

Museum Musings

APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2018

WESTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM, 601 MAIN STREET, HISTORIC WESTON, MISSOURI 816-386-2977

Iatan's Colorful History Iatan's Colorful History



Early Iatan's "business district".

Nestled against the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River and within sight of the Kansas City Power & Light coal-fired power station that bears its name, lies the little village of Iatan, MO.

J.G. Schultz, the son of a Maysville Kentucky merchant, moved west and settled in Platte County. Schultz bought nearby land from Benjamin Bean that would eventually become Bean Lake.

Soon after the Platte Purchase, allowing white settlement in former Native American ground, Schultz entered into a partnership with Major John Dougherty and Thomas Swords. Major Dougherty, retired from the army, fur trader, adventurer and Indian agent for the upper Missouri River territory, had come to the area in about 1837. He entered the land on the present site of Iatan and it became known as Dougherty's Landing.

The three men formed a company and laid off a town-site at that place. On May 22, 1841, the plat was filed. On November 30, 1842 Schultz sold his third to Dougherty and Swords who obtained a charter for the town. Dougherty bought Sword out in 1842 and developed the community on a little more than 300 acres.

The town was named Iatan by Major Dougherty, a long time Government agent for the Pawnee Tribe, in honor of an Otoe Indian chief by the same name. The chief supposedly derived his name from battles with the Comanche who were sometimes referred to as Iatan. Dougherty

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Carl's Corner

The Museum has opened for the summer/fall schedule. New cases have been designed featuring wedding dresses, toys and art from West Platte Students. You are encouraged to stop by and reacquaint yourself with the phenomenal amount of information available at our Museum.

In past reports I have mentioned the work that is being done on the building. As of today the work on the exterior of the building is essentially completed. I have reported in the past that the Trustees would like to make improvements to the first floor of the building. The last Trustee meeting on May 1 authorized the Executive Committee to hire an architect and start the planning process for making the first floor of the Museum handicapped accessible. It is hoped that grants can be secured and donations will be pledged to finance this work.

One of the pleasures of working with the Museum is having the opportunity to show off all the wonderful exhibits we have on display. Throughout the year we will have tour groups visit us. This is one of the best sources to show off our Museum and community.

I encourage you to "talk up" the Museum with organizations you are affiliated and suggest a tour of the Museum. I am sure you will find this rewarding and very interesting for the people on the tour. We have several "Tour Hosts" who can provide an outstanding program. You may contact the Museum for information pertaining to the types of tours and how to organize one.

As always, the Museum volunteers hope to see you at the Museum and especially meet your families who may be visiting Weston this summer.

Apologies . . .

The substitute editors of the *Museum Musings* apologize profusely to our members for the extreme delay of this newsletter. We thought we knew what late editor Carolyn Larsen put into each issue, but we were rudely awakened to our underestimation.

We appreciate your patience and consideration as we go through these growing pains.

Today's Events Make Tomorrow's History

“Antique: old, ancient, venerable, archaic, obsolete, having come into existence or use in the more or less distant past. Old may apply to actual or merely relative length of existence.”

The Weston Historical Museum houses antiques, things of value because they were saved by relatives as a link to their past. Pieces with the names of old town stores; or a dress once worn by a great-great-grandmother. Diaries depicting the travails of early pioneer days, or perhaps written memories of someone who came to the small river town located on the edge of the Mighty Missouri River. Every piece in the museum has a history to tell and each year we add more, because what was once an item or a letter or a program from a school play, has gained reverence due to the fact that it has become obsolete, historically significant or one of a kind still surviving.

Nowhere in the dictionary does one find an age to define antiques. Some say they have to be 100 years old to have that title. Others say 75. I say let's be careful with that 75 because that makes some of us antiques and I don't particularly care to be referred to in such a manner. After all, old is relative too. Take for instance the house you live in. If you had it built and you have raised your family there you think of it as new. But when someone says to you, “oh you live in that old blue house on Nebraska Street”, you have to pause for a moment to realize they are correct. Our house is over 55 years old. Compare that to the home I grew up in. Built before the start of the Civil War, it was and still is OLD! The house my grandparents owned was built in 1892 but we never considered that *old*. It was from the Victorian era which was back away but certainly not old. Add another 50 years to the age of that house and it too has become an antique.

All this brings up the true topic of today's guest column: history. History is something I loved to study back in the old days, when schools placed a good amount of value on knowing the past. Dates were important. Reasons for or against not so much. Then came a period, after my school days, when revisionist history started popping up. You know, don't think of people from the past as heroes. Oh no, let's expose every pimple on their character and show they were not perfect. Then came a period where what happen isn't as important to the history book as why it happened. Let's analyze everything and judge past eras to today's morals and find the people who came before as wanting in that department.

Not saying yeah or nay about these changes. Just saying times change and what seems important today may seem trivial to those who follow us. Take an event 50 years ago this month, the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy,

candidate for President of the United States and brother of the late President, John F. Kennedy. Most people my age (remember not antique) remember that event. My brother had worked on his campaign and was intensely wrapped up in the outcome of the California race. He stayed up late to watch the results on television and then shut it off and went to bed. The next morning, we awoke to the news that after we turned off our televisions the Senator had been shot. Throughout the day we kept a radio playing in the newspaper office and very late that evening we started home, with the car radio on for updates on his condition. As I turned the corner of Washington and Spring Streets, the old Rambler station wagon I owned decided to start missing, it's sparkplugs going bad. The announcer said “we have a bulletin from Los Angeles, California” and you knew, you KNEW what it was going to be. But all I wanted then was to get that blasted car up that hill before he said anything.

Did I think if we got into the security of our yard that it wouldn't have happened? Did I believe there was something magical in being parked in our yard or in our house? I don't think I was that naïve but I just wanted that car to get up that hill that night. Eventually it chugged up Summer Street, but not before we heard the words “Senator Robert F. Kennedy has died....”

Another day seared into our memories. First the death of President Kennedy, then the death of Martin Luther King; now Robert Frances Kennedy. In the ensuing years there would be other dates, Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon, the explosion of the Challenger, the collapse of the USSR, 9/11. All of these were earth shattering to us. Not history but a part of our lives. A very important, life adjusting part.

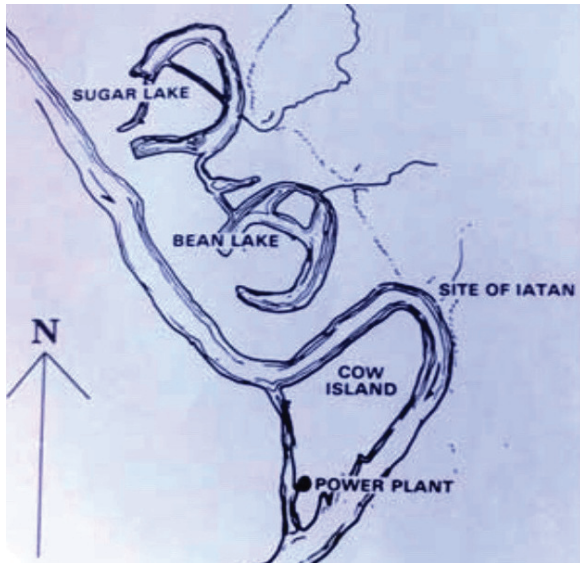
Today they are a paragraph in the current history books. Today those of us who lived through these events can remember with startling clarity what we were doing, where we were, how the world reacted. But with each passing day these events become only a sentence in a history book to future students. Do you see how history, antiques and museums all tie together now?

Without a museum, a living museum, the facts, the feelings, the fabric of our lives would be but a sentence in a dusty history book. It takes the saving of letters and magazines and newspapers to relate how we felt about things at a specific time. It takes the ability to actually look at a telephone from 1930 to understand what it was like before a cell phone. And it takes us, the antiques of today, to realize what we grew up with has passed on and that we should preserve our items so future generations may better understand who and what we were.

Colorful History . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

saw that the bluffs behind Iatan contained large Indian mounds. George Rensburg an archaeologist from Atchison, KS. opened several mounds in 1896. Over the years many pottery shards, bones, and artifacts have been found in those bluffs.



Cow Island's location prior to disappearance. Current location of KCPL's Iatan station is noted.

Directly opposite of Iatan is Cow Island which was discovered and so named by the early French traders. Purportedly named for a lone cow found wondering about on the island having been stolen by the Kansas Indians from the white settlement at Saint Charles Missouri and placed on the island to prevent her escape. Some have claimed that the French had a trading post on or near this island in the early days. Lewis and Clark made mention of the island in 1804.

Although Iatan could never compete with its larger neighbor 5 miles to the south, Weston, it was located near the river and a rail road was being built. It soon became a thriving shipping point with a wharf, depot, warehouses, stock pen, hotel, post office, general stores, and a pool hall. Military men from Fort Leavenworth often crossed the river to Iatan to indulge in the latter. But like Weston Iatan fell victim to the whim of the Missouri River. A major flood in 1881 cause the river to run from bluff to bluff. According to early day accounts Iatan was inundated but making matters worse, the river changed course leaving the once bustling little port town isolated.

The flooding became a 2000-acre swath of fertile bottom land with fields of tobacco corn and soybeans. By 1860 Iatan claimed several hundred residents and several stores. Fires destroyed many of the original buildings over



2010 populaton sign.

the years and unfortunately most of the records are lost.

The residents of Iatan, like most Platte Countians, sympathized with the South in the War Between the States. In May 1861, when the first Kansas regiment of Union troops was recruited at Ft. Leavenworth, they learned that a force of Rebel cavalry had been organized in Iatan and was flying its flag there – one of the first Confederate flags. According to an article by Dr. R. J. Felling in the April 1983 *Discover North*, members of the Union regiment bristled at the affront, and 17 volunteers vowed to attack Iatan and take down the flag.

By the time the men reached the river and located a pair of leaky skiffs to make the dangerous crossing to the Missouri side, five backed out. The remaining 12 tramped through brush during the night, crossed the river, and charged the Rebel camp at Iatan as the flag was being raised.

After a brief exchange of shots, in which three of the volunteers suffered leg wounds, the flag was taken down, and the raiders beat a hasty retreat. Using their rifle butts as oars, they paddled back to Fort Leavenworth, where they received a hearty reception and got treatment for their wounded comrades. The skirmish marked the first bloodshed of the Civil War. The next morning, the Leav-

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Iatan today.

Summertime Has Changed A Bit Over the Years

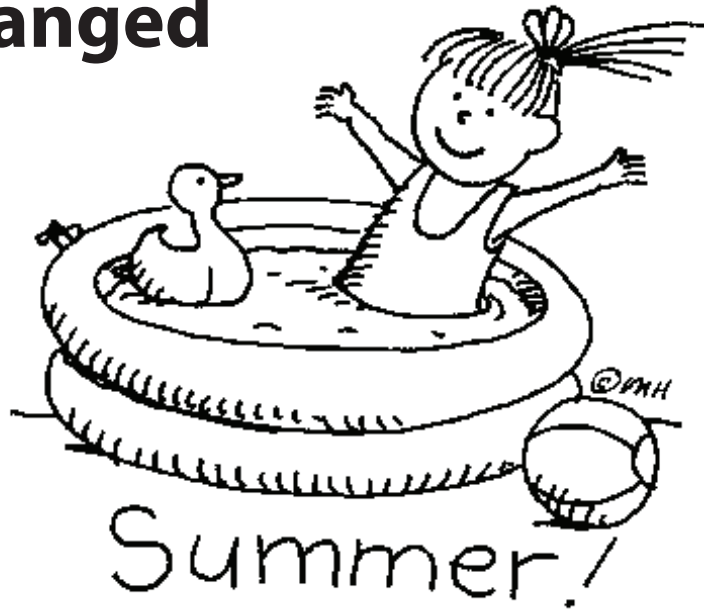
“*Summer time and the livin’ is easy . . .*” is a tune written by George Gershwin for the show *Porgy and Bess*, many, many years ago. But the tune pops into my head when I think of growing up in Weston during the 1950’s. We didn’t have air conditioning in most places. In fact, the words “air cooled” on the window of an establishment meant they were really into modern living. For years Lee’s Sandwich Shop on Main street had a window painted with what looked like frost to indicate it was cool inside on a hot summer’s day.

For many of us it was window fans, blowing the hot air out during the day and pulling in cooler air at night. If you had a two-story home, and many of us did in this area, you spent the hottest evenings on pallets in the lower part of the house, with a fan oscillating nearby.

Before it got too dark you played outside, sat on the front porch, or rode your bicycle up and down the hills of Weston, or the flat land of Farley, Beverly and Iatan, on the gravel roads in the country. As the sun set you started heading back towards the homestead where you gathered in poor lightening bugs, putting them in the always present glass jar, with grass so they could eat, and holes punched in the tops so they could breathe. The parents always managed to release them after you went to bed so they could live another day.

We made sand hills in our sand pile, created by the foundation of an old washhouse/shed combo, and conveniently located under the shade of an old maple tree. The leaves from the tree made “trees” on our sandy hills, sand homes dotted the landscape and toy cars raced up and down the roadways we had carefully prepared. When the level of the sand got too low, Hull Mill & Lumber Co., would deliver a fresh load of fine sand in a dump truck and the driver would always say “you kids stand back, don’t want to bury any one in this nice cool sand!” Some how that seemed like a nice idea to us but not to the powers that be.

If it was really hot you made a trip to Bill Cash’ Coal and Ice company, located on Market street, across the alley from the back of John Nichols service station. There you would sit in the station wagon, bare feet dangling off the trunk door and listen carefully with a great deal of anticipation as you would hear a sliding sound, then a whoosh as the block of ice would skid down the shoot. Mr. Cash or sometime Wallace Bell or other men whose names I did not know would grab that shiny piece of “glass” with ice tongs and swing it into the tub we had between us.



Homeward we went, anticipating the chopping of the block with the untouchable ice pick, then into the tub would slide two or three large watermelons, to be enjoyed as the sun set in the west that evening. There was never any ice colder than that and I don’t care if all ice freezes at the same temperature, this was the coldest!

Swimming was another venture. If lucky we got to go to the pools in Leavenworth or Atchison. These were frequently closed in those days because some thought polio was transmitted through the water, and others just felt it better not to congregate when the first word of a polio outbreak would strike fear into the hearts of all parents.

There were quite a few choice swimming holes in and around the area. One I know was great was out by Salem Christian Church, or there was one on the old Lober place on Lober Road. If you didn’t have a swimming hole on your property and the parents weren’t all that set on taking you to the pool, then you had to resort to THE CAR WASH! Hoses in hand, sponges at the ready and a little soap tossed in for effect. Water down the car, which took awhile because the water was spraying more on the children. Then apply some soap, swirl the sponges and rags around the car as high as you can reach, and duck to keep from being hit by another spray from the hose.

Take a minute to appreciate the beautiful rainbows cause by the water glistening in the summer sun and then start running to avoid another spraying. The car was never really too clean but it wasn’t for lack of spraying. The yard was watered this way and the kids were cooled off. A win/win situation.

Remember walking into John Riley’s Meat Market with the oiled wood floors, the cooling units that had handles which swung upwards to open? Remember putting your

nickel into the pop machine, sliding the glass bottle with the metal caps along the open pathways until you got your choice to the end of the runs and then you pulled it up through the gear mechanism? Strawberry soda, cream soda, orange, root beer, you name it he seemed to have it. The metal tops would cut into your fingers as you pulled the bottle upwards and then you would insert the lid into the bottle opener and push downward on the bottle. Depending on how careful you moved the bottle along its path, you either got a satisfying “pop” as the top came off, or you got a fizzing sound as part of your soda sprayed away.

We went everywhere barefooted! Across gravel, through delightfully squishy mud, along the concrete sidewalks and into the stores. If you were going to the Weston Theatre however shirt and shoes were required. But for a nickel you got a bag of popcorn, or cotton candy. Soda was a little higher, 10 cents please. The movies were always preceded by “news reels” with the most dramatic voice overs. For some inexplicable reason you actually listened to what the man was telling you about the world outside your safe little town.

Stores such as Boltz’ Garage, Weisinger’s Upholstery, Dr. Calvert, Vaughn’s Funeral Home, The Weston Hotel, the one-room Weston Library, The Weston Post Office, Carter Cleaners, DeHoney’s, McComber’s HyKlas, Offutt Jewelry, Hill’s Barber Shop, Sample’s Pool Hall, How’s Mercantile, and Tolle’s and Nichols Service stations, The Weston Chronicle, Sebus Brothers, Caldwell’s Cafe, Gambel’s, Eberwine’s Movie Theater, Zander’s Pool Hall, Quinley’s Paint and Supply, Paden’s Five and Dime, Bank of Weston, Beano’s, beauty shops, Rumpel Hardware, Schindler’s Grocery Store, Thomas’ Repair, Dr. McCrea DDS, Foley Insurance, two warehouses, Hardesty Oil, Dr. Felling, were all a part of the 50’s downtown. We had everything we needed.

Miss Marie Ohlhausen ran the library with an iron hand. The books were more or less sorted by age. Younger children read off the lower shelves and she was a one-person censor. Try sneaking a book off a higher shelf, and as she was handwriting the card tucked into the little manila envelope at the front of the book, she would stop, look at the title of the book, look over her glasses at you and say “I don’t believe your parents would appreciate you reading this. Select another.” There was no arguing. But there were summer reading programs.

Summer time and the living was easy. You walked from one side of town to the other, sometimes accompanied by your dog, sometimes a sibling. Always being carefully watched by the community. We were never put off being told “I don’t think your parents would want you to do that,” as we walked on the town’s many retaining walls, or started down to the creek, or checked out the warehouses

to see what we could see.

We had two towns in the summers, Weston and Marshall, where we would cross the neighbors back yards, entered the backdoor of the neighborhood grocery, again with those oiled wooden floors and the coolers with the lift up handles. But one thing slightly different in Marshall was we crossed a driveway that had old coal clinkers as a base. There we wore shoes and the clinkers made a scrunchy sound as we walked. It was because that sound brings back summer memories to me that I have a side pathway which winds through ferns and hostas, covered with pea gravel. It makes that same scrunchy sound so when I walk on it I am carried back to the summer heat, the smell of mowed lawns, the laughter of children playing in the garden hose’s spray, and the catching or fireflies. I am taken back to growing up in the summer in Weston, Missouri.

Editor’s Note: The preceding article, as well as “*Today’s History*”, were written by Ruth Mary Bless Clemens.

In our next issue we hope to have *Bertha’s Bits* and *Did You Know* included as well as a new feature column – “*Crackin’ Corn*”, which was an occasional column appearing in The Weston Chronicle during the 1960’ and 70’s.

Colorful History . . .

(Continued from Page 3)



enworth Conservative newspaper printed a rousing account of the raid. Dr. Felling reported that the rebel flag "was soon suspended bottoms upward in front of the Conservative office with the names of the captors emblazoned thereon."

Today there are a mere 47 residents in Iatan, according to a 2016 census. But as you travel along Missouri Hwy 45 between Weston and St. Joseph you will see the proud little village still reveling in its river landscape, beautiful bluff foliage, and rich contribution of Platte County History.

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June 2018

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* Denotes additional gift

Where Are They Now?

(In our last issue, the article on one of our subjects was inadvertently cut off. Below you will find the full story.)

Heather Amstutz



After graduating from West Platte High School in 1985 Heather Amstutz attended Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville. MO.

Four years later, in 1989, Heather was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army Corps of Engineers. Heather deployed throughout Latin America working civil affairs engineer projects in Honduras, Panama and Costa Rica. Heather earned a masters degree in interna-

tional affairs from Catholic University in Washington DC and speaks fluent Portuguese and French

Heather spent many years working with numerous humanitarian aid programs throughout the world and has been deployed to work in disaster areas and war-torn regions throughout Somalia, Darfur, Ethiopia, Angola, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia

Today Heather is the regional director for the Danish Refugee Council.

The Danish Refugee Council is a private Danish humanitarian organization founded in 1956 after the second world war in response to the European refugee crisis

Today The DRC works in more than 35 countries worldwide helping refugees, internally displaced people, and asylum-seekers.

What a remarkable life she has led!

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WESTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

A Non-Profit Corporation for the Preservation of Historic Information.

601 Main Street • P.O. Box 266 • Weston, MO 64098 • 816-386-2977

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Membership includes an electronic version of the Museum's quarterly newsletter *Museum Musings*. To receive it, please indicate your e-mail address on the line above.

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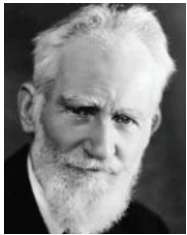
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WESTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

P.O. Box 266 • 601 Main Street
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“If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience.”

George Bernard Shaw

? Mystery Corner

This is one of those photographs that end up in our museum that we know little to nothing about.

This particular picture was given to us with no information at all so not only do we not know the building in which they are standing in front of, we have been unable to identify any of the children, adults or timeframe in this photograph.

If you can help us out with any or all of the information relevant to this photograph please give us a call at 816-386-2977, stop by Museum or email us at westonhistoricalmuseum.com.

Thank you for your help.

