## THE BOONVILLE McDEARMONS

H.E.W. McDearmon (1809-1882) The Civil War Mayor

Boonville mayor Henry E. W. McDearmon<sup>i</sup> was born in Virginia about 1809 to James (d.1816) and Sukey (or Susanna) Puckett McDearmon. His brothers and sisters included James Robertson (1805-1848), Bryant, and Frances (d. 1841). He was named in his father's will filed in Goochland County in 1816.

We know very little about Henry E.W.'s life in Virginia. His name and those of his relatives Bryan McDearmon, Richard McDearmon, and Thompson Hargrove appeared in public records as witnesses to the pension claim of the widow of Thomas Brooks, a soldier in the Continental Army who died in service in 1779<sup>ii</sup>. Henry E.W. was involved in a dispute resulting from land sold by his father James (d. 1816) to his brother Richard McDearmon. Henry E.W, his siblings Brian, and Frances, and various relatives of the deceased James sued Richard McDearmon. The lawsuit *McDearmon vs. McDearmon* appeared in Prince Edward Order books D (1814-1818) and J (1828-1832)<sup>iii</sup>. This family rift might have spurred Henry E.W. and his brother James to leave Virginia and seek new opportunities in Missouri.

A letter from Henry E. W.'s brother James Robertson McDearmon to his wife Martha tells us what we know about the trip to Missouri. Henry E. W. and James Robertson McDearmon arrived in St. Louis in December 1830. James Robertson also told Martha that Henry had found work the day after their arrival and offered to give him any money he earned to help him return to Virginia to bring his family to Missouri. In James Robertson settled in Femme Osage near St. Charles and became involved in local politics. Henry moved up the Missouri River. Henry married Sarah A. Collins about 1835. By June 1840, Henry was living in Fayette in Howard County, where his brother James wrote him about his feelings about being made candidate to run for the State Senate. Two years later Henry had moved to Boonville. James sent his daughter Aurelia to live in his household with the hopes that Aurelia could receive an education and that Henry's wife Sarah and mother-in-law Mrs. Collins could teach her housekeeping skills. Aurelia was unhappy and wanted to return home in order to go to a boarding school in St. Charles. By 1846, Aurelia had left Boonville and was in St. Charles studying under Mrs. Sibley and attending Lindenwood College.

According to the 1850 census, the H.E.W. McDearman household consisted of H.E.W. age 41, occupation carpenter, born in Virginia; Sarah A., age 34 born in Kentucky; James W. 14, Thomas B. 11, and Francis E.7, all three son born in Missouri; and Mrs. Susan Collins, age 54 born in Virginia. Apparently, Mrs. Collins owned the home. The value of her property was listed as \$500. Wii Mrs. Collins was probably Sarah's mother. Two sons died young. James McDearmon was buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery shortly after it was established in 1852. Frank McDearmon was killed at the start of the War in 1861-1862.

Henry E. W. was a carpenter and contractor. During the 1850's he was a partner in Homan & McDearmon. One of their projects was the construction of Boonville's Thespian Hall completed early in the summer of 1857 and considered "finest home of the theater in Mid-Missouri. It is now the oldest theater west of the Mississippi. ix

By 1852 H.E.W. McDearmon had become active in the Democratic Party. In May 1852, a convention of the Democratic Party of Missouri met at the Capitol in Jefferson City. H.E.W. served as a delegate from Cooper County and was chosen President pro tem. In April1856 the Democrats met at the State Capitol in Jefferson City, with party split in two factions of Anti-Benton and pro Bentons. The Benton ticket nominated H.E.W. as candidate for State Treasurer on the Thomas Hart Benton Ticket. Voting took place in August of that year. His bid—as well as that for Thomas Hart Benton's-- for state office proved unsuccessful. Xiiii

When Boonville elected H.E.W. as mayor, the St. Louis *Democrat* hailed the election as one of its "free labor triumphs." The paper described him as a

"staunch, uncompromising opponent of the politics and fanaticisms [...] of the 'national' demagogues of this State. The industrial question, the immigration question and the internal improvement question entered largely, we understand into the contest, and the emphatic voice of Boonville discloses that it does not intend to be behind its rivals in inviting enterprise, capital, and free industry to come unchallenged into its fine site, and aid in building up a flourishing city on the banks of the Missouri." xiv

Henry served eight terms as mayor of Boonville between 1858 and 1865. He also served as County Treasurer from August 3, 1863 through February 7, 1865 and was Town Marshal. His terms as mayor occurred during the turbulent times of the Civil War. Not only the nation, but also local governments became bitterly divided about Union or Secession. The conflicts affected H.E.W. McDearmon and his family personally. On April 28, 1863, William Douglass wrote to General Crawford that,

"Railey, Warfield and others no doubt formed the atrocious design of murdering McDearmon, in order to stop and crush a Union organization then forming of which McD was the head. A man who left town an hour or two before the shooting was heard to declare several miles out in the county that by 12 o'clock on that day McDearmon would be a dead man."

On May 11, 1861, the town was in turmoil because Mayor McDearmon was shot by old Mr. [William Raley] Raily. Von June 17, 1861, the first battle of Boonville occurred outside the town with the Union defeating State troops. Acting City Mayor James H. O'Brian surrendered Boonville to Union General Nathaniel Lyon. Could it be that Henry was recovering from the gunshot wound? His obituary reported that his right arm hung limp from a pistol shot received at the beginning of the War.

Many of Henry E.W. actions as mayor are recorded in contemporary records and local histories. On August 27, 1861, Mayor H.E.W. McDearmon and other city officials went to Jefferson City to plead for some Boonville citizens captured and taken to Jefferson City by Col. Worthington of the 5<sup>th</sup> Iowa Cavalry. In October 1861, Col. Logan of the Federal troops accused Col Eppstein's men of Co. E. of the Home Guards of

stealing some of the government stores in Boonville. After a confrontation between the two companies, Logan notified citizens living near Thespian Hall (where Eppstein and his men were quartered) to remove their families as he intended to bombard the hall and clean out the Home Guards. Hearing of this Mayor McDearmon and others prevailed upon him not to carry out his threat, as it would endanger the lives and property of innocent residents. XVIII

On February 12, 1862, Henry lost his second son. A dance took place in a house in east Boonville. Members of the 37<sup>th</sup> Regiment Illinois Infantry attended as well as Henry E.W. McDearmon's son Frank. The abundance of whisky and liquor and the caused the participants became argumentative and pugnacious. Frank McDearmon and a soldier (possibly Smith M. Martin) became embroiled in a heated argument. Frank McDearmon fatally shot the soldier, who, while dying, managed to cut Frank nine times with a knife. Both men died on the scene of action.

As the War continued, Confederate Col. Joseph Shelby turned his men north toward Boonville, and the citizens became aware that he was approaching the town. On October 10, 1863, Mayor McDearmon called a meeting of the citizens. They concluded that the only sensible thing to do was to surrender the town to Shelby. They sent a deputation of citizens to meet with him, but returned without being able to find the whereabouts of Shelby. Apparently Col. Shelby would not be entering Boonville. \*\*X\* However, the next day Shelby did enter Boonville. Boonville citizens, who originally intended to defend their town, lost their nerve; and a "trembling mayor was only too glad to take the oath of allegiance" Shelby's men took whatever food, clothing, and other supplies they could find, but did not molest or kill anyone during their stay. They soon left the town pursued by Union troops. \*\*xxii\*\*

The following year Boonville suffered raids by bushwhackers who killed and plundered the area around town. On July 14, 1864, H.E.W. McDearmon wrote to Gen. Brown: "Bushwhackers in considerable force north and south of Boonville. Send us one company of troops immediately." Brown replied that troops had left Otterville in the direction of Boonville after the rebels. "I again repeat: "Your citizens should be organized and armed for their own defense.' My troops are being drawn off to other districts, and the people in towns will be compelled to rely on themselves for their safety against predatory bands. This is an important matter for the citizens of Boonville, and will be daily more so as the government is moving the soldiers to the front, and will leave the rear to rely on itself for local protection. I have arms to give you and ask you to take them. xxiii:"

The incident that was to make H.E.W. McDearmon flee town took place on January 19, 1865. An intoxicated Union solder Henry Hillsman entered a confectionary store on Boonville's Main Street. Mary Beck the storeowner was famous for her delicious gingerbread and cider, but was also notorious for her hot temper when aroused. Henry Hillsman became obnoxious and talked louder than Mary Beck talked. Mary called for H.E.W. McDearmon, who was town marshal as well as mayor. Hillsman resisted H.E.W. who shot him. Hillsman died three days later. Comrades of the Union

soldier became aroused and obtained a writ for H.E.W.'s arrest. H.E.W. took cover for a while in the loft over a grocery store in town, but soon headed west for the Rocky Mountains or Canada. On January 23, Governor Thomas C. Fletcher offered a \$300 reward for the apprehension of McDearmon. The reward stated that McDearmon had made his escape and fled from Cooper County rendering it impossible for the Sheriff to execute the warrant for the arrest of McDearmon. McDearmon was described as being fifty years of age, stout built, inclined to corpulence and lame in his right shoulder. \*xxiv\*

While H.E.W. was still on the run, he wrote a letter dated December16, 1866 from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to his nephew John K. McDearmon. He said that his wife had written him that he could return home any time that he wished, but Mr. Adams a lawyer in Boonville said that H.E.W. was to go directly to Jefferson City and give himself up to the Governor. H.E.W. had no desire to fall in the hands of the governor's military substitute for a civil government. He would also ask for a change of venue for a trial and have the case sent to neighboring Howard County. xxv

He was afraid when he wrote John K., saying, "I am fearful that you will not be able to read this letter it is so badly written. I am so nervous I can scarcely write." After H.E.W. McDearmon returned to Boonville, he must have regained his self-confidence. A local history portrays a different H. E.W. from that in his letter: "When he returned he was a striking figure—a tall, powerful man striding down Main Street with two pistols in holsters at his front and a hand on each. He wasn't afraid of the devil. "xxvi"

H.E.W. McDearmon lived about 15 years after his return to Boonville. According to the 1880 Census, he was residing with his son Thomas H. B., as a retired carpenter aged 70 and widowed. He died on Wednesday, March 8, 1882. XXVII An undated, typewritten copy of an obituary said that bodily infirmities confined him to his room as an invalid. He had survived two sons (James and Frank), his brother James R. McDearmon (1805-1848), sister Frances McD. Gannaway (d. 1841), and his wife Sarah, who died when she was about 60. Controversial in life, Henry E. W. received praise after his death:

"Mr. McDearmon was a man of much more than ordinary intellect and a conscientious and respected citizen. He used to be one of the best-known politicians of the State and was a firm political and personal friend of Senator Thomas H. Benton, who held him in high estimation. He was well acquainted with the political history of the country, always took great interest in such things, and however widely men may have differed from him, none ever doubted the honesty of his purposes for the sincerity of his convictions. For eight successive terms he was mayor of Boonville, his first election being in 1857 and his last in 1864, and we never had a better officer in that position."

## Thomas Hart Benton McDearmon (1839-1893) The Marshal versus the Editor

Thomas Hart Benton McDearmon, the middle son of H.E.W. McDearmon, was born about 1839. On August 9, 1862, he enrolled for the Union as 1st Sgt. in Co. D, 52nd Enrolled Missouri Militia. xxviii Like his father Henry E. W., he was a carpenter and contractor, as well as town marshal. Announcements in the Boonville Weekly Advertiser listed his building projects in 1883. On January 17 1884, McDearmon and Finney formed a co-partnership as contractors. As town marshal, Thomas H. B. made his share of enemies, especially with the local press. He was described as a 250-pound policeman, "loud-mouthed, turbulent, and unprincipled.xxix". He "was zealous for duty, but addicted to drink. He worked hard keeping the town like a prayer meeting that he had it in a constant uproar over his miscarriages of justice. XXX. Editor A. B. Thornton of the Boonville News started a crusade against Thomas, who warned him to stop the crusade. However, Thornton continued the attacks. One Saturday afternoon on November 17, 1881, Thomas followed Thornton along Boonville's Main Street, shot and instantly killed him. Thomas H. B. claimed self-defense, saying Thornton fired at him first. Thomas H. B. surrendered himself to the sheriff. xxxi Three months later Boonville Sheriff John F. Rogers, and deputy, L.L. Williams, escorted Thomas H.B. McDearmon to the Boone County Jail on a change of venue to await trial. The case was tried in Columbia, Boone County. Melton's history reported that he was sentenced to one year in jail; xxxiii another said he was acquitted According to a contemporary newspaper article the case was given to the jury at 6:00 pm. April 29, 1882. It took the jury about 25 minutes to return with a verdict of not guilty. xxxv Memories of Thornton haunted Thomas the rest of his life. "Every night when I go home, I see a man waiting at my gate to kill me, but he always disappears" xxxvi, Thomas told street crowds for years after he was repudiated as an official.

Thomas H. B. McDearmon died on November 10, 1893 in Sedalia, MO. \*\*xxvii\* He was the only son of H.E.W. McDearmon to marry. He married Matilda Givens, in 1859 and Virginia T. Williams in 1867. His children included Fannie (1862-), Luella (1868-), Arthur (1874-), and Mary (1876-). His daughter Fannie married Giles H. Marshall, a painter, on November 1, 1882, and gave birth to Elma Loris Marshall on October 31, 1883 and a son Rudolph Giles in 1887. The descendants left Boonville, some settling in Sedalia,, Missouri. This is where our records of H. E. W's descendants end. Members of Henry E.W. McDearmon's immediate family are buried in Boonville's Walnut Grove Cemetery, but the head stones are illegible. The only recognizable marker reads "Sarah wife of H. E. W. \*\*xxxviii\*"

## Henry E. W. McDearmon Genealogy

James McDearmon (d. 1816) m. Susanna (Sukey) Puckett. They had:

James Robertson McDearmon (1805-1848)

Henry E.W. McDearmon (1808/10 -1882)

Bryan McDearmon III

Frances McDearmon (d. 1841)

Henry E. W. McDearmon (1808/10-1882)\*\*xxix\*\* m Sarah Collins (1816?-1876?)\*\* They had:

James W. McDearmon (1836-1852)<sup>xli</sup>

Thomas Hart Benton McDearmon (1839-1893)<sup>xliii</sup>

Frances E. McDearmon (1843-1862)<sup>xliii</sup>

Thomas Hart Benton McDearmon m. 1) Matilda Givens (1841<sup>xliv</sup>-1862) on March 3, 1859<sup>xlv</sup>. They had:

Frances (Fannie) McDearmon (1862-1941)

Thomas Hart Benton McDearmon m. 2) Virginia T. Williams (1840-1886)<sup>xlvi</sup> on June 7, 1867. They had:

Luella McDearmon (1868- ) Arthur McDearmon (1874- ) Mary McDearmon (1876-)-xlvii

Fannie McDearmon m. Giles H. Marshall on November 1, 1882<sup>xlviii</sup>. They had Elma Loris McDearmon (b. October 31, 1883)<sup>xlix</sup> Rudolph Giles Marshall (1887-1968)

Information compiled and written by Elizabeth H. McDearmon Werner in 2003; revised May 1, 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>i</sup> Henry E.W. McDearmon will be identified as Henry, Henry E.W., and H.E.W. McDearmon. We have not found out what the initials "E.W." represent.

ii Virginia Revolutionary War State Pensions: Richmond: Virginia Genealogical Society, c1980. p. 14.

iii Letter from Peter McD. Witt to Fielding McDearmon, August 10, 1988.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>iv</sup> Letter from James R. McDearmon to his wife Martha, December 6, 1830. Original owned by Fielding McDearmon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>v</sup> Name reported by HEW descendant James Shearin on McDearmon Surname Board <a href="http://boards.ancestry.com">http://boards.ancestry.com</a> June 8, 2008. Marriage date is estimated to be about a year before the birth of their first-born son James born ca, 1836.

vi Letter James R. McDearmon to Aurelia McDearmon, February 16, 1842. Original owned by Fielding McDearmon.

vii (http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper/Census/1850Cooper154.htm

viii Walnut Grove Cemetery, one of the most beautiful in the State, had its inception in 1852. In that year Charles F. Aehle, Robert D. Perry, Dr. A. Keuckelhan and others purchased a piece of ground containing two acres from William S. Myers to be used as a cemetery. Upon this ground was a beautiful grove of walnut trees, hence the name Walnut Grove Cemetery. This tract has been added to from time to time. The first body interred in the cemetery was that of Mrs. Sarah Ann Quarles, who died Aug. 24, 1852. Others

buried about the same time were Mrs. H. A. Massie, **James McDearmon**, and Ida Aehle. From W. F. Johnson's "History of Cooper County, Missouri", 1919, quoted in

http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper/Cemeteries/WALNUT\_GROVE\_CEMETERY\_E\_SURNAMES.htm

- <sup>ix</sup> E. J. Melton, *The First 100 Years* quoted in an e-mail from J.F. Thoma to E. Werner, August 17, 2003 "THE CORNERSTONE was laid at the northeast corner of the basement on July 25, 1855, following a community procession from the courthouse. The parade proceeded to the fair grounds where an estimated 3000 heard an address by William Douglas. A community dinner followed. [...] The hall rose steadily under the direction of McDearmon & Homan, local contractors. The building, finest home of the theater in Mid-Missouri, was completed early in the summer of 1857."
- <sup>x</sup> "Proceedings of Democratic State Convention," *Missouri Courier* (Hannibal, MO), Thursday, April 15, 1852, Issue 46 Col. D. Infotrac.Galegroup.com. accessed April 18, 2007.
- xi "Democratic State Convention," *Liberty Weekly Tribune*, May 2, 1856, page 2 in Historical Missouri Newspapers Project, <a href="http://newspapers.umsystem.edu">http://newspapers.umsystem.edu</a> viewed May 1, 2007.
- xii Thomas Hart Benton (1782-1858) served as Missouri's Senator from 1821 until his defeat in 1851. For 30 years he distinguished himself but as the State became polarized over the slavery issue it was impossible for him to retain a seat in the Senate. He served two years (1853-1855) in the House of Representatives but was defeated as he opposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. In an effort to salvage his political career, he ran as an Independent Democrat candidate for Governor of Missouri against Trusten Polk the Regular Democrat and Robert C. Ewing an American Party Candidate. Trusten Polk won the election but resigned in February 1877 to become a U.S. Senator. From *History of Greene Count, Missouri 1883*, by R. O. Holcombe. <a href="http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lochist/history/holcombe/grch5pt1.html">http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lochist/history/holcombe/grch5pt1.html</a> accessed April 25, 2007.
- xiii "Election Results," *Liberty Tribune*, Sept. 12, 1856, page 2 in Historical Missouri Newspapers Project, http://:newspapers.umsystem.edu viewed April 27, 2007.
- xiv "More Free Labor Triumphs in Missouri," *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* (WI), April 19, 1858; Issue 92, Col. A. Infotrac.Galegroup.com. accessed April 18, 2007.
- <sup>xv</sup> Missouri Provost Marshal Papers, Microfilm Reel F1277 Letter from William Douglass to General Crawford, April 28, 1863.
- xvi From "The Civil War Letters of Nancy Chapman Jones" on
- http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper/Military/Jones\_Letters.htm viewed December 6, 2002.
- xvii Thoma, James F. *This Cruel Unnatural War* (Kingsport, TN: J. Thoma, 2003), p. 32.
- xviiiThoma, pp. 42-43.
- xixThoma, pp. 52-53. James F. Thoma examined the Regimental roster for the 37<sup>th</sup> Rgt. Illinois Infantry and found only one entry that fit the requirements of this incident. On February 12, 1862, Smith M. Martin was killed at Boonville. MO.
- xx The History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri. St. Louis, National Historical Co., 1883, p770
- xxi Thoma, p. 81
- xxii Thoma, p. 82.
- xxiii The War of the Rebellion: A Compendium of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902. Series I, Vol. 41, Part ii; pp. 189-90.
- xxiv Man Shot; Sedalia, Missouri; The Sedalia Advertiser, 28 Jan. 1865 cited in Thoma, pp. 192-130.
- xxv Letter from H.E.W. McDearmon to John K. McDearmon, December 16, 1866, original owned by Fielding McDearmon. James Thoma explained in an email (5/19/03) to E. Werner that Boonville had a large German population who would have been antagonistic to H.E.W. as Hillsman was German. Howard County was strongly southern, and a jury would have been less likely to convict H.E.W.
- xxvi Melton, E.J. *Melton's History of Cooper County Missouri*. Columbia, Mo.: Stephen's Publishing Co., 1937, p. 373.
- .St. Louis Globe-Democrat March 9, 1882; pg. 6, Issue 293; col. B.
- xxviii Thoma, p. 188.
- xxix History of Howard and Cooper County, Missouri. St. Louis: National Historical Society, 1883, p.787. xxx Melton, p. 373.
- "XXXI" "Only a Few Days Ago [...], The Globe (Atchison, KS), November 21, 1881; Issue 1, 227 Col. D.
- xxxii "Chronicle of Crimes," St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Wed. Feb. 15, 1882, p.5 issue 271 Column A.

xxxvi Melton, p. 373.

xxxix St. Louis Globe-Democrat March 9, 1882; pg. 6, Issue 293; col. B.

xli A James McDearmon was one of the early people to be buried at Walnut Grove Cemetery.

xliixlii "Death of Tom McDearmon, *The Emporia Gazette* (Emporia, KS) November 10, 1893; Col. F.

xliv Estimated birthdate from the 1860 U.S. Census.

xlvi "Death of Mrs. T.H.R. McDearmon," *Boonville Weekly Advertiser*, January 12, 1886. on <a href="http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper">http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper</a>

xxxiii Melton, p. 373.

xxxiv History of Howard and Cooper County, Missouri, p. 787.

xxxv "McDearmon Cleared." *Liberty Weekly Tribune*, May 5, 1882, page 1. Historical Missouri Newspapers Project. <a href="http://newspapers.umsystem.edu">http://newspapers.umsystem.edu</a> viewed April 27, 2007.

xxxvii "Death of Tom McDearmon," *The Emporia Daily Gazette*, (Emporia, KS) November 10, 1893.

xxxviii Telephone conversation between Elizabeth Werner and Mrs. Ada Townlain of the Walnut Grove Cemetery Historical Association. (May 6, 2003) She said the stones were "old, old, old."

xl HEW's family members and birth years come from the 1850 Census. Sarah's approximate death year comes from a conversation with Ada Townlain of the Walnut Grove Cemetery Association. She said that the headstone said "Wife of HEW McDearmon, 60 years." (Telephone conversation May 6, 2003).

xliii A Frank McDearmon was killed in a fight with a Union soldier in the Winter of 1861 according to the *History of Cooper County Missouri* by W.F. Johnson (p. 209)and *Melton's History of Cooper County Missouri*, by E.J. Melton: (1937), p. 91. James F. Thoma checked roster for the 37<sup>th</sup> Rgt. Illinois Infantry and found only one entry for a death that took place in February, 1862.

xlv See Cooper County Marriages (1850-1859) and 1860-1869 on <a href="http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper">http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper</a> for Thomas H.B. McDearmon's two marriages.

xlvii The 1880 Census on <a href="http://familysearch.org">http://familysearch.org</a> gives the members of Thomas H.B. McDearmon's household. His name is spelled "McDeorman."

xlviii IGI Individual record for Fannie McDearmon on http://www.familysearch.org

xlix Cooper County Births 1883 at http://www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper (p. 11 128)