

## Memories of Frank Wornall (excerpted)

I was born September 28, 1855 and do not recall much that happened before the war began. Some things that memory recalls now may have been told me, but most of what I jot down here was personal in experience.

I remember when the roof was put on the house, one of the carpenters carried me up a long ladder in his arms. Again, I recall that father gave me a pony at that time; with me in the saddle, the pony was led around the house several times before I was permitted to guide him by the reins. I was told to keep away from a pile of broken brickbats on the north side of the house; that I didn't do with the result I was thrown over the horse's head, receiving a scar on my chin which is still there.

Again, when President Lincoln, by proclamation freed the slaves, our colored people remained with father on a wage basis. The Jayhawkers, as the Kansas Federalists were called, were constantly after them to move to Lawrence. One Saturday, they were paid and without notice moved out that night and the next morning, Mother and Father, having no notice, took time to dress for church and about then discovered no help. Father had to feed and milk and chore; Mother had to cook and do other housewife's duties. Father drove the cows in the yard to milk them; his coat was off but he had the balance of his best suit on, sitting on a three-legged stool with a big tin pail; he was getting along well until the unexpected happened. The milk fountain he was working on had a sore teat; when he squeezed it, she kicked viciously, he went over backward, carrying the pail and a stiffened arm to his great disadvantage...

He never was interested in politics although he never failed to do his duty as he saw it, in casting his vote – a Democrat because he believed in State Rights, tariff for government support only and other basic principles of the old party. At one time, he served as State Senator from his district and formed a very close attachment to a brother senator from Mexico, Missouri, Charles Hardin, who served one term as Governor. My youngest brother was named for this gentleman. He and his family always lived on the original acreage that his father bought in 1843 and to which, by purchase at different intervals, he more than doubled its acreage.

The only time he lived elsewhere was when General Ewing, the head of the Federal Army force in this territory, in his efforts to crush out guerilla warfare and to destroy bushwhacking, issued an order known as Order Number 11, forcing all people living in certain districts in Jackson and Cass counties and adjacent to the Kansas State Line to move from their homes. Many of these homes left vacant were destroyed by fire and other wreckage. George C. Bingham, a warm personal friend of my father's, a wonderful writer on statecraft and public issues but by far better known for his talent as a painter, used his brush and palette, producing a very large picture known as Order Number 11, now of immense value and I think now owned by our State. This picture memorializes the dreadful condition and animosity and death-dealing treatment resulting from Ewing's order. Our family was forced to leave our country home, couldn't find accommodations in Westport, moved to Kansas City and Father bought from Dr. Joel C. Morris a fairly-built house located at the northeast corner of what is now 9th and Main Streets...

...Now for some of the events that happened within the walls of the house and on the old farm which made the place historical: Missouri, as a state, had declared for neutrality during the war and the legislature had created an armed force to enforce it. This force was called the Home Guard. Unfortunately this organization soon became Federal in its membership and was dominated by leaders who sympathized with the North; especially was this true in Clay, Jackson and Cass Counties, which counties had been largely settled by emigrants from the southern states.

You recall that there was a great contest between the northern states and the southern states as to the admittance of Kansas in the Union. Slavery was the vital question as to this admittance, just as it was finally the basic cause of the civil struggle. Kansas was admitted in 1861; for some six or seven years previous organized effort existed to control, by emigration, the state as a pro- or anti-slavery state. Many hard struggles took place, many scars and memories embittered the people on both sides in this contest. The North was successful and the state was admitted by Congress with severe restrictions and national laws enforcing freedom to the colored race.

This bad feeling had in no way died out; in fact the war enhanced and strengthened it. Notwithstanding Missouri's stand for neutrality, the Home Guard soon became Federal and energized by much of the bad feeling referred to. Unquestionably, many of the families who had come from the South and who were religiously attempting to live in accordance with their oath of neutrality were by wrong treatment spying; arrests and abuse forced into a defense that became more or less organized and known as bushwhackers; so lawless were the times that the farmers in the counties never attempted to put in a full crop after the first year of the war, for if you raised one you were not permitted to enjoy it. If the Red Legs from Kansas didn't carry it away, the bushwhackers did. And each side was ever ready for some unfair or surprised attack upon the other.

This explanation is given that you may understand an incident I now describe. Possibly I should say before I describe the same that the Santa Fe trade had moved in its outfitting process to Westport quite a number of years before this, and that especially from 1847 until 1860 the heaviest overland shipment in this business was made. With the war, it was somewhat reduced, but still large. Maybe you never knew why all this merchandise was shipped by wagon to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and there sold to Mexicans and Spaniards who had come up from Old Mexico with wool and other commodities for exchange. Naturally you might ask why the trade didn't find a more direct and shorter route. The explanation is largely because the Mexicans, on account of their war with Texas were afraid that Texas authorities would contraband their property and take it from them.

### **A Running Road Fight**

All these overland outfits sought to make their first trip in the spring as early as possible for being in Santa Fe first they would command higher prices and when any outfit loaded at a warehouse in Westport they always tried to do it as to start in the middle of the late afternoon and would camp on the open prairie about six miles south for their first night. You realize that their motive power was mostly large oxen, still many mules and horses were used and that nearly always, the teams of four to eight oxen, or the same number of mules or horses would be made up for the first time and their drivers had to learn which ones were the best pullers of the load. These loads were heavy and the first real test was the long hill on Wornall Road leading south from the bridge across Brush Creek at the Plaza. Each driver had a new whip, most of them plaited, they had long fan-shaped or flared buckskin crackers and they could be made to pop like a gun.

Now to the incident. The family was seated around the supper table as we called the main meal then, the windows were up and in the stillness of the evening we began hearing pop, pop, pop, pop. Naturally father thought it was a train of wagons starting out and I recall that he said: "I wonder who is starting out so late in the spring?" The pop-pop grew louder very rapidly and was soon heard in the lane in front of the home. I followed father as he went out the back door and around the corner of the house, waving something white in his hand for the picture is indelible and I don't whether it was a handkerchief or a napkin, and in a voice that could be heard a long distance, he called to a body of men on horseback going south all dressed in Federal uniforms and yet shooting each other down. He asked: "What's the matter?" A blue-coated man on a dappled gray stopped his horse and answered, "We're having a hell of

a time” He spurred and started away and before going fifty yards, shot a man, appareled just as he was, who fell off his horse dead.

The explanation of their being all in Federal uniform was learned afterward. Two Federal troops had made a wide circuit hunting bushwhackers along the Blue and Indian Creek without success and were returning northwardly along Wornall Road and as they reached what we call Allen Hill, now about 51st Street, bushwhackers that were waiting for them on either side in the woods dressed just as they were rushed them, turned them back and began killing. The Federal officer had no way to withdraw his troops from the mules until they reached the southern end of the land as it was fenced and to the open prairie. I don't know the statistics as to the number of killed and injured; I do remember that father told Hans, our only farm hand, to hitch up the team, which he did, there being no stock law it was possible many of these bodies injured might be defaced. Hans refused to go with father; he started alone, thought he would get a neighbor in one of the next two houses to join him. By himself, he picked up and loaded into the wagon-bed thirty-one dead bodies and reached Westport about 12 o'clock that night. The relatives of the bushwhackers who were killed didn't dare claim their bodies so there were between twenty and thirty of both sides, largely Confederate, that were buried in a long ditch in the northeast corner of what is now 55th Street and Wornall Road on the Bent place. Afterwards, these bodies were moved to Forest Hill Cemetery.

### **He Refused to Take a Dare**

Another incident that happened, I think, in 1862; early in that year father had paid a visit to Kentucky and on his return brought with him a girl about 14 years old that he obtained from an orphan asylum in Lexington, Kentucky, Her name was Mittie Pigg; father had some thought of adopting her. A few months after their return home and while a company of Union soldiers, which had been searching for bushwhackers were returning north on the Wornall Road to Kansas City, Mittie said to me as we were standing on the little iron porch on the second floor of the Wornall homestead, and which is under the roof of the main front porch: “Frank, I dare you to shout, “Hurrah for Jeff Davis”” I was at an age when I wouldn't take a dare so in a piping voice I shouted. The passing soldiers looked our way but did not stop; however, that night after I had gone to bed and was asleep, a part of the troop returned, and refusing to listen to father's explanation, marched him away with a threat of death. In some way, mother had obtained the description of the incident from the girl and father continued to use this information in his defense with the statement that it was nothing but a childish prank. After about an hour, they permitted his return. The next morning brought further development.

### **Going to Church One Sunday**

Another experience was ours in early 1863. We had as guests two cousins from Paris, Kentucky, Ella and Sally Mitchell. It was Sunday morning and we were all packed in a carriage except for father who was riding horseback on our way to Westport for church. Upon reaching the crown of the hill corresponding to 48th Street now, we were stopped by a band of soldiers all dressed in Federal uniforms and were forced to return home. The women, scenting danger, concealed their jewelry and were not further molested.

Leaving a picket in the road who stopped everyone going north or south, the major part of the troop filled our yard, ransacked the house taking everything of value which proved to be only a part of their purpose for they announced to father that they had reliable information that he had money buried in the garden and they wanted it. His denial had no seeming effect upon their determination. They told him if he didn't locate it they would kill him. He reiterated very earnestly his earlier denial; he knew he was in serious danger. During all this time they had abused him in the most violent way with cursings

and threats; they went so far as to slap me over because I had a little double-barreled pistol. They took it; it was not loaded but was much prized. Father told him that he had money in Westport and Kansas City and that if his life was at stake he would willingly give it to them. They told him they did not go to town-in this way we knew they were bushwhackers. Exasperated by his denial they finally put a rope around his neck, carried the other end up to the railing on the second floor of the porch, drew it taut, renewed their demand with cursings.

For an explanation of what happened at this junction, I will have to go back to the beginning of my story. We had only one helper on the farm because it didn't pay to raise a full crop. When this was done by farmers and they were ready to reap the profits and benefits of the year's work, their crops were either taken or destroyed by the Red Legs of Kansas; and if not by them, appropriated by the bushwhackers. One of these helpers was a German; I called his name in another incident, Hans. He hitched up the carriage and was watching the family as we started to church. He saw us turned back by the soldier; knew it meant trouble and I imagine he thought them bushwhackers. He knew that there was a troop of cavalry at the Shawnee Mission and that Major L.K. Thatcher, the father of John Thatcher, a prominent lawyer in Kansas City today, and a friend of my father, was in command of a Mission troop. Hans slipped down behind the garden and orchard, on down through the valley to 55th Street as numbered now, went west through the Bent place to the Mission, explaining to Major Thatcher dad's danger, and a troop was ordered to mount at once. With a rush they came through a wooded road now a part of the Mission Hills golf links, and on gallop appeared in the big pasture and were seen by the picket in the road, who announced their coming and the band making so much trouble quickly took to their horses, leaving dad to disentangle himself from the noose of rope around his neck. A few minutes later in the soldiers' appearance might have made a great difference in our lives.

### **Jennison, the Feared and Hated**

Another tragic and trying experience happened in the same year, 1863, but in the fall. In the quietude of an early morning, a group of Federal soldiers dismounted, came into the yard and house, announcing the coming of General Jennison with an order that the house should be prepared for his headquarters. They immediately took possession. To understand the full danger to my father, it is necessary that you know that no Federal Officer in this territory was more hated nor had anything like the bad reputation for dealing death and general destruction of life and property as had he. A part of the dialogue between mother and father was not in my hearing but in after time often repeated. He told mother that without a doubt this was his end; that this officer wouldn't listen to reason and was out to kill on rumor as a provocation. She had courage and to encourage him said that their only hope for escape was in the power of the Master, and suggested that they go to their private room and submit their distress to Him for succor and relief. Mother further told him to show every courtesy possible; to present his defense in the kindest way and that she would go into the kitchen and prepare the very best meals possible. She was a good cook.

Jennison's command reached us soon after this and were received with every courtesy under the circumstances. There were some three troops of them numbering about some two hundred odd men. They were there eight days; they destroyed every fence on the place, burned it up; they killed all the hogs and beasts on our place, as well as the neighboring places; they had nothing but frowns entertaining hard thoughts, the atmosphere was very gloomy. Jennison occupied the parlor as his headquarter, had father in there a number of times, long interviews with nothing to encourage. About the fourth or fifth day, coming down the stairs, I met a lieutenant. In my hand was an old barley knife of no value. He said to me: "Frank, is that the best knife that you have?" I replied, "Yes, sir, the only one"; and then he said, "I have two and will trade with you" and gave me a beautiful knife with several blades

in exchange. Proud of my deal, I went to father and told him of what had happened. He made me repeat what I had said several times for he thought I might have picked it up or purloined it. Assured of my statement, a smile wreathed his face for the first time that week.

On Saturday, the sixth day, Jennison called for father again. When he went into the parlor, Jennison very frankly told him of some of the rumors that had reached him as to father's sympathy and also help to the Confederate cause and especially to the bushwhackers, and that he came with no other thought than that death would have to be visited on him at once. He told father to figure up the damage that had been done to the farm; father replied: "Let it go". Jennison insisted upon his obeying his command and he immediately made his estimate of the damage at \$2,500; Jennison told him that he was unfair to himself, that his actuary had figured the damage at \$2,800. Pointing to a table, he said that money is there for you and a receipt for you to sign. A remarkable thing about this experience was that Jennison never had been known to pay for any property that he had destroyed before, save in one instance when he took some hay and corn and made payment for same.

### **Battle of Westport**

In October 1864 happened the Battle of Westport, often referred to as the "Gettysburg of the West" in the annals of the Civil War. So much has been written and so many speeches made describing Price's march through this state and his being turned back in the final encounter, named above, that I shall not attempt anything but a narrow account of the things that happened immediately on our farm.

General Price in his march had reached Independence in October 1864. On that Friday night he forced a crossing of the Blue in the lower part of Swope Park as we now know the terrain. Saturday was spent in maneuvering and forming his lines for advance and while many Federal troops had gone south on Wornall Road to intercept the enemy, Sunday morning found the Federals lined upon the hill running east and west from the State Line to a half mile east of Troost about on a line of 58th Street. The Confederates were lined across corresponding east and west distances and about 74th and 75th Streets.

Cannonading had continued all during Saturday and its early evening. Dad had been impressed by a Kansas militia regiment taken south without a gun and finally persuaded its officers he was no use to them, and was permitted to return down the valley of Brush Creek to Westport and viewed the battle from the top of the Harris Home. Mother and I were the only inmates of the home Saturday night. We had a big yard and just outside of the fence to the south the pickets of the Confederates had spent the night and with the wakefulness and hunger of morning had concluded to have Mother cook their breakfast. This she did but they were not permitted to eat it; they had scarcely started to eat when they were rushed by the Union pickets who were encamped on the north side of the fence and in bigger number and who concluded then to have breakfast. The Confederates were reinforced and returned for something to eat, and lo and behold the battle was on.

Dad often said the Battle of Westport was over a breakfast for Price ordered his advance and in a few hours our home became the hospital for one of his divisions. The beds were knocked down, pallets laid close to each other, all of the hospital arrangements of that time quickly placed in reach of the hand of those who were to administer help and in a few hours the house was full of the wounded and dying. I shall describe but four incidents, all of which occurred in the afternoon of Sunday, except one, which happened on Saturday.

The cannonading was violent and the boom of artillery was roaring in your ear and mother attempted to go to the meat house to get a ham. Ladies wore their hair in a style called a waterfall, a round oval flat cambric pad was put at the back of the head and the hair draped around it. When she was about half

way to the meat house, a cannonball came so close to her head that it blew her hair down; in fear she returned to the house. Afterwards, gaining courage, she did her mission.

The other three incidents were on Sunday afternoon. Along about two or half past, a Confederate Soldier came to the rear porch door for admission. A Minnie ball had torn off half of his chin – a horrible sight with the flesh hanging down, bleeding down the entire front. He didn't belong to the division and they wouldn't let him in. He couldn't talk except with his eyes and hands. I was permitted the run of the house; I got a pan of hot water, soap, towel, bandages, etc., took the man out in the shade of the cover of an old cistern, helped him wash, bandage up and shape himself to go further east to another hospital. His eyes and hands conveyed an everlasting gratitude; I often think I may see him again.

Price ordered his retreat; the ambulances had taken everyone from the hospital that the doctors thought could be moved; a young fellow galloped up to the rear porch, tied his horse to the rail and when he found that his brother had been so badly hurt that the doctors refused to try to take him away, he began cursing and I never heard such a tirade in life. Against the wish of authority, he got his brother in the saddle of the horse he had ridden up, got on behind, started out cursing the Yankees.

Last incident was after Price's force had passed our house going south and the Federals were following them. It is fair to say that much of the Federal force was made up of the militia that never had been in a fierce battle such as this and the worst in man's nature was in control. There were many Confederates left in the house because of their condition and the impossibility of moving; and the officers of the Federals had much trouble with their sabers and other means in preventing the killing of all the Confederates thus left by these excited Unionists. One time, when there was a celebration of the Battle of Westport in the old home yard, and I was called on to make a speech about a boy's memory of that time, I related the above incident and after the adjournment Mr. John Richards of Richards and Conover complimented my talk and said that he was left in control of the guard to save those of the Confederates who had been in this danger. Price had gathered plunder of various kinds and values through his march until he had some six hundred wagons which were detoured south from Independence into Arkansas; they never crossed the Blue or were in any part of the territory in which the Battle of Westport was fought. Pleasanton attempted to overtake this train of wagons, but they had too much advance for the accomplishment.

Order Number 11, referred to before, was made in the fall of 1864 (Frank is incorrect, it was August 25, 1863) also, in the summer of 1864 (The Mission actually closed in 1862.) the government moved most of the Indians at the Shawnee Mission School to Shawnee, Oklahoma where they still are. My grandfather, who established the Mission, had moved to 35th and Agnes, where he had bought a farm during that summer. He took the new oath of Missouri; without his consent was elected a member of the Home Guard, a troop of which had its headquarters in the neighborhood to which he had moved. He was hesitant about becoming a member, advised with friends who told him the least noise made about the situation would be the safest course, accepted and was immediately elected captain. In for it, he had to go through.

The family were all gathered for Christmas at his new home-an old southern type with center hall, two-story, large brick house, long since torn down. I recall my father and uncle taking the presents from the Christmas tree and in strong voice calling Captain Johnson, handing grandfather a little tin saber with which he attempted his salute and threw the scabbard into the air and up over his shoulder.

Six weeks after that (It was actually the night of Jan. 1, 1865), in the dead of night, a body of soldiers stopped at the gate, first saying they wanted water. He answered and told them they could find a pump with a tin cup fastened to it. Then they said they wanted to come in and warm; he told them they

couldn't do it. All this time they had been drawing closer to the house; he felt the necessity of shutting and locking the door and as he did so, they fired on him, one bullet went through his heart; in a few minutes he was dead. He was a large man weighing 270 pounds; a man of wonderful influence.

He was buried at the Shawnee Mission. Three days later, services were so long that night was on and, in those times, it was thought dangerous to be out after dark, so Mother, Father and myself were persuaded to stay all night at the Mission, which we did and came through Westport the next morning to learn of the Order Number 11 (Frank is confused about when Order Number 11 happened.) and at the post office father got a letter, telling him never to appear upon the farm again without sufficient armed protection. I recall that the writer asked him to destroy in the most minute way that letter. The post office was on Penn Street, now a part of the Manor bakery. I can see him yet tearing the letter into the smallest bits and scattering it into the air. We didn't go back to the farm. An hour later, Mr. Hornbuckle, who lived with his wife on the place in addition to Hans came in to tell father that our house had been surrounded the night before by a band of bushwhackers, seeking his life, and when he attempted to tell of Thomas Johnson's death and burial they said they knew all about that; they killed him and were there to administer the same medicine to John B. Wornall.