

The Happenings

March/April 1994

St. Joseph Museum

Pony Express National Memorial

PONY EXPRESS DAYS

Mary Cordonier Duncan and Floyd Cordonier of Kansas City, great-grandchildren of Johnny Fry's sister, and Martha Jones, granddaughter of Johnny Fry's brother, were on hand on March 31 to "kick-off" Pony Express Days at the Pony Express National Memorial. Fry, the first rider from St. Joseph, died in 1863 at the Civil War battle of Baxter Springs and left no children of his own. Mrs. Duncan, Mr. Cordonier and Mrs. Jones helped commemorate the role played by the "young, skinny, wiry fellows" who rode for the Pony Express by placing a special marker at Mount Mora Cemetery on the grave of Charlie Cliff, one of the four riders buried in St. Joseph. The others are James W. "Doc" Brink (Mount Auburn Cemetery) and Michael Whalen and John Koerner (both in Ashland Cemetery).

At a press conference held earlier in the day, the descendants were introduced to the media. Also at that time, new research was presented which pin-pointed the location of the property on which Johnny Fry was reared after the family moved to Buchanan County from Kentucky in the 1840s. Jackie Lewin, curator of the Pony Express National Memorial, had assigned Mary Knab, research assistant, the task of following up on a lead into the background of Johnny Fry. The lead came through the donation of a scrapbook by Boyd Frazer. In small print in an article about the history of Rushville, Missouri, was a note about early pioneer Colonel Wells, "step-father" of Pony Express rider Johnny Fry. This was a key that opened a door to more information about Fry. The family of Johnny Fry and the location of the family home had long been questioned. Who were his parents? Did he have brothers and sisters? Was the family home in Rushville, St. Joseph or Kansas?

The first stop was the Northwest Missouri Genealogy Society. There Mary Knab located a marriage record for B.G. Wells and Mary Fry for August 28, 1856. (So, Johnny Fry's mother was named Mary). The 1860

census for Buchanan County had an entry for B.G. Wells, age 68, a Rushville area merchant and farmer born in Virginia. His wife was Mary, age 50, born in Kentucky. There were two Wells children listed and two Fry children: Jasper, age 17, a barkeeper born in Kentucky and Sarah, age 14. This was indeed part of the Fry family, but where was Johnny?

Mary Knab then returned to the census record - this time the 1850 Buchanan County census. Wells was listed again but this time with a different wife, Loriania. Mary then looked for the Frys and found John Fry, age 51; Mary Fry, age 39; and children Richard, age 17; Reason,

Clint Sims



Mary Duncan and Floyd Cordonier, aided by museum staff member David Rich as a "young, skinny, wiry fellow," set the marker on the grave of rider Charles Cliff.

land where Johnny Fry spent his first years in Buchanan County. What more appropriate place could the first Pony Express rider have lived?

Johnny Fry lived on this land until he was approximately 16. By 1856, his father had died and his mother remarried. Part of the Fry family was grown and on their own and the rest went to Rushville to live with their mother and B.G. Wells. It is more than probable that in 1860, the starting year of the Pony Express, Johnny Fry the rider was the same John Fry listed in the St. Joseph City Directory as a foreman for the Fish and Robidoux livery stable located on the northeast corner of Main and Faraon. The Robidoux was Charles Robidoux, son of

anniversary of the start of the Pony Express. Costumed interpreters were at the museum throughout the day to welcome visitors and answer questions.

Next to the Memorial at Bill's Saddlery, Russ Mooney demonstrated saddle making. Russ is an expert leather worker and made the replica Pony Express saddle and mochila which is on exhibit at the Memorial. In addition, he has made replica saddles and mochilas that are on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution; the U.S. Postal Museum; the Kansas State Historical Society site at the Hollenberg Station; and Wells Fargo and Company headquarters



Clint Sims

Erich Uhlhorn as Mayor Jeff Thompson: "Three cheers for the first overland passage of the United States mail! Three cheers for the Pony Express!"

Joseph Robidoux who was the founder of St. Joseph. Johnny Fry boarded with M.G. Fish on Louis between Main and Second.

At the time of the Pony Express, one of Johnny Fry's brothers (Reason, ancestor of Martha Jones) lived on a farm south of Troy, Kansas. Fry's only sister, Sarah (ancestor of Mary Duncan and Floyd Cordonier), married William Canter of St. Joseph in 1865. Fry's mother died in 1870. With this new information, the story of Johnny Fry becomes more complete.

The first rider, Johnny Fry, left the old Pike's Peak Stables at 7:15 p.m. on April 3, 1860. Today, the Pike's Peak Stables houses the Pony Express National Memorial. On Saturday, April 3, 1994, the Pony Express National Memorial celebrated the 134th

Beginning at 1:00 p.m., a showing of the 1953 full length movie, "The Pony Express," was held in the community room. Starring in the movie were Charlton Heston, Rhonda Fleming, Jane Sterling, Forest Tucker and Michael Moore. Shown at 3:00 p.m. was the episode of the "You Are There" series which featured the story of Pony Bob Haslam's ride through Utah Territory at the beginning of the Paiute Indian War. The 20 minute made-for-television feature was narrated by Walter Cronkite and aired during the 1950s.

At 4:00 p.m., volunteer Erich Uhlhorn, dressed as 1860 Mayor Jeff Thompson, gave the speech which sent off the first Pony Express rider. Concluding the day's commemorative events was the departure of a Pony Express rider from the stables.

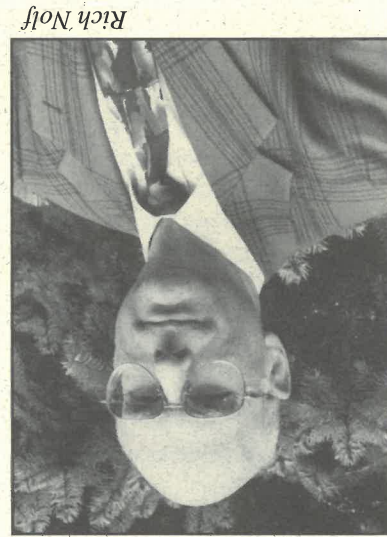


Clint Sims

Joel Mooney and his horse portrayed Johnny Fry and Sylph.)

By the time you receive this issue of the *Happenings*, the Upland Forest Complex exhibits will either be completed or nearly completed. It was several years ago that the initial rough plan was worked out and coordinated by David Mead. He drew a number of outside resources into the creation of the master plan. Then, David and Robbie Sipes worked very closely on finalizing the story line for the exhibit.

However, the natural history project got put on hold when the expansion at the Pony Express became top priority. David and Robbie, along with other staff members, narrowed their focus to the Pony Express. The staff was the driving force in the design, and there were a number of exhibits that the staff fabricated for the Pony Express. You can see the quality of exhibits that can be designed and executed by the staff when you look at the Pony Express National Memorial.

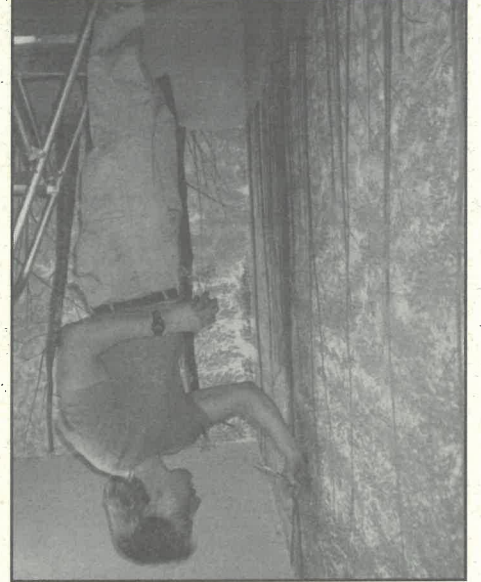


Rich Nolf

After the grand opening of the Pony Express National Memorial, David and Robbie picked up where they had left off on the third floor, reoriented themselves, and decided to begin with the Upland Forest as the first habitat segment

they would deal with. It has been extremely interesting for me to observe the process which they have gone through. There was the research on tree casting and

David Mead



Clint Sims

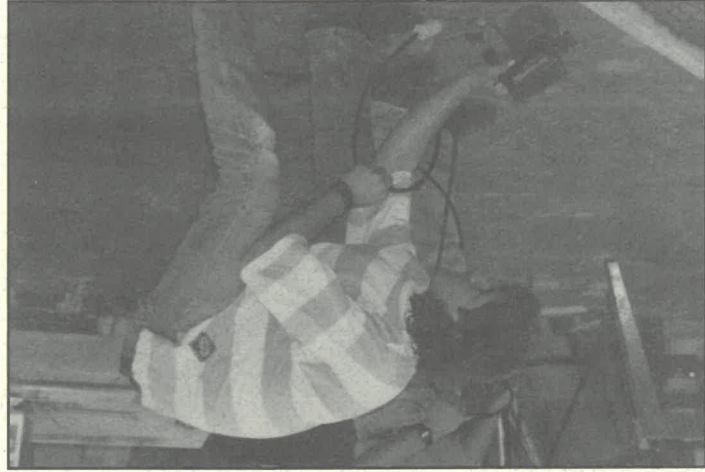
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Chad Lawhon

other small features of the upland forest. Chad Lawhon, an intern from Missouri Western State College, has become very proficient at making plants and has played an important role in the development of the exhibit.

The physical construction and framing of the exhibit area went rapidly. David began the background. He has done many other kinds of painting, but he has never done a diorama background. I watched him start it, struggle with it, fight it and become so frustrated that he



Robbie Sipes

painted the whole thing over to start all over again because it "just wasn't coming together." He did some "brain picking" in the process and the second time around it really started to come together. Artists can often be their own worst enemy, because they are never satisfied with the work they have done.

Story continued on page 6

Clint Sims

St. Joseph Museum

MUSEUM CAMP

Everyone has heard of cheerleading camp, baseball camp, scout camp, church camp and other types of educational and recreational camps for young people. Why not a *museum camp*? A museum camp could offer activities related to history, natural history, exhibit building, Indians and the Pony Express. Children could make an old-fashioned toy or a replica of an arrowhead or maybe go bird watching.

The St. Joseph Museum and the Pony Express National Memorial are sponsoring a week-long Museum Camp to be held daily, June 20 - 24, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The camp will be the first program the museum has offered of this sort since the natural history classes were discontinued a number of years ago. Registration will be limited to children who have just completed grade four, and enrollment will be restricted to the first 25 children to register. An enrollment fee of \$25.00 for members and \$30.00 for nonmembers will cover all the activities for the week. The following is the museum camp schedule *(All activities will be at the St. Joseph Museum unless otherwise noted):

Monday, June 20

- 9:00 - 9:30 Registration confirmation and orientation
- 9:30 - 10:30 Natural history: Bird study
- 10:30 - 12:00 Exhibit building: Arrowhead reproduction

Tuesday, June 21

- 9:00 - 12:00 Pony Express *(meet at the Pony Express National Memorial)

Wednesday, June 22

- 9:00 - 11:00 Ethnology: Native Americans
- 11:00 - 12:00 Exhibit building: Arrowhead reproduction

Thursday, June 23

- 9:00 - 12:00 Natural history: Bird study *(meet at Northwest Parkway)

Friday, June 24

- 9:00 - 10:30 History: Old-fashioned toys and games
- 10:30 - 11:30 Exhibit building: Arrowhead reproduction
- 11:30 - 12:00 Wrap-up and commencement

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU CASES

Recently, six cases were constructed along the south wall of the office of the Convention and Visitors Bureau at 109 South 4th. The cases were built so that local museums can make use of them to showcase their institutions. On March 1, staff members from the St. Joseph Museum and Pony Express National Memorial installed artifacts, photographs and labels in two of the cases.

In addition to a full color photograph of the building, items in the St. Joseph Museum case are an Acoma pot, a Hopi kachina, a wood duck, a souvenir program from the Tootle Theatre and a pitcher from the Union Depot Hotel. These artifacts were chosen to highlight

the three major areas of the collections at the St. Joseph Museum - Native American, local history and local natural history.

The focal point of the Pony Express National Memorial case is a mochila, the saddlebag used to carry mail. Other items include a Pony Express rider statue, a photo of the Pony Express National Memorial, the Pony Express logo and labels.

These articles will be in place until July at which time they will be removed so that other local museums may be featured.

MARKETING PLANS BEING DEVELOPED

Marketing is a major focus area for staff members Kathy Reno and Reva Rocha. They have enlisted the volunteer services of Mike Septon who has been in the marketing profession for over twenty years in sales, consulting and instructing.

A fact base of information has been pulled together. Mike, Kathy and Reva will use this information to formulate a plan to market to our target audiences. Look for more information in future *Happenings*.

"WALK ST. JO" YEAR-ROUND VOLKSWALK

receive AVA credit or a patch award, the volkswalker must confirm that he or she has walked the entire route. This is done by answering four questions on the back of the pamphlet - easy questions such as what bank is on the corner of 10th and Penn.

"Walk St. Jo," the first annual year-round volkswalk, officially began on March 1, 1994, but was "kicked-off" on Saturday, March 5. Members of the Missouri Riverbluff Ramblers, Helen Caton of the Family YMCA, and Kem Mills, Chris Fisher, Reva Rocha and Marilyn Taylor of the St. Joseph Museum spent the day helping 93 volkswalkers get off to a good start. Returning volkswalkers had many positive comments to make about the route and the pamphlet with the historical information.



Reva Fish-Rocha

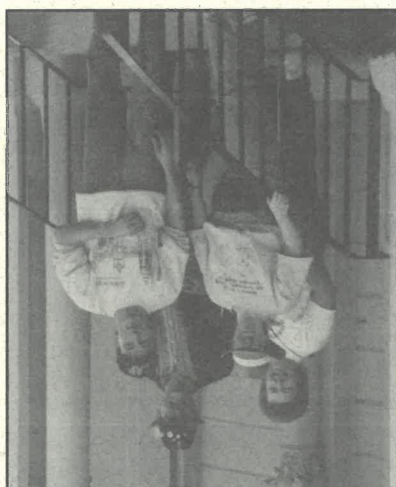
For more about the "Walk St. Jo" year-round volkswalk, call the St. Joseph Museum, 232-8471, or contact Helen Caton at the Family YMCA, 232-3344. Anyone interested in learning more about volkswalking or the Missouri Riverbluff Ramblers may also contact Helen Caton.

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The second time around is much better, and I am really pleased with the way that background is turning out. I am equally pleased with the way the whole complex of the exhibit segments evolved. The cooperative nature and the skills of each of the people working on the background, foreground, fabrication, framing and plexiglass vitrines have combined to make an excellent exhibit team. I feel that you too will be very pleased with the results, and I wanted to share with you my pride in the exhibits crew of the St. Joseph Museum and the Pony Express National Memorial.

Edith Meyer

In October 1991, the Family YMCA and the St. Joseph Museum cosponsored the first annual volkswalk to be held in St. Joseph. The host club was the Missouri Riverbluff



Reva Fish-Rocha

Volkswalkers, from back to front: Audrey and Richard Taylor, Shari Taylor and David Jacobs.

10K walk. If a person wants American Volkssport Association (AVA) credit for the walk, the charge is \$1.50. For credit and a patch award, the charge is \$5.00. People may also register to walk for free if they do not want credit and/or a patch award.

Upon registration, the volkswalker is given a pamphlet that has route instructions, a map and historical information about some of the sites passed during the walk. The pamphlet was a joint project of the staffs of the Family YMCA and the St. Joseph Museum. To

NEW LOGO FOR THE ST. JOSEPH MUSEUM



A handsome logo has been developed for the St. Joseph Museum by Clint Sims, staff graphic artist. Building on his own ideas and suggestions from other staff members, Clint developed a design that represents the focal areas of the museum's

collections - Native American, history and natural history. As you can see by the accompanying graphic, silhouettes of three eagles are used to exemplify the three areas. One eagle symbolizes the Native American collection: the hunting skills of eagles were much admired by Native Americans, and they often used the feathers and talons of eagles and other raptors (birds of prey) for personal adornment and in ceremonies:

The second eagle embodies the history collections: a bald eagle has been the symbol of the United States since the late 1700s so it is appropriate that it also represents the museum's history collections which focus on St. Joseph's past and the city's role in westward expansion. The third eagle represents the natural history collections: the connection is most obvious in this area - a proud, magnificent bird to represent all of the museum's natural history items.

The colors chosen for the logo are as shown - maroon and black. Letterhead, envelopes and business cards featuring the new logo have been printed on recycled paper and are in use.

Now that the museum has a new logo, signage will be changed to incorporate the new design. New signs made of aluminum were placed on the museum grounds in April. A large 51" by 60" sign is on the northwest corner of the museum block. Smaller signs (30" by 35") have been placed on the southwest and northeast corners. A small sign has also been placed by the driveway adjacent to the front steps. This sign reads "ENTRANCE" and has an arrow pointing to the front door. This sign is intended to alleviate any confusion about which door visitors should use.

The next step is to replace both St. Joseph Museum and Pony Express National Memorial signs at various locations in the city and along area highways. It is anticipated that this will be very costly so the signs may have to be replaced one by one instead of concurrently.

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ New member ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift

Your Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (____) _____

Gift membership for: (please fill in your name above)

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (____) _____

Membership level:

___ \$1000.00	Patron	___ \$100.00	Donor
___ 500.00	Fellow	___ 50.00	Subscribing
___ 250.00	Sponsor	___ 25.00	Sustaining

All contributions are equally divided between the St. Joseph Museum and Pony Express National Memorial unless otherwise specified.

Enclosed is a check for:
\$ _____

Please make your check payable to the St. Joseph Museum or Pony Express National Memorial and mail to:

**ST. JOSEPH
MUSEUM**
1100 Charles Street
St. Joseph, Missouri
64501-2874

NEW AND REINSTATED MEMBERS

The Pony Express National Memorial board of trustees and staff are pleased to welcome **Joyce E. Tenney** of Baltimore, Maryland, as a new member. We appreciate her interest in the museum.

Your contribution provides a one-year membership for you and your immediate family. A majority of your membership contribution is tax deductible under 1994 IRS guidelines for charitable contributions. After receiving your membership, we will send you a receipt that includes further information on tax deductibility.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

ST. JOSEPH HERITAGE TOUR

The first annual St. Joseph Heritage Tour" is being sponsored by the Museums of St. Joseph, an informal networking organization of all the museums of St. Joseph. This three-day event will be May 6, 7 and 8. Hours will vary according to each museum. Cost for adults will be \$8 in advance; \$10 at the door; students 13-17 will be \$4 in advance and \$5 at the door; children 12 and under free. Tickets are available through any participating museum and at various sites throughout the city.

Thirteen organizations will be participating this year. They include the Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art, Knea-von Black Archive, Society of Memories Doll Museum, St. Joseph Firefighters Museum, National Military Heritage Museum, Missouri Valley Trust Building, Patee House Museum, Jesse James National Museum, Pony Express National Memorial, Glore Psychiatric Museum, Robidoux Row Museum, St. Joseph Museum and Twin Spires Religious History Museum.

For more information call either the St. Joseph Museum, 232-8471, or the Pony Express National Memorial, 279-5059.

May 10 - The Gateway Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association will meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Highland Presbyterian Church located in Highland, Kansas. The program will be "Iowa, Sac and Fox Presbyterian Mission" by Rev. Susan Hartley-Berger.

May 11 - "A Day in Amish Country" is a field trip to Jamesport, Missouri, that the St. Joseph Museum is sponsoring. You should have received a separate mailer outlining all the details.

May 30 - The St. Joseph Archaeological Society will meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Pony Express National Memorial, 914 Penn Street.

May 30 - Memorial Day - Holiday hours will be observed at the St. Joseph Museum, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

June 7 - "Follow the Santa Fe Trail South" is a field trip being sponsored by the St. Joseph Museum and the Pony Express National Memorial. You will receive a mailer about this trip.

June date to be determined - The Gateway Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association is planning an all day field trip to Alcove Spring.

For more museum information call 232-8471

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St. Joseph Museum

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St. Joseph, Missouri 64501-2874

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Sunday & Holidays 1-5 p.m.

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