"Ann Hawkins Gentry"
(C0732)

Collection Number: C0732

Collection Title: “Ann Hawkins Gentry”

Dates: 1960

Creator: Gentry, William Richard Jr.


Collection Size: 0.02 cubic feet
(1 folder)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia. If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shs.mo. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] “Ann Hawkins Gentry” (C0732); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

Donor Information: The remarks were donated to the University of Missouri by W. R. Gentry, Jr. on August 1, 1960 (Accession No. CA3444).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the “Ann Hawkins Gentry” can be found in the following collections:

- Historic Missourians
- Columbia Cemetery Association Deed, (C2620)
- Ann Gentry Commission, (C2621)
- Frank Tull Collection, (C3212)
- Gentry Family Papers, (C4026)
Historical Note:

Ann Hawkins was born on January 21, 1791, in Madison County, Kentucky. She was the daughter of Nicholas Hawkins and Ann Robinso. On February 10, 1810, she married Richard Gentry, and the couple settled on a farm in Madison County, Kentucky. Together they had thirteen children, of which nine survived to adulthood.

The Gentry family moved to the Missouri territory in St. Louis in 1816. In 1818 the family moved to Franklin, a bustling settlement on the Missouri River near Boonville. Richard Gentry became a land speculator. Around 1820, the Gentry family moved to Smithton, a small settlement on land that is now at the center of present-day Columbia. Richard built a three-room log cabin in Smithton, from which he operated a tavern. In 1821 Smithton was abandoned. The Gentrys moved about a mile east to the new town of Columbia. Richard opened a new tavern just off Broadway and purchased land at the corner of Seventh and Cherry streets for his farm and stable.

Richard Gentry joined the militia in Missouri. He was elected the first mayor of Columbia in 1821 and a Missouri state senator in 1826. He also engaged in overland trade along the Santa Fe Trail. He was gone for months at a time, leaving Ann to run the farm and tavern on her own.

In 1830 Richard Gentry was appointed postmaster of Columbia. Ann helped at the post office while also maintaining the home, raising the children, and overseeing the tavern. In 1832 Richard was promoted to the rank of major general in the Missouri State Militia and left the state to command troops fighting in the Black Hawk War. Meanwhile, Ann took over the day-to-day operations of the post office.

In 1835 the United States launched a military campaign against the Seminoles in Florida. Gentry raised a volunteer regiment of Missourians to serve during the conflict. He was commissioned a colonel of volunteers. On Christmas Day in 1837, he was killed while advancing toward Seminole fighters at what is now known as the Battle of Lake Okeechobee. Initially buried on the battlefield, his remains were returned to Missouri in 1839 and buried at the Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. Upon hearing the news of her husband’s death, Ann Hawkins Gentry reportedly said, “I’d rather be a brave man’s widow than a coward’s wife.”

With the death of her husband, Ann Hawkins Gentry was left alone to raise the children as well as manage the family tavern and the city post office. In 1838 she was also appointed as Columbia’s new postmistress, becoming only the second woman in the United States to receive that distinction.

Ann Hawkins Gentry served as Columbia’s postmistress until 1865. She died on January 18, 1870, and is buried in Columbia Cemetery.

Gentry County, Missouri, was named in Richard Gentry’s honor in 1841. In 1960 the Ann Hawkins Gentry Roadside Park was dedicated in Gentry County.

Arrangement:
The collection has been arranged into the following series:

Remarks

**Scope and Content Note:**

**Remarks**

This series contains remarks at dedication of the Ann Hawkins Gentry Roadside Park in Gentry County, Missouri, June 5, 1960.

**Container List:**

f. 1 Remarks

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