

## A TRIP TO AUGUSTA, ST. CHARLES COUNTY

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There are many beautiful trips to be taken into St. Louis County. But, I think, none surpasses a trip to Augusta for scenic beauty and historic interest.

The adventurous pioneer, Daniel Boone, settled in this part of the country and adds romance and interest to its early history.

As early as 1704, the French, in their hunt for gold travelled the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. St. Charles County, at that time included the land between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers as far as Dubuque, Iowa and 1000 miles up the Missouri River. It was in 1784 that Blanchette built his cabin on the site now. St. Charles and called it "Village de Cotes". However, by driving over the new highway (40) one does not pass through St. Charles, which is worth making a special trip to see.

Daniel Boone's home is off the main highway. After crossing the Daniel Boone bridge turn left on 99 and continue to Hamburg. Turn right off 99 about a mile past Hamburg on a little dirt road. If possible have a guide or stop in Hamburg for directions from the natives.

Boone was born Nov. 2, 1734, near Reading, Penn. When he was 17 the family moved to Blue Ridge County in North Carolina. There he married 15 year old Rebecca Bryan, thereafter his constant companion in all his adventures. From 1759 until the Revolution he spent most of his time fighting Indians. In 1769 what is now Kentucky was an unexplored wilderness and Boone was hired by a syndicate of Virginians and Carolinians to lay the course of Empire westward. The Cherokee Indians were persuaded at the point of long rifles to sell all of Kentucky and most of Tennessee for 14,000 British pounds in money and some trade goods. An interesting incident at this time was when a Shawnee Chief took a great liking to Boone and decided to adopt him. The ceremony consisted of pulling out all of Boone's hair except a thick scalp lock.

In 1797 Daniel Boone settled in this territory (Missouri) which was then under the Spanish flag. He became a citizen of the United States in 1803. He claimed 8500 acres but, as he usually did, neglected to file his claim in Washington. So consequently lost all of it except 850 acres which was saved for him by an Act of Congress in 1812.

In 1800 he was appointed commandant of the Femme Osage district. Still standing is the great elm tree, or Judgment tree where he passed judgment on the cases which were brought before him. Boone died in 1820 at the home of his son, Nathan.

Colonel Francis M. Curlee bought the Nathan Boone estate in recent years. He restored it to its original beauty and has made extensive research in purchasing furniture of this period to furnish it. The picturesque grounds are carefully tended and show the love of the present owner for this historic old place. It was to this home our pilgrimage was made, and Colonel Curlee was our gracious host.

Continuing on this little dirt road and making a circle back to the highway (99) one passes through the little town of Femme Osage. The Femme Osage Evangelical Church is the oldest German Church west of the Mississippi. However, little remains of the original building except the foundations.

And now we are approaching Augusta. Rich in scenic beauty, Augusta is a picturesque little German town built entirely on hills. Originally the Missouri River

flowed at the foot of the village, but in 1872 this capricious river changed its course and left a fertile valley to be planted in golden wheat or corn up to its banks and adding its beauty to the scene. Hills covered with luxuriant forests hem in the little town.

Gottfried Duden was the first German settler in the vicinity. He travelled extensively with Daniel Boone and his companions. After his return to Germany he wrote a book telling in glowing terms the desirability of migration to America. This was a great period of discontent and suffering in Germany and his picture of a land of freedom and abundance was irresistible. It was largely because of this book that thousands of Germans came to settle in the middle west.

Germans of all classes were attracted by Dudens "Letters". One group of aristocrats, known as the "Berliner Society", hoped to reap fortunes in this country. They were merchants, doctors, professional people and some of them were members of the nobility. "The latter had no profession except to be noble" Gert Goebel wrote of them. The old Americans observed their doings with dumb amazement and the other Germans laughed at them. A second group were idealists who came to satisfy spiritual and intellectual needs. These idealists were largely professional people, teachers, clergymen, and were called "Latin Farmers". The third and largest group were those who appreciated freedom, but came principally because they were attracted by the opportunities offered them by this country.

The experiences of the early settlers were those of Hardships and trouble combined with joy and gladness. Their common interests and sympathies bound them together in the strongest friendships. The first homes were a cross between a "hoop cabin" and an Indian bark hut. As soon as enough settlers arrived they started building log cabins. A window with a sash and glass was a rarity and a luxury. Greased paper served as window panes, but more often there was none at all. Furniture was made by hand out of wood during the long winters. A huge fireplace served for heating, cooking, and a system of ventilation.

Meat was the main article of diet and of this there was plenty. There was deer, elk, wild turkey and prairie chicken to be had for the hunting. Bears were known to have been in this region and at night the pioneers were lulled to sleep by the screeching of panthers and the howling of wolves. Snakes were another source of danger. Within a few years the greater part of St. Charles County and surrounding counties had become entirely German. The Americans still held the bottom lands of the Missouri. Those in the hills had been bought out by the Germans and at present the Germans have also taken peaceful possession of the bottoms as well.

An American by the name of Hancock located the site for Augusta in 1776. In 1836, Leonard Harold laid out the town of Augusta, which was then called Mt. Pleasant. Harold was a Pennsylvania Dutchman who came to this locality immediately after the war of 1812. Harold was for many years, monarch of all he surveyed, living alone on the village site. In 1833 the emigration of Germans began. The population of Augusta was largely German, the people being exceedingly thrifty and prosperous. The early business center of the town was along the river front in the South part of town. In 1872 when the Missouri changed its course all supplies (which were mostly from St. Louis) had to be hauled 12 miles from the river by wagon. Thus the little town was practically isolated as far as river traffic was concerned.

Among the early settlers was one Conrad Mallenckrodt. He taught the first public school ever opened in St. Charles County, which was in Augusta. Mr. Mallinckrodt was also a civil engineer and surveyer and through his efforts many of the best turnpike roads in the county were laid out and completed.



Augusta also boasts of one of Daniel Boone's descendants who is now living in the town. Mr. William Hayes is the great-great grandson of the early pioneer.

German was taught in the schools and spoken entirely in the little village. It wasn't until 1914 that English was taken into common use. German is still spoken in Augusta and with its many quaint old houses still standing it has the atmosphere of a real little German village transported here.

The wine industry was of the most importance. As Augusta was situated on a nice sunny south slope, and the land being very fertile, it was especially adapted to the growing of grapes. The entire area which is now the town proper was once entirely covered with vineyards, as were the surrounding hills. Some of the remnants of these first vineyards still remain.

There were many wine producers but one, Carl Muench, was the most prominent. Mr. Muench had a vineyard of approximately seven acres and in the year 1882 produced about 7,000 gallons of wine. His first cellar was built in 1882 and the second larger cellar in 1888. The bricks from which these cellars were made was made from the clay taken from the excavations. A brick plant was established on the property just for this purpose. The capacity of the cellars was about 30,000 gallons, and they were usually filled. These cellars and brick plant are still in good repair.

The old Muench home has recently been remodeled and today one can stop there for a delicious chicken dinner and relax on the huge front porch that overlooks the valley and river in the distance.

In 1856, while the temperance laws were being enforced in the state a number of German residents of Augusta, who found it impossible to enjoy themselves around the wine table in the manner common to their native land, took advantage of an ice blockade in the Missouri River to organize a musical and social society. They erected a tent on the ice and over the muddy waters of the Missouri organized the Augusta Harmonie Verein. Later the organization built the present Hall in which are held many of the town's social events.

Augusta was incorporated in 1885 and received a charter from the state.

#### Bibliography

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From Essay of Augusta High School Students (Class 1932)

From many kind friends