

Native American History

In July of 1838 William McCoy wrote his future wife Eleanor about the observation of the difference of individual character here in Independence. In this particular letter he writes; "Some of the Society in this Town is somewhat intelligent & affable people". The letter would mention mountain men, Santa Fe Traders, Mexicans and Californians being in town. But he would also mention the Native American Indians he would see often on the streets of Independence as entirely different from each other in language, manners, custom; like the Shawnee, Delaware, Peoria's Potawatomie's, Kickapoo's Sac. I find this reference fascinating in that William McCoy had only been in town for a few short months and was already able to distinguish the differences of the First Nation people. We seem to have assumed that just the Osage Indians were here in town. We need to realize that the Osage were divided into five bands: Hilltop Dwellers, Thorny Plant Dwellers, Upland Forest Dwellers, Hearts Stay, and Little Osage. Separate tribes like the Missouri and Kansa and other nearby tribes also would have been aware of the trade opportunities here in Independence. We actually found Woodland Indian artifacts on our property that date back approximately 1,000 years ago when we were doing archaeology in our back yard (or what City Hall designated a code violation and public nuisance) . From the book, "Atlas of Lewis and Clark in Missouri", their 1805 journal mentions three tribes in this areas: Osage, Ayauwais, and Kansa. I hope folks drive out to Ft. Osage and visit the relatively new museum and interpretive center there and see what an incredible Native American history we have here in Jackson County and this area. It's important to go before the leafing out of the trees to see the river and image how the first emigrants would have been making there way here in the early spring on their journey to Independence and then on their way to Manifest Destiny. From our study, archaeology, and review of the earliest property records, we believe the large spring just north of us, that Heritage House sits on (on the original Owens-McCoy property) served early settlements of Native Americans, fur traders, and missionaries. We have tremendous opportunities here in Independence to present rich stories of American history!