

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIRST BUSINESS PLACES

The first land entry within the present limits of Maries County was made on January 11, 1826, at which date Charles Lane entered the east half of the southeast quarter of section 3, Township 40, Range 8, and on April 21, 1827, entered the west half of the same quarter section, giving him one hundred sixty acres of land embracing the tract known for a hundred years thereafter as the Old Pay Down Mills. As mill sites were in great demand by the early settlers, Lane probably had such a use for his land in view when he entered it. It is still considered an ideal site for water-driven machinery being situated on a small creek below a large spring that furnishes a never-failing supply of water.

He seems to have made little improvement, however, and when he sold the land to Peter Walter in 1829

the mill was not finished, if indeed it had ever been started. Walter, who was a German of inventive disposition, built two small barges which he anchored several feet apart in the swift water, placing a small paddle wheel between them which he connected to his burrs and operated a mill until he could complete the one supposedly started by Lane, and thus 'held his trade' until his dam was finished and the larger mill in shape to run.

Before this was accomplished, however, the 'boat-mill' turned out to not be so satisfactory, so he fell back on the old horse-operated one, the power being furnished by the owner of the corn, who rode the horse to mill, used him to grind the grain while there, and then rode him home again. Walter operated the different types of mills on the site until 1834 when he sold out to Daniel Boone Wherry, who, in conjunction with Reuben Terrill, ran it until Wherry's death in 1850. Terrill and his family and members of the Kinsey family operated it until 1866, when the property passed into the hands of William Bray. With the exception of a few years it has been in the ownership of the Bray family ever since, being now owned by Seth Bray, a grandson of William.

Very little of Peter Walter's history is recorded. In 1833, shortly before selling the mill site to Wherry, he entered land farther down the river, now a part of the J. D. Rogers farm, where it is thought he lived the remainder of his life. He was the father of John Walter who married a daughter of John Steen, an early settler after whom Steen's Prairie is named, and who lived almost his entire life along the Dry Fork of the Bourbeuse Creek. He left two daughters, Margaret, wife of John Arendall, and Sarah, wife of M. R. Matthews.

Daniel Boone Wherry, who purchased the mill from Walter, was a native of St. Louis County, tradition naming him as a son of Dr. Mackay Wherry, who lived in St. Louis and St. Charles counties prior to 1800. If this is correct, his mother was a daughter of Reverend Ichabod

Camp, the first Episcopal minister west of the Mississippi River, and a native of Pennsylvania. Reuben Terrill, Wherry's partner, was a native of Virginia and his biography is treated elsewhere in this volume.

As has been said, Walter's mill was finally a 'hoss power' affair and the only industry was grinding corn. But after its sale to Wherry and Terrill the original purpose of putting in a dam and using the water for power was carried out, and the customer's horses relieved of the burden of furnishing power for operation. The power furnished was far in excess of the demand on it, so the owners began to cast about for other uses for it. Having added a store soon after they acquired the mill, a powder mill and distillery soon followed. They were extensive fur buyers, and a thriving trade soon built up. The above industries supplied about all that the settlers needed except for the very occasional services of a physician. These, too, were generally to be had. Dr. David Waldo had entered land a short distance down the river from the settlement and spent much of his time at the mill since it was the central trading point for the country for many miles around in all directions. Even before Walter sold to Wherry the business had been given an added impetus by the entry of Samuel Massey and Thomas James of the land between the mill and the Gasconade River, on the banks of which they established their Bloom Landing where the manufactured products of their Meramec Iron Works were hauled overland and there shipped by water as far as New Orleans. Much of Wherry and Terrill's furs--and some of their whiskey--went down the river in these same boats, part of the furs going direct to buyers in Paris.

After the death of Reuben Terrill in the late fifties the property was operated by his son, Hamilton Terrill, until about 1866. Then it passed into the hands of the Kinsey and Bray families, the Kinseys shortly after selling their interest to Bray. It has been in the hands of the Bray family ever since, although no longer

operated as a business.

William Bray was an Englishman who appeared at Vienna in the late fifties, after emigrating from England shortly before. He purchased lots in the town at auctions held by the county and erected a carding and woolen mill, first on property now owned by Joe Buschmann in the south end of town and later on the land now owned by Miss Lizzie McManamy, known as the Boudreaux property. His daughter, Louisa, having married Thomas J. Kinsey, who was interested in the Pay Down Mill, he was persuaded to move his woolen mill there and take advantage of the ample water power--the powder mill having fallen into disuse and the distillery being closed owing to the heavy taxes imposed by the government as a result of the war. Shortly after moving there he acquired all the land and industries connected with the place, and successfully operated them up to the time of his death in the seventies. Afterward they were owned and operated by his son, Thomas A. Bray, for the thirty years up to his death in 1906, the property passing into the hands of his son, Seth Bray, in the division of his father's estate. The last industry operated there, the woolen mill, was moved to St. James several years ago.

Bloom Landing remained in the hands of the families of its entrymen until 1872, although abandoned many years before as an adjunct to their furnace facilities. It was then sold by their heirs to C. E. Given, who erected another water-power mill on it about a mile below the original Pay Down Mill, which he operated for more than thirty years. After his death the property passed into the hands of Dr. W. H. Bowles; it is now owned by Ralph Bixby.

The Indian Ford Mill is an interesting story. Just about the time Vienna was founded in 1855 Thomas B. Roberson of St. Louis bought all the land along the east side of the river south of the old Vienna and Indian Ford

road and established a mill. His first attempt was to dam the big slough in the bottom above the road and forming what is now known as 'Becky's Island' to use water-power for mill operation. This effort failed because of too little fall in the stream at that point. Having used up all his available resources building the dam, he mortgaged his land to William Boardman and with the funds thus secured built a steam mill on the bank of the river at the place now occupied by Jack Duncan's Indian Ford Cabins. The boiler and engine were shipped to Bonnet's Mill on the Missouri River--whether by rail or water is not known--and hauled overland to the mill site. In the course of this haul Roberson tore up just about all the wagons in the neighborhood. The trip was finally completed by using an extra big wagon and six yoke of oxen, all borrowed from Thomas Anderson.

Roberson did a good business, but the burden of debt on the place proved more than he could carry, and the property passed into the hands of Boardman in 1860. Boardman continued to operate the property for several years until it was destroyed by fire about 1866.

During the time of its operation, especially during Boardman's ownership, the place was of considerable importance. In addition to the grist mill Boardman operated a sawmill of his own, and also a carding machine, the latter owned by I. J. Jones and leased by Boardman; a blacksmith and wagon shop, a store and two saloons actively competed with Vienna during this time. Boardman later lost the property also, title passing to Eli Givens and John Bishop, from whom the present ownership by Colman Finn and Parker Kellison can be traced. No attempt to rebuild the mill was made after its destruction while owned by Boardman, as a mill had been started at Vienna about this time.

The ferry at Indian Ford was in operation at least soon after the county was organized, but the name of the first owner is unknown. During the Civil War it was

owned and operated by John King, the boat being rowed by long oars, or sweeps. It was bought by Ira Noblett in the late sixties, and was operated by him and his widow, the late 'Aunt Becky' Noblett, and their son, Jeff, up until about 1912, when bridging the river at this point put the ferry out of business. For a time two ferries, the other operated by Dolph Bishop, were in operation at this point.

Ferries were established at and near where the Old State Road (The Springfield Road) crossed the Gasconade soon after the road was established. The very first was likely operated by Abraham T. Smith, grandfather of the late A. S. Henderson, on the land now owned by Bert Allen, a short mile above the later and better known Bloomgarden--or Johnson--Ferry. In fact, the Smith Ferry may have been in operation before the state road was built. It was later known as the Henderson Ferry, after Dr. William Henderson moved there following the death of Smith. Still later it was known as the Bowen Ferry. The road on this side of the river reached the high ground across the lower end of the farm now owned by T. J. Terry. This route was abandoned in favor of the more accessible Bloomgarden Ferry more than seventy years ago.

Business of nearly all kinds was represented at Bloomgarden. In addition to the business enterprises of the Johnsons the next most active place was the blacksmith and wagon shop conducted by Ephraim Kinkeade and George Pickering. These places were on the east side of the river. On the east side Calvin Feeler had a store and lodging house, just at the foot of the hill. Another store was operated for a time farther back and on the east side of Spring Creek, somewhere near where the Tennyson Schoolhouse now stands.

Coppedge's Steam Mill, at what is now Safe, was built and operated by members of the Coppedge family until 1864, when it was sold to Moses Lamoreaus. It is

not known whether or not it was a successor to a 'hoss power' mill, but it was one of the very earliest mill sites in the county after Pay Down. The mill has long since been abandoned and the machinery removed.

Spencer's Mill on Spring Creek was a water-power mill in operation before the Civil War, and had a race track as an added attraction. A store, also a saloon, were operated there part of the time. Members of the Spencer family owned both the mill and the store.

Stony Point just below the forks of the Maries on land now owned by the Wieberg family was noted as a trading point on the west side of the river. Established by Charles W. Holtschneider, a wealthy member of the Westphalia colony, about 1848, and operated for him by William Krone, it soon became the trading point for a large territory. Aside from the store and saloon, a blacksmith shop--one of very few--brought much business to the place. It continued in existence more than twenty years until the growth of Vienna and the establishment of a trading post at Koeltztown resulted in closing out the business conducted there. The Holtschneider stock of goods was removed to a point in the Maries bottom some six miles west of Vienna, on land now owned by John Dill, where a store was conducted under Krone's management for some years.

In addition to the business buildings Stony Point boasted of a doctor for a very short time--Dr. Linn, who married a daughter of General Parsons of Jefferson City. The young couple had lived here a very short time, however, before Dr. Linn was drowned while trying to cross the Maries to answer a sick call. His widow returned to her father's home in Cole County and later married a Standish who was killed in Mexico with Parsons after the war.

Prewett's Store stood on the land known as the Ball West place, on the old Dixon and Vienna road. Franklin's Store was on the Wittkopp place adjoining. Both stores were removed to Dixon after the railroad reached that point in the early seventies.

The house on the Walker place, now owned by Dr. O. H. Jones, just across the road from the Walker Schoolhouse on Lanes Prairie was built for the only hotel in the county shortly after the Old Springfield Road was opened. It was a main primary road for movers and drovers to and from St. Louis and beyond, and to Springfield and the Indian Territory in the southwest. At that time St. Louis did not afford a large enough market for much of the stock trailed over this route, and it was customary to leave the road below Union, cross the Missouri at St. Charles and the Mississippi at Portage des Sioux or Alton, and sell them on the larger market at Jacksonville, Illinois, where the demand was always large enough to take care of all their offerings. This house was the only one regularly operated as a hotel in the county, the next day's travel either way taking a journeyman just over the line into either Gasconade or Pulaski County. It was conducted for many years after its erection by Mrs. Belinda Walker.

In addition to the mills above mentioned, many other small mills were operated as neighborhood conveniences in several parts of the county. Robert Winston had one on Fly Creek, where the farm-to-market road crosses. Farmer Doyel had a mill on Mill Creek at the Hodge crossing in an early day, and later had a small one at the last creek crossing on the road from Vienna to Indian Ford. Another mill, owned by William (Pee Wee) Vaughan, was at the Steinman place on the lower Maries.

The exact location of Johnson's Store, owned and for many years operated by T. J. (Jeff) Johnson, is not

known, but it stood in the general vicinity of Old Grove Dale, which bore the earlier name of Pea Vine. Jeff Johnson owned so much land in that area that the location of the building site is difficult at this time, but it is thought to have been on the west side of the Pea Vine Creek and slightly south of the Old Springfield Road. It is second only to Pay Down in age, because business was conducted there when the Terrill family came to this county in the middle thirties. Jeff Johnson's nephew, G. W. Jones, operated the stand after the death of Mr. Johnson, removing the stock from that point to his new location in Lindell when he bought his father's home place after the Judge's death. George Terrill, brother of the first Reuben, also conducted a store to the south of the Springfield Road for a number of years after coming here, the site being on the home place of the present John R. Terrill., adjoining the Gasconade County line. Spanish Prairie, the Hawkins Store, is treated in the chapter on the Hawkins family. Bilbie's Mill on the old Castle Rock road near Barnett's Station was another well known trading point, the machinery for which was boated up the Osage to Castle Rock or above, and from there hauled overland by ox teams.

The early settlers in the southwestern part of the county were largely supplied by stores outside of our boundaries. Coppedge's Mill on Little Piney, in the Newburg territory. Wheeler's Mill on the Gasconade south of Hancock, and one at the later site of Bray's Mill near Iberia in Miller County all operated stores in connection and much of our early day trading was done at these points.

The Meramec Ironworks played an important part in the development of Maries County. They were located at Meramec Springs in the extreme east edge of Phelps County, barely over the line from Crawford County, and for many years exercised a great influence over the eastern half of Maries County. The springs were likely known to trappers and fur traders in the territory long

before they were to the outside world. Attention was drawn to them by the bad luck that overtook a band of Shawnee Indians while camped there. This band, led by Joe Rogers, a white man who had been captured by the tribe while a small child in western Pennsylvania and had risen to be the chief of the band when it was forced to leave eastern Ohio. The band skirted the north bank of the Ohio and finally crossed the Mississippi at or near Cape Girardeau in the early days of the nineteenth century. The exact year of their appearance west of the river is not known, but it was early in the century for it is recorded that the band was in and around St. Louis during and shortly after the War of 1812.

Continuing their wanderings westward they finally arrived at the Big Springs where they camped and where they were overtaken with the 'aguer' of the white man. (For some unknown reason malaria does not appear to have attacked the Indians, especially the eastern ones). Anyway, at this time most of them had it and in trying to escape the Bad Manitou to which they ascribed their affliction they unknowingly did the right thing--moved to higher ground. Tradition has it that Maries County was their next stopping place, supposedly on the western edge of Lanes Prairie where their sickness speedily disappeared and where they camped for some time. It is thought the old orchard on the Ferrell place on the Prairie, which was of good size when he entered the land in 1848, was set there by a member of the Rogers tribe, which by this time was more than half white as a result of the many white men marrying into the band.

It was after his residence oh the Prairie that Rogers and his band made their way back to the old home in Ohio, where, in telling of his travels to his white friend, Thomas James, Rogers described the big springs with the Bad Manitou and the vast bed of iron ore near it. Iron mining was getting to be quite a business in Ohio and Pennsylvania at that time, so Mr. James was interested in the Indian's tale and resolved to investigate.

Accompanied by Samuel Massey he made the overland horseback trip to Missouri in the middle twenties, found the springs and the iron ore deposit, and characteristically decided to enter the land and made preparations to exploit his find.

An iron furnace to smelt the ore was built in the wilderness and finished about 1829, when active work of mining and smelting the ore began. It turned out that transporting the finished product would be a much bigger problem than producing it. In casting about for a way to avoid the long overland haul to St. Louis by ox-wagon the partners heard of the new settlement of Pay Down near the Gasconade. Near it they found the needed shipping point which gave them a water route to St. Louis and New Orleans with a wagon haul of only thirty miles. So in 1830 they entered the land between Pay Down and the river now owned by Ralph Bixby and for many years known as Given's Mill. They called the place Bloom Landing, from the fact that the 'blooms' were hauled there in great high-bodied ox-wagons and there loaded on flatboats for the long water trip to the western markets. The plan proved thoroughly workable and for many years the Mississippi River territory was supplied with iron products made at this furnace and floated to market from Bloom Landing on the Gasconade. The deeply cut banks of so much as yet remains of the Old Lanes Prairie and PayDown road are the marks of the ox-wagon wheels that passed over it during this period, each loaded with about 4,000 pounds of iron and pulled by three or four yoke of oxen.

The advance of steamboating, and later the building of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, led to the abandonment of Bloom Landing in the fifties, or shortly before, in favor of the longer haul over the Old Iron Road to Hermann. There the iron products were loaded directly into steamboats or freight cars. This method of transportation endured until the beginning of the Civil War when the completion of the Frisco Railroad to Rolla furnished the owners a much better outlet.

In addition to having their first shipping point in Maries County the James interests employed many of the Maries County young men in their different activities, which by this time had been enlarged until they covered several different lines. Vast ore banks had been acquired all over the Phelps and Crawford County section, and some prospects in Maries County. But in spite of this ownership they bought large quantities of ore from small producers who worked at their little banks at intervals when there was no farm work. They then hauled the ore perhaps twelve to twenty miles to dump it on the stockpile at the smelter and 'trade out' the proceeds at the company store or receive the value in money, as they wished. A ton of ore then was as staple produce as a can of cream is today, with the advantage of a much steadier market. In fact, with the exception of a few head of livestock the ore produced was often the main 'money crop' in the east end of Maries County during the period prior to 1850.