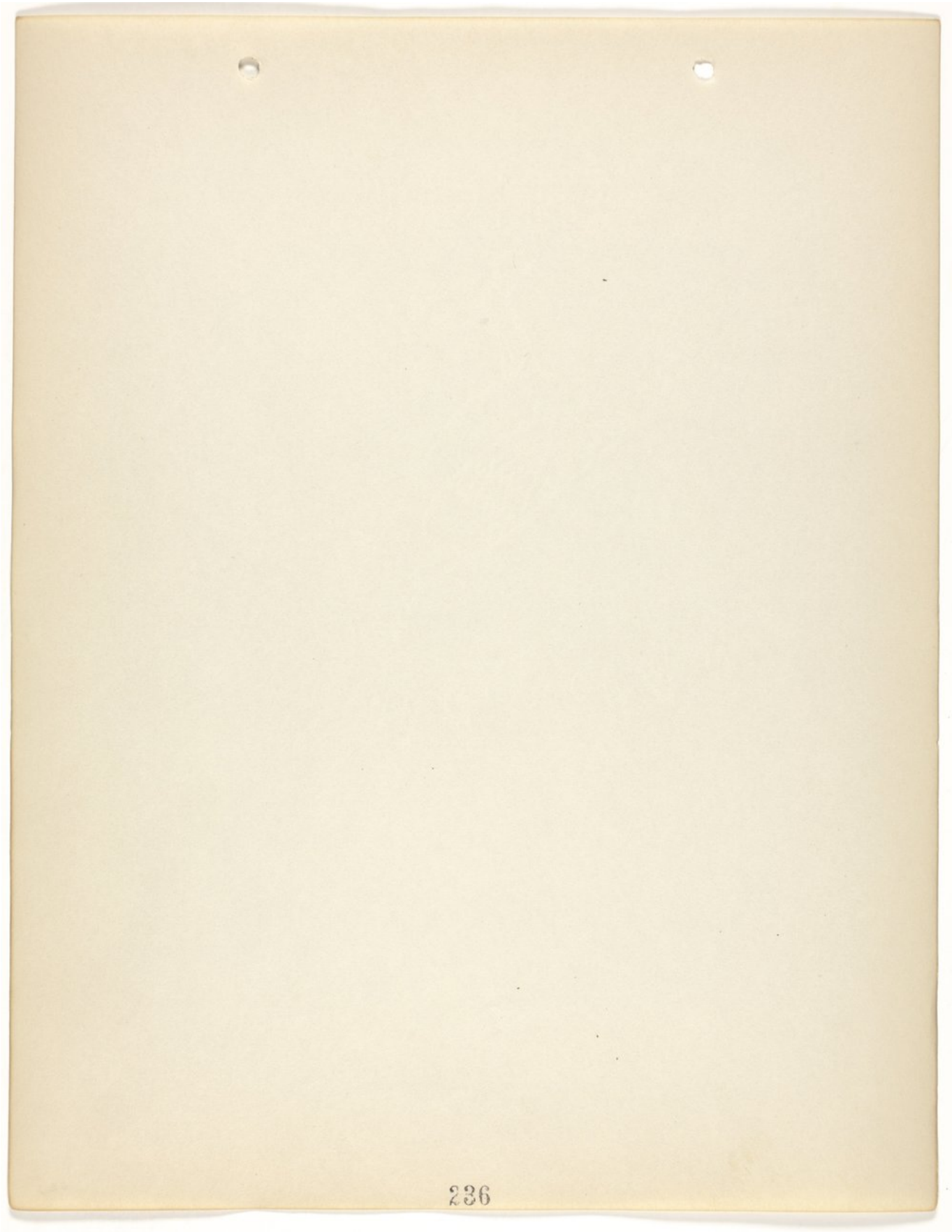


THE PASSING OF LANDMARKS.

An Old Time Kansas Cityan Recalls Days Long Gone By.

(Published in the Kansas City Times)

She Was Here When Houses Now Being Torn Down in the March of Progress Were the Finest in All the Country Hereabout--Memories, Both Sorrowful and Pleasant, Crowd In--Good Stories of Early Residents Along the River Side.

I have read in Kansas City papers of a recent date notices of the tearing down of notable houses in the old quarter of the city--that part upon the high bluff between Main street and Grove street, Second street and the levee. To me and to others to whom "this is our own, our native land," the demolishing of those old homes is a sad business.

Memories sorrowful and pleasant crowd upon me at the very mention of them, and it seems almost sacrilege to me to remove them. The papers are in error, however, in reference to the Chick mansion, for that was torn down and carried away more than fifteen years ago. At that time one of the Kansas City dailies published a very interesting history of that "old white house on the hill." In that article the writer stated that the lumber for this house was brought from Pittsburgh, and that it was the first fine house built in the old town. The mansion was two stories high, and contained originally, I think, five very large rooms and wide passages or halls both above and below stairs. It was built of logs and weather boarded on the outside.

The residences of Mrs. Christiana McCoy and her son Issac, Mrs. Bernice Chouteau, Mr. Steele and J. C. McCoy were the others that I remember as the first in that locality. A little later John Campbell, W. H. Chick, William Jarbeau, Judge Waldron and others built homes there.

At the home of Judge Waldron, which stood just across the street south from Colonel Chick's, Mrs. Dave Smart first saw the light of day. I made an early call upon the wee lassie--she could not have been more than two or three weeks old at the time. I was told that her name was Alice Medora, and I thought it such an uncommonly pretty name that for a long time after I named my favorite among my doll family for her.

And these cherished old landmarks are to be obliterated! The reflection costs me many a pang, yet "though lost to sight to memory dear" they will ever be to many of us old timers.

A peculiar feature of J. C. McCoy's old house is that the roof of the front part was built before the walls. When Mr. McCoy bought the lot there was already upon it a log house with an excellent new shingle roof. Most pioneer log houses in those days were covered with clapboards. In making his plans for its removal he remarked that he hated to waste so good a roof and believed he could utilize it for his new house. The workmen he had employed ridiculed the idea and said it was preposterous.

This put Mr. McCoy upon his mettle and he declared then and there that he could accomplish this feat, and he did. He secured stout props and placed them under the roof, removed the logs, then laid the brick walls, hoisting the roof as became necessary and when the walls were finished there was the roof ready and waiting, and it stands today, minus some shingles, a monument to this wonderful man's perseverance and unflinching purpose in any aim or scheme he undertook. The brick for Mr. McCoy's house, and also for his mother's was made by his own negroes and the building done by a brick mason named Tooley. The first named was really the first brick house built in Kansas City. The McGee homestead, which was erected previously, was not built in town, though it was afterward taken into the limits. The first cases of cholera in Kansas City in 1849 were in the McCoy houses. That dread scourge seems to be no respecter of persons or locality, for where these first cases occured was the cleanest part of town, high and dry, and the air pure.

To me the sight of those old homes, which the march of progress decrees must be obliterated, is still the prettiest part of the city naturally. It is high and sightly and the view unequaled, except about the location of the Scarritt Training School.

The home of Mrs. Christiana McCoy afterward became the residence of Dr. Lykins and is identified with his and his excellent wife's famous hospitality. Most of W. H. Chick's children were born at his home, just east of his father's residence. They and Mr. Campbell's fine looking, manly boys, the Shannon and Jarbeau children played many a prank upon those old historic hillsides.

Earlier than this, we children of the pioneers, with the little darkies, used to rove over the bluff sides amid the trees and grapevines and pawpaw bushes searching for "hen nests." The chickens could rove at pleasure then, but alas! now even these innocent and useful creatures are restricted within limits in the big town that has overshadowed our dear old village.

Sometimes we would build little furnaces beneath some bank and roast and eat eggs to our heart's content. When this was the case our old cook would declare that "dem wild varmints gwine to suck all de aigs ef somebody don't set traps an' ketch 'em. How is I gwine to make poun' cake an' waffles widout aigs," but never a word said we.

Mr. McCoy owned the ferry in those days, and Cynthia, a colored servant, used to go out in front of the brick house on the brow of the bluff and blow a blast or so on a conch shell to announce to the ferry hands that dinner was ready. The old shell, which is still in Mrs. McCoy's possession, made the echoes ring among the tall timber that covered the hills. I feel almost like borrowing the old conch shell and going up on the bluff, before the dear old house is gone forever, and send one bugle blast that would awaken the echoes once more among the hills and valleys. But only echoes would respond; The Crazy Jane is supplanted by the Annie Cade or another, the big bridge spans the current where once rode triumphantly the old horse boat with honest Black Tom at the helm.

Although Mr. McCoy had bought the ferry privilege from the town company, one of them, Mr. Gillis, thought that he could run a rival business also.

He had a flat boat made, launched it and carried passengers across the river in spite of Mr. McCoy's remonstrances. One night he became so exasperated with Mr. Gillis that he hitched a yoke of oxen to the offending craft and hauled it a mile or so off into the timber.

Mr. Gillis then brought suit against him or he against Mr. Gillis, I forget which. The suit was tried in Independence and the day of its termination dragged until a late hour and Mr. Gillis, who lived twelve miles away, was compelled to leave for home. He went out and brought the big nails to build a new flatboat, put them into his saddlebags and started home sure of his case.

Mr. McCoy remained at the court house until the case was decided, which was in his favor. He and a friend then started homeward, and as they were riding spirited horses, they overtook Mr. Gillis on the long hillside west of the Blue. "Uncle Billy, don't you want to know how the suit was decided?" said Mr. McCoy's companion. "I know," said Mr. Gillis, without turning his head. "Know nothing," said the man; "the judge decided the case in Calvin's favor, not yours." Then the defeated ferryman got down from his horse, took off the saddlebags, turned them upside down and emptied every nail upon the ground; then remounted his nag and proceeded on his journey, muttering words that it would not become me to record upon this virgin page.

This ended the legal fight for the ferry.

Once in a winter in those old days the whole face of the earth was covered with ice. In front of Colonel Chick's house the timber and underbrush had been cleared away down to Northrup and Chick's building on the levee. Back of his house the hill had been cut away, leaving an embankment perhaps twenty feet high. One day while the sleet was upon the ground a party of young people were standing at Colonel Chick's front gate when M--, the Colonel's daughter, either in play or by accident, commenced to slip; her brother, standing near, reached his cane to her and as she attempted to grasp it, in mischief, he jerked it away, never dreaming that she could not regain her foothold. This threw her off her balance and off she went like shot out of a shovel.

Down she sped, nearer and nearer the high embankment, the frightened lookers on powerless to aid her. Just before she reached the precipice she caught hold of a hickory sprout which stopped her perilous journey. Her brother called to her to remain where she was and he would cut steps in the ice so she could return without danger.

She was so indignant, however, not only that his mischeviousness had placed her in such peril, but at the undignified figure it had caused her to display to the spectators, that she scorned his assistance.

She pulled off her shoes, and like "Cousin Sally Dillard," "h'isted" her petticoats a little, crept cautiously in her stocking feet around the brow of the hill, and reached home more scared than hurt, but as mad as a wet hen.

During that icy period, or another one, two young beaux were going down the narrow pathway that led from the Chick home to Main street and the levee, when both lost their footing, or one fell and dragged the other down,

and off they shot, too, one head downward and the other the reverse. They were rapidly approaching a fallen tree, when the one who was heads up, seeing the danger to his companion, swung him around just in time to save him from cracking his cranium against the log. grasped him by the leg and

This is the harrowing tale they told, at any rate, and I give it as I heard it.

We were not favored in those days with chestnutty jokes about slipping on banana peels. Most of us had never seen a banana, but we had just as much fun with the ice, and arnica and witch hazel extract were abundant in the market.

I earned my first money in one of those old houses that they are tearing down. My aunt had a beau and I was in the room. I suppose I was making myself a nuisance, as children can under such circumstances, for the young man said to me: "Nell, I will give you 10 cents if you will sit perfectly still for thirty minutes and not say a word." I accepted his proposition and earned the dime, and a good deal of entertainment and useful information besides. I could hear what they said just that much better, and I heard more than I had ever hoped to find out. The loss of the dime didn't cripple the gentleman's finances to any great extent, as he has been able to erect some of the handsomest buildings in and around Kansas City, and is still at it, as I see by the building permits.

I was pleasantly reminded of the old days by a pretty little incident in Independence a short time ago. I called at the home of one of my dear old friends. Living with her parents is a married daughter who has two lovely little girls about 4 and 6 years old. The mother of these little ones is an exceptionally fine singer and they inherit her talent.

While I was there the little girls sang for me the old, old hymn, "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound," to the old fashioned tune. If seraphs had sung for me I could not have been more touched than I was by the sweet voices of those artless little ones singing the old hymn I have heard so often sung by loved ones now gone, tenants of those old homes so soon to go too.

The grandparents of the little girls who entertained me so sweetly may have taught them the beautiful song too good to be forgotten. I rather think this is the case. If so, I commend them for their good taste and loyalty to the old times.

There still remains one old landmark upon the bluffs and that is the Guinotte homestead. It was there in my earliest recollection and was then the property of Mrs. Bernice Chouteau. It is to be hoped that this one home may be permitted to remain. It is made of logs and the material cannot be used again so well as the bricks from the historic old houses on the west bluff can.

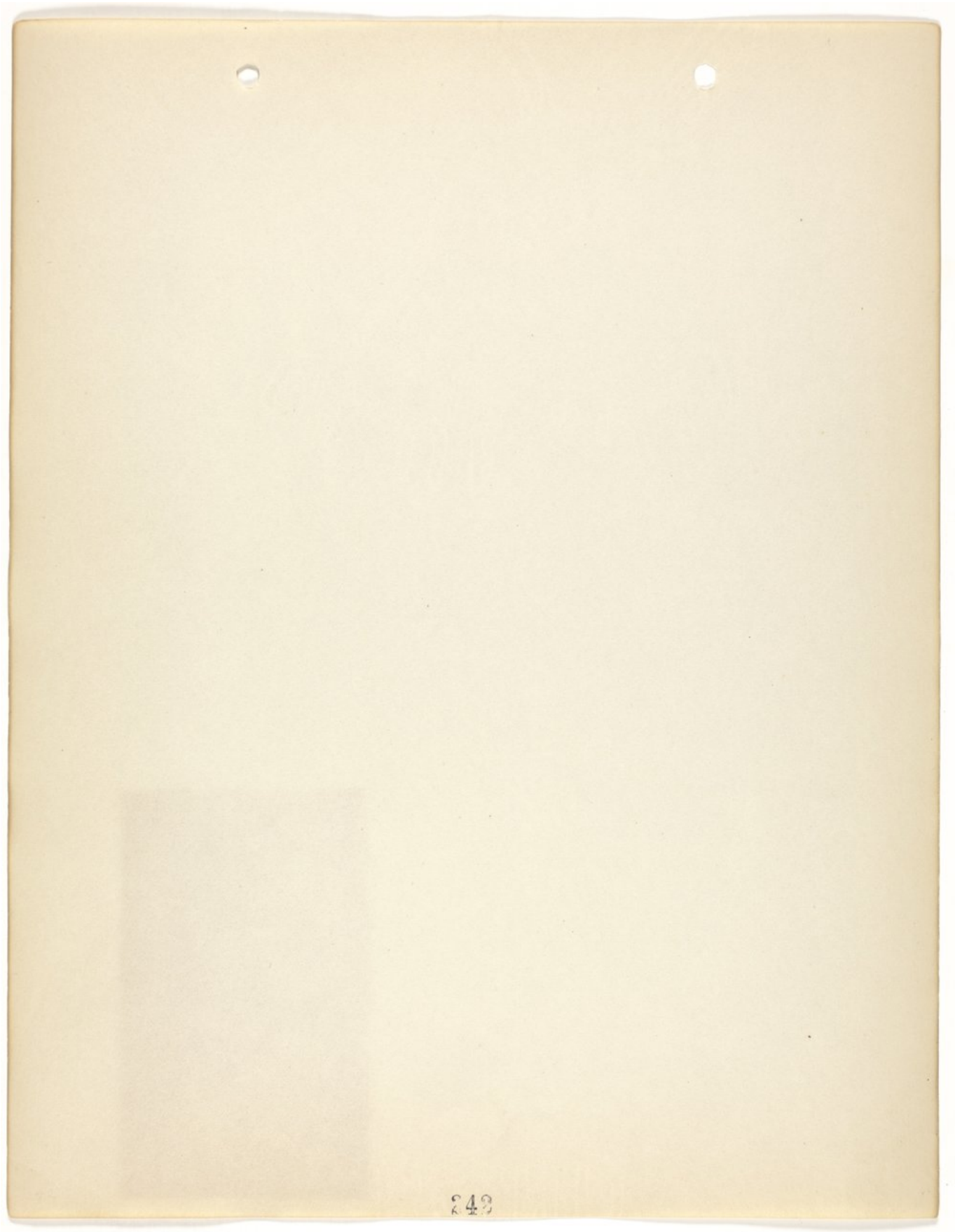
These brick doubtless will be bought by some sacrilegious wretch who will build with them a dog house or a cow shed.

Well, sic transit gloria mundi. We old fogies must bring all our philosophy and philanthropy to bear upon the case, but I for one can but wish that the march of time and progress had, like a certain discreet general, marched round the hill instead of over it.

Time truly works wonders, but it devastates and destroys many a cherished spot. Now I feel like the poet who wrote:

Out upon time, it will leave us no more
Of things to come, than things before!
Out upon time who forever will leave
But enough of the past for the future to grieve;
O'er that which hath been, and that which must be,
What we have seen our sons shall see----
Remnants of things that have passed away,
Fragments of stone reared by creatures of clay.

N. M. HARRIS.



WHEN KANSAS CITY WAS YOUNG.

(Published in the Kansas City Times, Sept. 25, 1892.)

Memories of "The Golden, Olden Glory of the Days Gone By."

The Children of the present Generation Compared With Those of Forty Years ago-- Stately Colonel Chick in His Splendid Home Overlooking the Broad Missouri-- A Glimpse of "Pathfinder" Fremont and his wife-- A Charming Story of the Early Days in and about Kansas City.

If the children of the present generation and those of forty years ago could, by any chance, be brought to confront each other, there would be a mutual feeling of amusement at the droll aspect those of one era would present to the other.

The little girls of two score years ago wore short frocks and very wide and long pantalettes, immaculate in the morning and often mere wrecks of their matin purity in the evening. The hair, either in long curls carefully placed behind the ears, or neatly braided; white stockings for Sunday wear and blue and white mixed for every day; the shoes were neither high nor low quarters, reaching just to the ankle.

"SUSANNAH, DON'T YOU CRY."

Little boys wore very short waists, sometimes buttoned at the back and buttons for ornamentation here, there and everywhere. Indeed, so elaborate was this button adornment that one little fellow who lived in another county some years before the period of which I now write, and who is now a well known and highly respected banker in Kansas City, wore a jacket or "round about" so lavishly decorated by his fond mother with buttons that his schoolmates dubbed him Button, his family even calling him by this nickname oftener than his real one.

The soubriquet clung to him until he was grown and even yet I am told that some loving members of his family who cherish tender recollections of the past still call him Button.

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These little lads of the olden time wore trousers long and ample; no slender little shanks were then exposed to wind and weather covered only with thin hose and black at that. Yet these children that I describe were not "poor folks" but those whose parents were well to do. The children of the present are with us and we need not describe their mode of dressing. They are just as sweet and winning now as in those old days, though I am afraid not so welcome. To me they are the brightest, dearest and most comforting of all my blessings in my life's pilgrimage.

In the year 1844 I made my first remembered visit to the village of hills and hollows and little else, then called Kansas, now Kansas City. An Aunt who was visiting us took me and we went "a horseback," to use the vernacular of the time and locality. We entered the suburbs at or near where is now the corner of Main and Fourth street. From there to our destination which was the hospitable home of Col. William M. Chick, afterward known as the "white house on the hill" our course was indeed a winding way, first turning east, then north around the bluff upon which the old court house now stands, then next through a hollow which was afterward called Pearl street. When we reached the large log house, the residence of Colonel Chick, I was charmed with the magnificent view that was spread out before my childish vision. Albeit I was somewhat appalled. The river was so wide; its length could be seen for miles in either direction; the extensive stretch of country, to the north, the Wyandotte hills. All these wonders suddenly brought before me was almost too much glory for one day. My life had hitherto been spent among the "banks and braes" of Brush creek. I could not have believed, had I not seen with my own eyes, that the world was so big.

MRS. JESSIE BENTON FREMONT.

I remember Colonel Chick as a grand looking, kindly faced gentleman with snow white hair, who would take me upon his lap and sing to me "Where Now Is Good Old Moses?" He walked with a cane always, and had the leisurely, easy manner of a southern gentleman of that day.

A year or two after this first visit I met at the same house Colonel Fremont and his stately wife. I remember their appearance as clearly as if it were yesterday instead of over forty years ago. Mrs. Fremont wore a traveling dress of dark green cloth, the waist fastened with round white pearl buttons. Her dress fitted her fine form to perfection; she was very stylish looking, but I thought rather "mannish" in manner.

The colonel wore military clothes; his hair was long and put carefully behind his ears and parted almost in the center. Though he had a refined face and gentle manner I did not admire him near so much as I did Mrs. Fremont and I wondered if he did not feel ashamed to go around looking so much like a woman.

I listened, spellbound, to his accounts of the far West and of the wonderful things he had seen. Mrs. Fremont had with her the first Mexican dog (the hairless kind) that I ever saw. The general and his wife must have been regarded as distinguished guests, for I remember that they "put the big pot in the little one" at Colonel Chick's during their stay.

Down on the hillside near the river lived a family named Richter. Mr. Richter decided to move to Westport and would go out there every day to superintend the building of a residence. His wife told me that on one occasion he was so late returning in the evening that she walked to the summit of the bluff to meet him. As she went up the narrow pathway she met two Indian men; a little further on she met a youth about 15 years old, with an open pocket knife in his hand. He spoke to her pleasantly and passed on. Not seeing her husband Mrs. Richter returned to her home. When she reached her gate she was horrified to see lying across her door-step one of the Indians she had met, dead with blood flowing from a wound in his breast, in which was sticking the blade of a pocket knife. She was almost frantic with fear at the horrible sight. There was no one within call and as it was near dark and she could hear the yells of drunken Indians on the levee, she was afraid to

"WHERE NOW IS GOOD OLD MOSES?"

start out to find assistance, and could only await her husband's return.

When he came he was at a loss what disposition to make of the body of the murdered man, but he finally decided to place it in an unused shed in the yard, as there was but one room in their pioneer cabin. Mrs. Richter says they passed a night of terror, expecting every moment to hear the savage whoop of the friends of the dead Indian, coming to avenge his murder. They heard no sound, however, and at the first dawn of light, Mr. Richter went to the shed, but it was empty. The door was open and tracks were plainly seen where the friends had come and borne the corpse away. They had come and gone so stealthily and quietly that the anxious listeners in the house were utterly unaware of their presence. The boy whom Mrs. Richter had met upon the hillside disappeared and was not seen for months. When at last he returned the Indians made no effort to have him punished.

In these early days in Kansas City there were four young ladies who were reigning belles, a distinction not so hard to attain then when the masculine element of society largely predominated as it is now. These girls were pretty and sprightly, healthy and helpful at home. They were peerless housewomen and cantered merrily o'er hill and dale as gay as larks. I do not believe they ever suffered a moment with ennui. But one of this lovely quartette is now living.

Beaux were numerous and gallant in those days, and as a general thing were in independent circumstances. These young folks had parties and picnics, equestrian excursions and singing school and enjoyed life doubtless to the fullest. They had their jealousies and rivalries, too, just like other folks in all times and climes. I remember one of our colored women told me with a great air of mystery that "Jeems tole her dat Mistah B. and Dr. R. come mighty nigh fitten a jewel about Miss T. an' dey would a fit, but Mistah Tom 'suaded 'em to make fien's an' shake han's."

I remember well a handsome, dark eyed young physician who finally married the Juno of the four belles. He asked me one day if I could sew. I said "yes, indeed," and he handed me a pocket handkerchief and asked me to hem it for him. I replied that I would if he would sing, "Susannah, Don't you Cry." He agreed to my terms and then and there sang the then new song. If his singing was really as fine and sweet as it seemed to me then, his prima donna wife would have to look for her laurels if he were to repeat the performance at this day.

My first teacher, my best and the most affectionately remembered, except a Miss Lydia Urton and Rev. Nathan Scarritt, was a Mr. Buchanan, a genial, bustling man. He was lenient for those times when the rod, and a long keen one at that, was an indispensable adjunct of the school room.

I think he knew that the boys whom he sent for the switches-- that was the victim's duty--cut notches in them so they

would wear out quickly, but he never commented on it. Like the schoolmaster of "The Deserted Village,"

"He was kind and if severe in aught
The love he bore to learning was at fault."

The log school house, where he taught, stood about where the St. James hotel is now, and in a small clearing in a wilderness of big trees and pawpaw and hazel brush. We carried water for the school from a fine spring in a deep hollow about seventy-five feet east of the Gillis theatre's present site.

The successor of the kind and gentle Mr. Buchanan was quite of another sort. Mr. Rex, as I shall call him, was an unfeeling tyrant. He flogged right and left, without regard to merit or demerit, and paddled our hands with the ruler unmercifully, without the slightest provocation, and would never deign to explain to the victims the cause of the onslaught. I think he did it to keep himself awake; his mind was not active enough. He once struck a little girl on the head so severely that she was an invalid for months, and yet so absolute was a teacher's authority in those days that he was never called for account for his cruelty and depotism. I think one of the best things of the present age is that the young have rights as well as their elders. Children were then expected, as they were constantly reminded, to "be seen and not heard."

I wellremember the first steamboat I ever saw, the Tobacco Plant. We had heard that this boat would probably arrive on a certain day and on the eventful morning we shavers bounced out of bed and ran down the side of the bluff that overlooks the Grand avenue depot of the Missouri Pacific to watch for the boat. We need not have hurried, however, for it was a weary watching and waiting nearly the whole day before we caught a glimpse of the huge craft rounding the bend at Randolph. For an hour before we had heard the "chu, chu, poo" of the paddle wheels and escaping steam, we gazed upon the huge, slow moving vessel in awe and admiration. I had almost said adoration. As all things come to those who wait, the old Tobacco Plant at last reached the wharf greeted by cheers loud,

long and varied by the motley crowd of Indians, negroes and white folks. In a few years from this we would have scorned to bestow even a passing glance upon a craft so ordinary looking, for our river was alive with magnificent steamers, with banners flying, bands playing, deck hands singing and mates "a cussin'."

J. C. McCoy then owned the ferry at Kansas City and lived on the bluff near the residence of Colonel Chick. He at first, used an ordinary flatboat, but being ambitious to do the best and have the best, as was his nature, he determined to have a steam ferryboat. He purchased somewhere an old boiler and engine, had a boat built and placed upon it the steam arrangements. He painted the boat in gay colors and named it Andrew Jackson. Old Hickory was then in the prime of his popularity and glory.


"FITTIN' A JEWEL."

A mischievious nephew of Mr. McCoy stole down one bright moonlight night soon after this boat was launched, and painting over the proud name of Andrew Jackson with white paint put just underneath in plain but disreputable letters, "The Crazy Jane." I think Mr. McCoy let it go at that, deciding finally, doubtless, that the latter name was the most appropriate soubriquet, for in a very short time the crazy craft carried Mr. McCoy and his crew in spite of their nautical skill and herculean efforts down the raging tide of the Big Muddy, reeling and rocking in a most insane manner until near the Randolph bluffs it finally fastened upon a huge sawyer, where it remained until the winds and waves got away with it.


THE TWO SCHOOLMASTERS.

In the early days, we who were children then, though we lived simply and our toys were crude and not numerous, were just as happy and contented as the more favored ones of today. Our playhouses, at the foot of some huge tree, the projecting roots of which made the partition; and the cups and bowls of acorns delighted our childish fashion quite as much as the lovely play-things now so abundant and cheap do our grandchildren. We derived quite as much pleasure from gathering hazelnuts and pawpaws and wild grapes on the hills where now stand the Midland and St. James hotels and the new Board of Trade building as the children of Kansas City do now from feasting their eyes upon the many charming and tempting things now spread before them on these same hills.

N. M. H.

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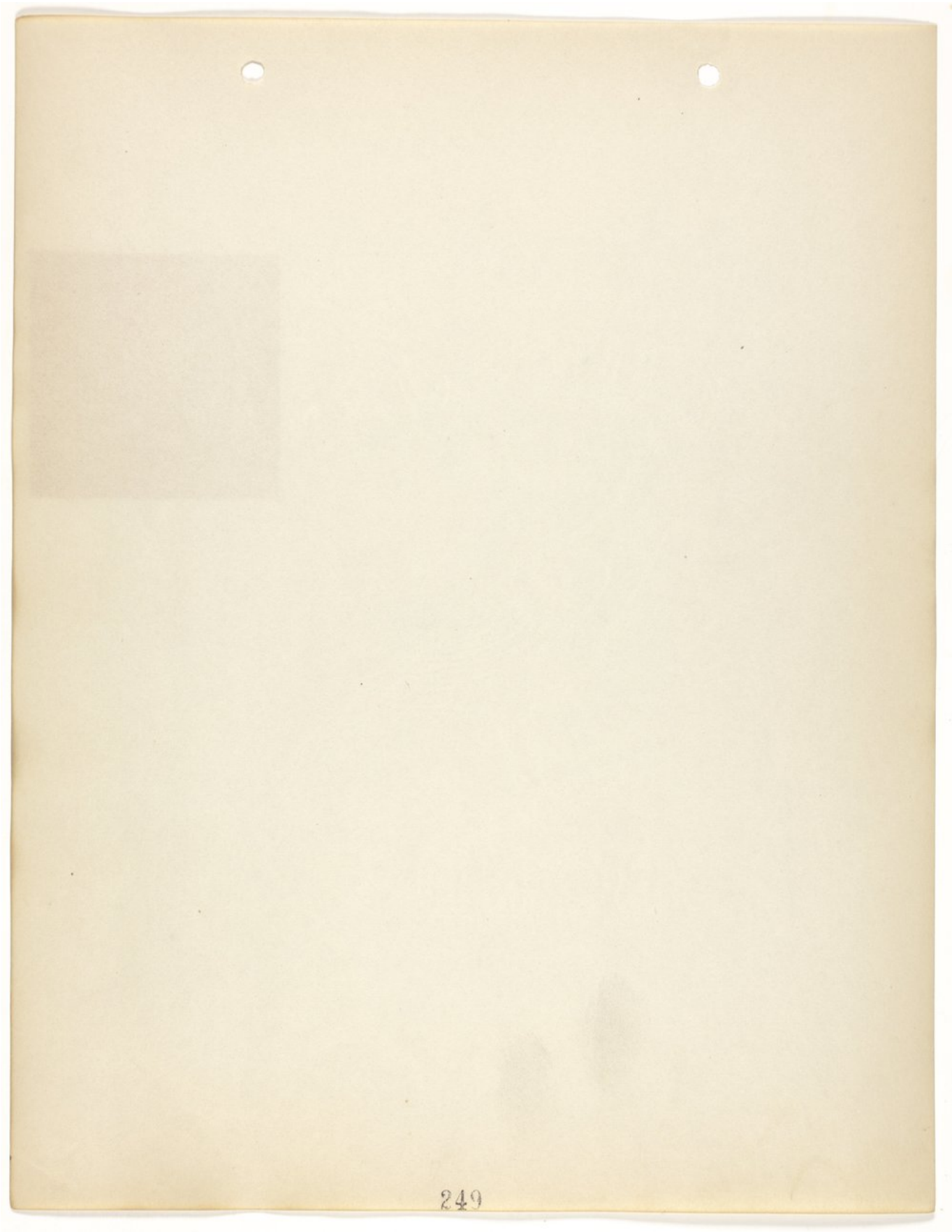
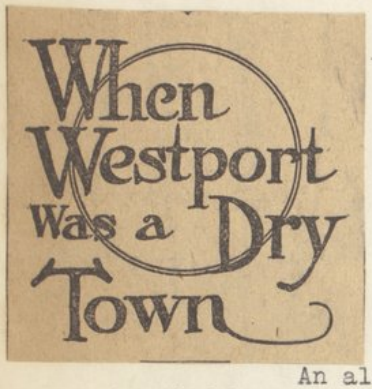




WHEN WESTPORT WAS A DRY TOWN.

(Published in the
K. C. Star, about 1914)

An almost forgotten incident that has just been brought to mind by the recent efforts of Westport citizens to get rid of the saloons will perhaps be of interest. It is this- that for several months, one year in the '30s, Westport actually was a dry town. This seems hard to believe of any border town where usually there are more saloons than grocery stores. This state of affairs was brought about in this way: The Indians of several tribes whose reservations nearby touched the town would come in, get crazy drunk and ride through the streets whooping like madmen. This condition finally became intolerable, so the citizens met and discussed measures to mend matters. A committee was appointed to request the co-operation of the saloon keepers. All these except one agreed to close their saloons, and did so at once, and turned their whisky on hand over to the authorities to dispose of as they saw fit.

One mercenary fellow flatly refused to close his place and defied the citizens to interfere with his business. He said, moreover, he would kill any or all who attempted it. A mass meeting was held in Cal Ehrick's store to decide upon a course of action. They hesitated to resort to severe measures, and in the midst of their deliberations a stalwart young fellow, William Jack, started toward the door, saying: "My old daddy sent me here to represent him, and he expects me to do something, and I'm going to do it." Others followed him to the saloon of the obstinate citizen and found him standing in the doorway with an ax in his hand and swearing to brain anyone daring to approach him.

Bill Jack picked up a long pole which lay in the street and with this rushed on the defiant saloon keeper and knocked him down. He was securely tied, then the men rolled his liquor barrels into the street and with his ax knocked in the heads of the barrels and firewater flowed undisturbed along (now) Broadway south from Westport Avenue.

Westport was then for a few months really a dry town and order restored. There is an old saying that you cannot make a "silk purse of a sow's ear"- you can, though, but not often. I could prove this by pointing to the descendants of this recreant citizen of Westport, who are sought after folks in high society. The ex-saloon

keeper's lesson learned that day in old Westport had a salutary effect on his after life. He returned to his farm near town and became an enterprising,law abiding citizen.

A FORGOTTEN TRAIL.

I am often asked from whence and to where led an old road, yet plainly indicated in places by depressions and straight rows of trees. This is a slighted section of the Santa Fe Trail,yet was traveled by returning freighters more frequently perhaps than the fork most familiar to later day persons. This fork of the trail, sometimes called "Dyche Road," veered to the right of the straight road along (now) Wornall Road, at the top of the hill south of Brush Creek, then running southwest, through what is at present the Judge Allen homestead, diagonally through the Country Club grounds, past the Ward home, continuing on southwest between the terminus of Sunset Hill car line and the old McCoy Graveyard.

Just east of the picturesque premises of A. W. Buckley, an architect of the new Union Station, the trail turns southward extending through and beyond the old Doctor Lykins plantation to a point a few miles south and west of the Wornall home, where it intersects the better remembered Santa Fe Trail.

Near or on the farm of a well known pioneer named Summerwell was a wagon and blacksmith shop operated, if I remember correctly, by a smith named Thomas. It was in order to reach this shop that returning freighters left the east fork of the trail so the battered and broken wagons, after the long journey over mountains and plains, could be repaired and put in sound condition for the return journey, and the worn feet of the teams newly shod.

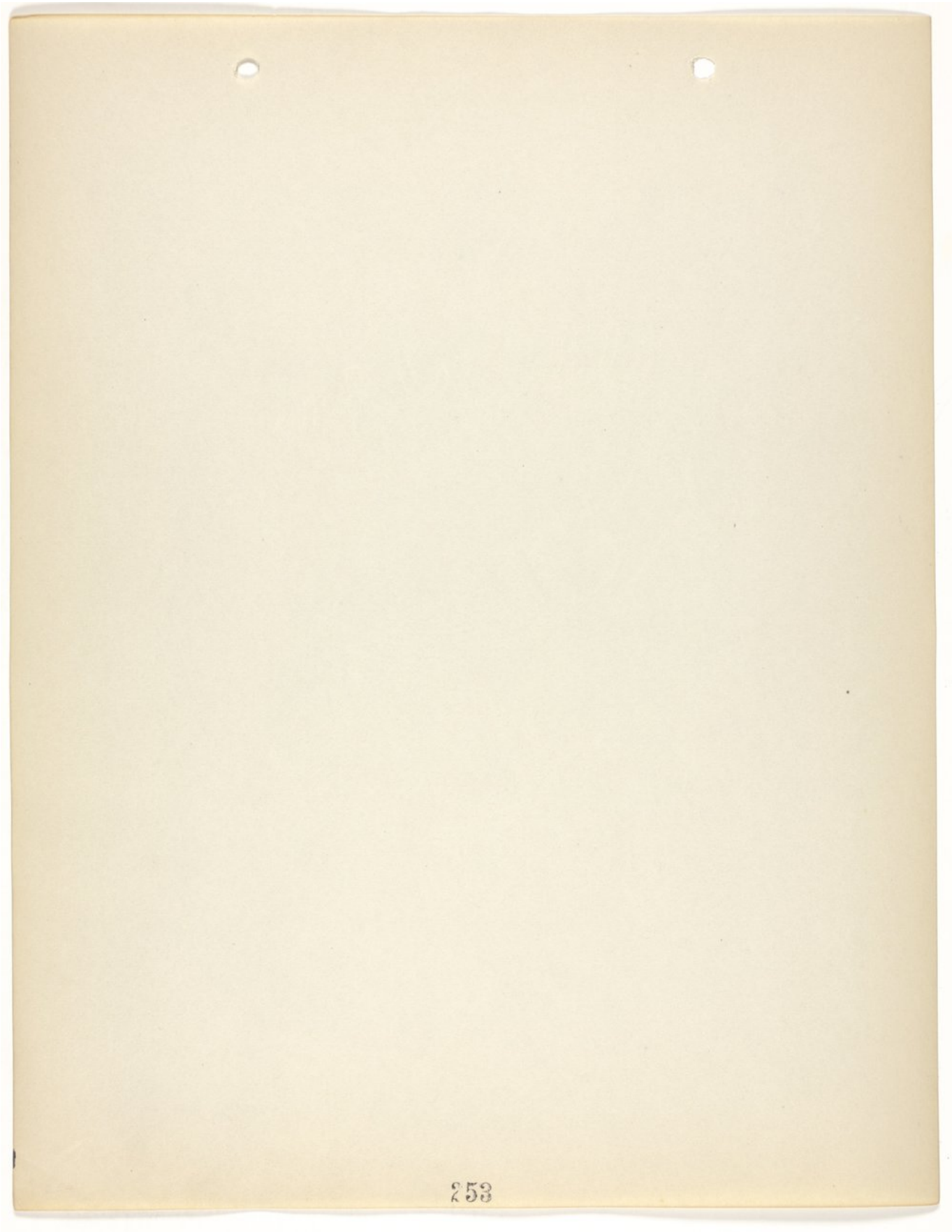
This smith by the wayside for many years made money "hand over fist", and I believe (though I cannot be sure of this), that this was the man who achieved fame by inventing a prairie schooner with sails, which gained for him the soubriquet- "Wind Wagon Thomas."

Later on wagon and blacksmith shops were operated in Aubrey and New Santa Fe, on the main trail, or wagons were repaired by the better equipped smithy in Westport, so the wayside blacksmith's fame and prosperity waned and this west fork of the trail was used mainly as a neighborhood road.

A new street recently opened to and beyond the state line from the loop on the Sunset Hill car line interrupts traces of this forgotten road for a distance, but I had no trouble locating it, for I found the spring which was by the roadside and which now flows from a pipe over the west wall of the Thorne premises. This clear, cold fountain in the old trail days gushed from a natural grotto of moss covered rocks within a cluster of crab apple trees right by the roadside, sending a purling brooklet along a pebbly path across the road. This fountain still cold and crystal clear, has lost its pristine charm by assuming city airs, a metal pipe sends forth its cool waters, that once poured from rugged rocks verdant with moss, the once babbling brook is concealed beneath the roadway.

If I had been the park board or street commissioner I would have left that lovely nook where Nature formed it and the murmuring brook should flow undisturbed over the boulevard, a pleasant relief to the landscape and unsightly oil roads. Along about here in early days among those wooded knolls prairie chickens flocked in large numbers in certain seasons of the year, and W. H. Chick, Alex. Johnson, Allen McGee and other enthusiastic nimrods bagged scores of this incomparable game bird.

Mrs. N. M. HARRIS.



OLD SETTLER SAYS PEOPLE OF TODAY ARE FAULT FINDERS.

Mrs. Harris Tells Historical Society Street Holes Were No Worry Once.

(Published in the Kansas City Star, about 1913)

PIONEERS HAVE THRILLS.

Divorces Rare on Old Knob Hill- Kansas City Spirit Is Born.

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Mrs. Nellis M. Harris, one of the early settlers of Kansas City, and daughter of John C. McCoy, the surveyor who laid out the town, in the following paper, read to the Historical society Saturday, deplored the fact that people of this day are so prone to criticise.

She tells of the time when the citizens of Kansas City were happy and contented without the things we now think essential to our existence- gas, electricity and so on. Now we grumble over a few holes in the street, we complain if our street cars are not on time, or are not routed just as we would like them, when our grandfathers, by dint of a little energy, rescued the family carriage from mud up to the hubs, or did their visiting in boats, which were apt to get stuck in a sand bar at an inopportune moment. Mrs. Harris tells of the aristocratic old Knob Hill, where some of the oldest families of Kansas City lived, and which is now known as Hobo hill.

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The site selected by the earliest settlers in the new town, Kansas, for residential location certainly was picturesque and imposing. It loomed high in verdant grandeur in the summer's sun or sparkling with myriad gems when frost or snow covered its precipitous reaches. This most conspicuous point on the river's course was in clear view from beyond old Parkville along the sweep of the mighty Missouri and still in plain evidence until the bend at Randolph Heights shut off the view.

When I listen to grumblers or read their grouchy letters, their complaints about transportation facilities, a few holes in the streets, or a puddle or so in the pavement I realize that this is an era of discontent and ingratitude; that we are unmindful of our advantages. I have seen a family carriage stalled on Pearl Street, the fashionable thoroughfare for residents in young Kansas City.

What of it? A fence rail and a little muscular energy relieved the situation.

WAIT HOURS FOR BOATS.

What would the pampered people of Kansas City now think if they, in order to reach the business section had, as we did, to meander down narrow precipitous pathways cleared of underbrush down the hillside. These paths were all made zigzag- the hazard would have been too great had they run straight; or how could they curb their impatience when desirous of making a journey, if they had to wait for the steamboat's arrival often hours beyond schedule time? Sometimes even when we saw our boat round the bend and after hastily donning our wraps and hats it would be discovered that the boat had struck a sand bar and was fast there for we couldn't tell how long.

One old-timer suggests that we were then not sensible of our own misery. Be that as it may, we were happy and ambitious, and fortunately there were very few downright poor folks in the community. Indeed, most of the citizens of our town and neighborhood were in comfortable circumstances, and what counts for more, a large proportion of them were educated and refined.

We had our pleasures and our pastimes, sensations and thrills. We had, too, our sorrows and disappointments, and these but bound us closer, for sympathy is a wonderful leveler and forcibly demonstrates the adage that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin." My mind reverts to the old golden days and each phase of life here is before me as I write. I see in the picture the children as they played among the pawpaw thickets, and gathered hazelnuts, "oodles" of them, about what is now Third and Walnut streets, or hazarded life and limb about the pitfalls that some necessary grading made along the face of the bluff. Later the Campbells, Jarboes, Chicks and others augmented our little aggregation. In this list memory retains a vivid picture of some mighty creditable specimens. The gentle Jarboe children, Lee Chick, a handsome, bright little fellow; Willie and John Campbell, manly boys, dressed in the newest style of the day- broad-cloth roundabouts, with trousers to match, were dressup garments for youth then; Emma Chick, Ellen Evans, Sue Biggerstaff and others in and around our village.

MANY WEDDINGS THEN.

Numerous weddings were celebrated, and when I say celebrated I mean it. These were momentous occasions; everybody, his wife, children and guests were invited, expected and attended. Actually the first wedding in the town was the marriage of the Rev. Thompson Peery and the widow, Mary Jane Johnson.

One day I witnessed a singular wedding cavalcade, if two equestrians can be so designated. In the van was a dapper, rather handsome white man, arrayed in the latest style of broad-cloth suit, tall silk hat, high stock, fancy vest, etc., riding a meek looking steed; following a few rods in the rear was an Indian maiden

seated on an Indian pony. The modest damsel rode sideways, mind you, and she was dressed tastefully in some dark material, and over her head was tied a gorgeous silk handkerchief. These were Mr. Hiram Northrup and his wife, Margaret Clark. I want to say right here that Mrs. Northrup, a pure Wyandotte, was one of the neatest, most capable housekeepers I knew.

Caroline and Eliza, the handsome daughters of Judge T.A. Smart, married and had the real old-time wedding festivities in our town's earliest era. A remarkably handsome couple whose wedding soon followed was that of Pierre Menard Chouteau and Mary Polk. Later Matilda Chick and the Rev. Nathan Scarritt were married in the "white house on the hill." There were others as noteworthy, which cannot be recounted in this brief sketch. Elopements added spice to this feature of social life here, but divorces were so rare that one case in the early days appalled and grieved the whole community.

THRILLS ARE MANY.

Thrills, however, were not altogether lacking in our usually orderly neighborhood. The migrations of the Mormons, who spent the winter of 1855 and 1856 in the Milton McGee timbered pastures at Eighteenth and McGee streets, furnished intense interest and excitement.

Then the landing here, in 1849, of thousands of gold seekers, Californians they were called, made things lively for a while, but soon cholera broke out among these ambitious, brave fellows; many died, others were so impoverished and some so discouraged they abandoned their project. The decimated ranks resumed the journey after the season opened up when it was possible to cross the plains and mountains.

Another thrill was furnished that bright spring morning when Mack Chouteau's fine steamboat, the Amazon, rounded the bend at Randolph and opened up its calliope to the strains of "Yankee Doodle". Most of us had never heard of such an instrument and even when told what it was (I'll venture the assertion the word wasn't pronounced properly) could not realize that such forceful, excruciating tunes could emanate from such a source.

One thrilling episode I must mention while on the subject was experienced by myself and other youngsters one Sunday morning. We attended a Sunday school in a small frame building at Third and Delaware streets. On this particular morning, when arrayed in our best Sunday clothes, we went to the school house and no teacher was present. We children waited and waited and still not a grown person appeared. Finally, concluding probably that it was a foolish waste of time, Will Sexton, a youthful leader in many a prank, suggested that we play something. The rest of us responded to the proposition with alacrity. We began our hilarious "un-Sundaylike" proceedings with the lay, "Oh, Sister Phoebe, how merry were we, when we sat under the Juniper tree, the Juniper tree, heigh ho."

SECOND ACT IS END.

We began thus and we ended in the second act of this animating playlet. We had just reached this point. Will Sexton so satisfied and sassy looking seated in the chair, the others marching around him, and I was about to place the hat to the words "put a hat on his head to keep his head warm and take a sweet kiss, it will do him no harm," Just then the door was sneakingly opened and two vinegar visaged women stalked into the room. Thrilling? I feel it yet. These meddlesome women in passing heard the "rucus" within and took it upon themselves to investigate. My, such a lecture as we received. From the invectives and imprecations one would have thought we poor thoughtless little children had committed the seven deadly sins and then some. Actually it seemed like they must have swallowed the dictionary so fast and furious flowed from their mouths the denunciatory adjectives. We were simply scared stiff and meekly submitted even to accepting the notes to our parents of their discovery of our heinous conduct. We finally were permitted to depart and at last our tongues were loosened. The farther we walked and the more we talked the madder we got. When we reached (now) Main and Second Streets we held a council of war and decided that if the meddling feminines wanted to communicate with our parents they must use some other method, so we then and there tore up the incendiary documents and scattered them to the four winds. There were usually at least four varieties of agitated atmosphere at this pinnacle on the old town hill.

Ah! well, I do not think a sedate child could have sprung from that hill-top, with that broad vista from every point of the compass; those towering cliffs, prismatic woods, majestic river. Something up there swells the heart too big for utterance! Perhaps its ozone, its enchantment, was not all in vain, for the children of those hill dwellers still have that joy of living, confidence in fellowman, the full-hearted love of this home city. Yes, and ginger, too! For many, many of their descendants, by their achievements, enterprise, brain, brawn and loyalty, have helped put Kansas City on the map.

Perhaps the site was not so badly chosen, and right there may have been the birthplace of the Kansas City Spirit.

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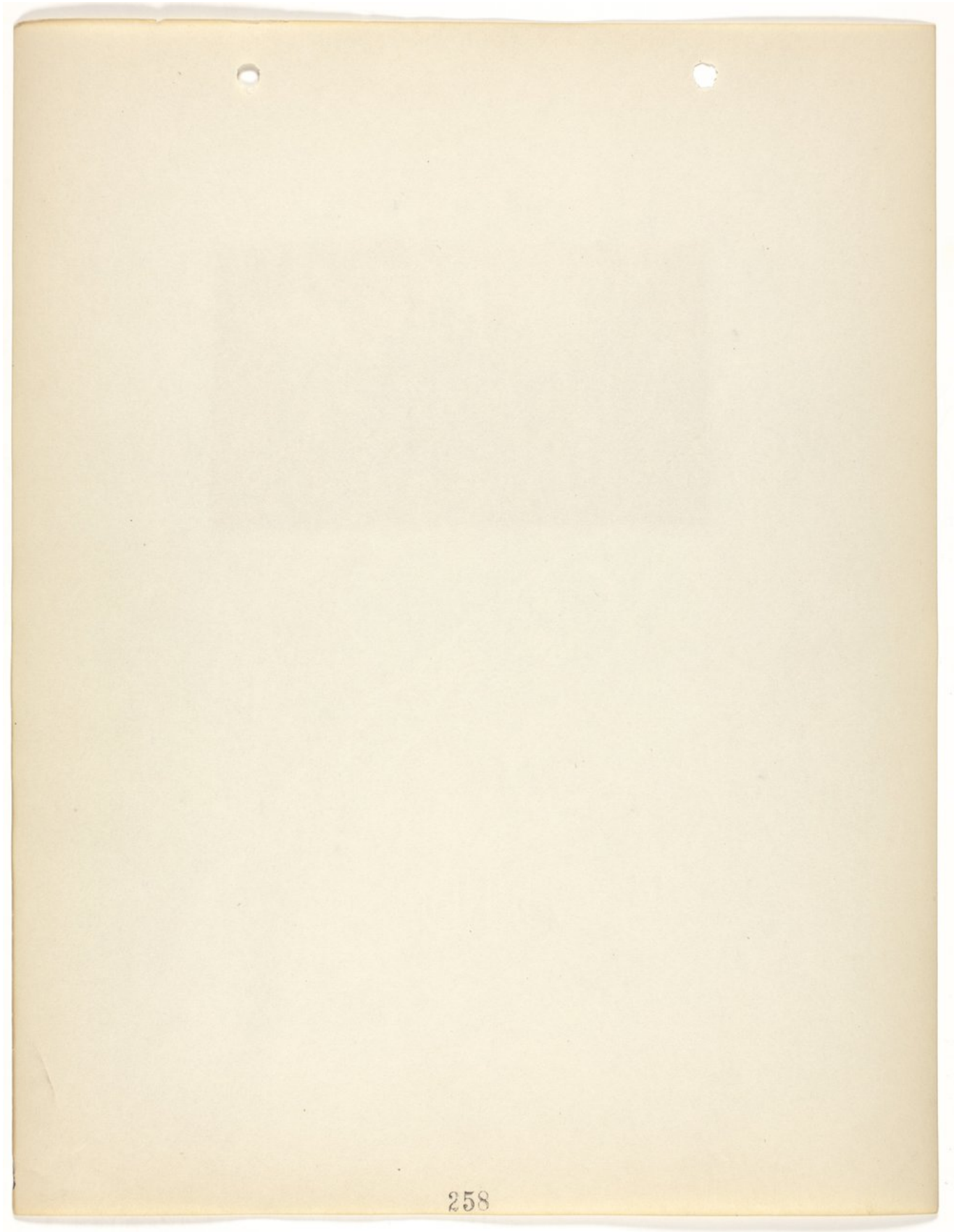

STORIES OF THE WAR.

I have often been requested by old-timers to relate tragic, amusing and mournful incidents of the late war, but I have felt reluctant to venture upon this dangerous ground for fear my own feelings, my prejudices or my honest convictions might betray me into saying unkind or unjust things of the "other side."

In any event, I know human nature well enough to be certain that whatever I or others may say on this subject, or however it may be said, there will be some who will think that too much has been told, or that it is told in the wrong way, and others who will feel that too little has been said, and that said too mildly.

Of one sad chapter in our border history, a stern war measure that the general then commanding considered the exigencies of the times demanded, the famous order No.11, which, with its attendant wretchedness, has been compared to the exile of the Arcadians, on that I will not dwell. Then "we saw as through a glass darkly." Now in our retrospect we endeavor to see all things clearly in their true light. I not long ago heard a preacher (himself one of us in those stirring times-- on the "other side") deliver an excellent sermon on the spirit of tolerance and forgiveness, and among the worthy precepts set forth he dwelt upon forgetfulness of an injury, of indiscretions, or even of crime where the offender had repented his wrong-doing, emphasizing his lesson by repeating fervently and impressively:

"Man should be ashamed to remember what God, the blameless one, forgets."

Well, I cannot vouch for the repentance of others, but I can for my own regret if I was ever unjust in thought, word or deed to anyone. And I am trying not to remember. I have sometimes thought that in order to have a complete, fair and entirely impartial history of the civil war, two persons, one Union and one Confederate, should compile it together. This amicable arrangement might not work satisfactorily, however, for I know of more than one instance where well-meant efforts to conduct something or other in harmony between opposing