

Auction Finds
Switzerland County Historical Society
December 7, 2009

The Switzerland County Historical Society is fortunate to be part of a community where so many people have our interests at heart. At a recent local auction Pam Acton discovered a box of items she purchased contained documents pertaining to local history, so thought we might want them. She was so right! Thank you, Pam, for donating this amazing collection of writings, documents, booklets and clippings to our archives.

Pam's treasure trove included several handwritten manuscripts by local historian Effa Danner on a variety of topics including the Mount Alpheus-Spiritualist Community in Patriot, John M. King, stone fences, the history of Vevay Newspapers and the Tardy Chateau. A manuscript entitled "Some Old Timers" by William Patton included stories about Professor John Rous, Edward McKee Roberts and a horse trading tale about Samuel Lock. The author of a typed manuscript about Alexander McHenry is unknown with pages 1 – 14 missing from the 28 pages.

The following excerpts were transcribed by Ann Farnsley, collections coordinator at the museum, from "Mount Alpheus Spiritualist Community of Patriot, Indiana" by Effa Danner, (circa 1930). It is of great historical interest to the wine industry in Switzerland County Indiana, as it is the only account we have to date describing the day to day life of vineyard work.

(John Murray)...” Spears, (a Universalist minister) concieved (sic) the plans of reforming the world using a great river system as an artery for spreading spiritual propaganda. To this end he established stations in 1859 at Cincinnati Ohio and Patriot, Indiana, where they bought a \$12,000. farm of John Allen which had a 12 acre vineyard in cultivation. The vintage was to add to their resources as well as be a resort for their converts.

“The most interesting to us is the Diary of Mt Alpheus affairs beginning Jan. 1, 1862

Feb 25 Mr. Koons who had a 20 year unexpired lease on the vineyard refused to vacate, They consult Esquire Bela Herrick who advises them to compromise.

March 6. Educationeress (sic) is requested to come to New York to help carry on revival work, she is trying to get a house keeper & nurse for her little girl who had a “worm fit.” The Order sends money to buy seed, implement & a team of horses for farm work. She is sewing on a sewing machine “which works like a charm & is worth its weight in gold.”

March 17 “Dr. Sabin came here Monday morning & left Mon night without expressing as to whether he liked or disliked the proposition made him to labor here.”

The Harmonizer comes down from Cincinnati left \$25.00 for her trip to New York & \$20.00 for farm expense.

Koons continues disagreeable & demands \$40. to withdraw which they finally pay him.

March 28. Finish trimming front vineyard & begin back vineyard. 6 hands at work cutting slips & staking vines. Mr & Mrs. Johnson the tenants have agreed to keep house in the absence of the Educatoress (sic) & the diary is now written by an uneducated person which seems to be the Liberator.

April 5 – No letter from Harmonizer, (John Orvis, Treasurer) used all the money left & what little I had of my own, forbidden to go in debt for corn to feed horses, could not pay off the vineyard workers for weeks work.

May 2nd Hired men about to strike as they are not paid. Commontation (sic) arrived Harmonizer sent \$10.00

May 5. Mr. Johnson not at work for two days.

May 11. Laborers in vineyard fewer day by day. No money

May 15 Educatoress (sic) returns. Col. G.F. Lewis & Mrs. Marsdon come on mailboat for a visit & bring \$140.00 & \$20. for Education dept. Paid the vineyard workers all but Albert Grennet who was away. Their names are listed on the Daybook, nearly all of them French men. Felex & Albert Grennet, Felix Amiet, A. Bonnel, L. Badoux, P. Blanc, M. Coffin D. McHuron & N.B. Johnson at \$1.00 a day.

May 20. Louisville members Mrs Taylor & Mrs French send presents to Educatoress (sic) The leading medium.

June 3. Educatoress leaves for Keantone N.York. (She does not return to Patriot.

June 24 Liberator had his picture taken & sends it to her.

June 25. Trimming the vines thinking this week will finish them.

June 30 Finished trimming vineyard.

This neglect of the vines & processing them so late that the sapbleed caused many vines to die & the vineyard deteriorated (sic) rapidly. But still can be seen the terraces on the hill sides where once the purple grapes bursted in the harvest.

The Diary continues in another hand writing a woman who does the house work & cans blackberries. Harmonizer send \$60. for vineyard work.

Sept. 29. Commenced picking grapes.

Oct. 1 Pressing grapes for house

Oct. 14 finished picking grapes.

Dec 11. Distilling brandy

March 13. Amenarch (John Orvis) came with Mr. Newman & Mrs Katy – who take charge of place & Amenarch went to Cin_ to sell wine.

March 20 He made a sale & they began to rack of the wine today. Carted 11 barrel to the wharf. (about \$1000.00 worth.) Amenarch & Mr. Newman have a misunderstanding & no arrangements are made for the farm. The writer is anxious to get away from this place.

She writes, “Mt. Alpheus is a pleasant place, but it is a God forsaken place, if not forsaken by God it is by man for the last four or five weeks.”

“There is little to do & mud & rain all the time. Reform, it is a blessed place for that, surrounded with drunken ignorant rough people.”

April 1st Amenarch went to Cincinnati Communicator & myself, perhaps all of us will leave tonight, things are very unpleasant. I hope it will be all for the best.”

John Orvis dissolves the Sacred Order at Patriot & bought the place himself for the first \$1000. note was the only one paid by the Sacred Order. He contracts with Felex Amiet to take charge of the vineyard 1865.

These are exact transcriptions, and no attempt was made to edit or correct spelling. Leaving it “as is” gives a more accurate description of conditions in the vineyard at Patriot during the year of 1862. If you are interested in the whole nine page paper concerning the Mt. Alpheus community, it is on file at the Switzerland County Historical Society.

Martha Bladen