

# History: One story at a time

Mary Lou Montgomery  
Montgomery Historical Publications Co.

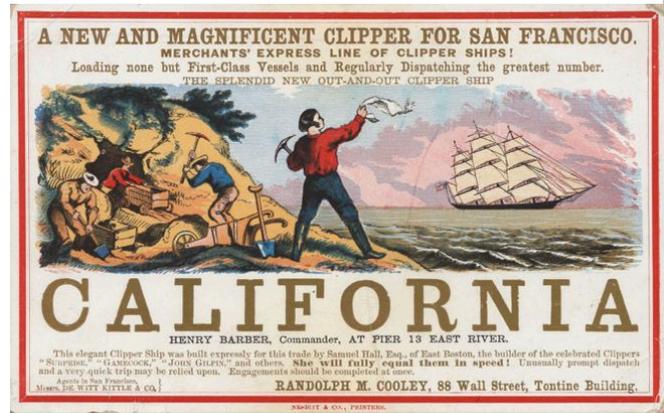
## Prominent Baptist dies en route home from Gold Rush

Fellow ship passenger brought news back to Hannibal in 1850

### MARY LOU MONTGOMERY

Virginia Halsey was just 12 years old in 1850 when word came via a stranger that her father was dead.

William Halsey, a prominent member of Hannibal's Baptist Church and a respected citizen of the community, was one of an estimated 200 Hannibal men who left for California in 1849-50 to seek riches during the Gold Rush. A difficult, months-long trek for the fittest of the fit, disease and death took a commanding toll on those who ventured out on the months-long journey either on land or by sea.



William Halsey, who chose to return home via ship south from California in 1850, either by crossing the Isthmus of Panama Canal or traveling around Cape Horn, died of cholera some three days' journey short of the port of New Orleans, at the age of 42.

A gentleman who came in on the stage coach at Hannibal in December 1850 brought the sad news to Halsey's family and friends that he had personally witnessed the death of the Hannibal man aboard the ship.

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#### Church dedication

Oakwood Methodist Church first opened its doors to worshippers in 1890.

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#### Considers investment

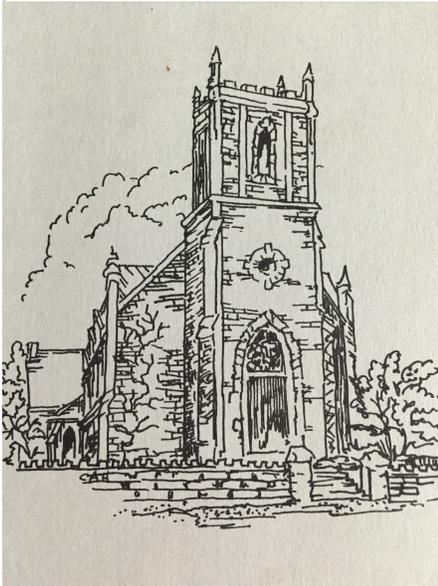
Former minister of Arch street church returns to Hannibal.

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#### In the night

Which is worse, a burglar or a rat?

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## Fire

### Trinity Church fire, 1902

The Trinity Episcopal church at Hannibal was damaged by fire to the extent of about \$2,000. The fire was caused by an overheated flue.

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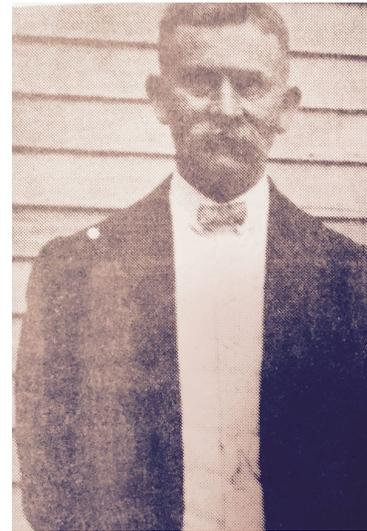
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## Methodist minister interested in real estate development

Sept. 6, 1906, Macon Times  
Democrat

Rev. H.C. Garrett, the well known Methodist minister, who is interested in Eure Place (area of Virginia and Magnolia streets), located on the Broadway extension, arrived in the city yesterday afternoon from Carrollton, where he attended the annual conference. Rev. Garrett has been located at Brookfield as pastor of that church but at the conference just adjourned he was appointed conference Sunday school secretary. The Journal is pleased to learn that Rev. Garrett will have his headquarters at Hannibal



and will remove his family here in the near future. He was formerly pastor of the Arch street church, and a cordial welcome will be extended to him and his estimable family.

### Thanksgiving 1850

Dec. 12, 1850, Missouri Courier

This is the day set apart by the Governor of this State as a day of general Thanksgiving. An appropriate sermon will be delivered this morning at the Second Presbyterian Church, by Rev. J.H. Lorance. Subject – “Our duty in the present junction of National excitement.” The public are invited to attend.



Early photo of  
Oakwood  
Methodist  
Church  
provided by  
Archie Hayden  
of Hannibal

Dedication services Summer of 1890

## Oakwood Methodist Church

Newspaper article included in Peter Stone's diary, Steve Chou collection

Dedicated by Rev. McAnally,  
of St. Louis, Yesterday, With Imposing Ceremonies

On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1889, the people of Oakwood held a meeting at Edmondson's Hall, when it was decided to erect a church in that suburban village. The lot on which to erect the building was donated by J.B. Price, and a subscription paper was started. Enough money being raised to warrant the erection of the building, the preliminary steps were taken without further delay. In a short time after this meeting, the contract for the building was let to Messrs. Aluge and Davis, and work was commenced immediately. About May 1<sup>st</sup>, the contractors completed the building, which was accepted by the church committee, and arrangements were at once made for the dedicatory services, which were held

yesterday.

For the first time, POST reporter visited the church yesterday morning, The building is neat and conveniently arranged. It is a frame, 28 feet wide by 42 feet long, with a seating capacity of at least 300 people. It is located a short distance north of the New London gravel road and east of the lane leading to the old Holmes property. The building faces the south, and the numerous windows on either side of the building catch all the breeze, and, notwithstanding the extreme heat of yesterday, no person suffered from the want of fresh air. The people of Oakwood have every reason to be proud of their new church, and great credit is due the leaders in the movement, as they have labored almost unceasingly to the

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accomplishment of what they had undertaken. It was built at the cost of \$1,650, all of which, with the exception of about \$400, was raised previous to the completion of the edifice.

The building completed, the next thing to do was to determine who should preach the dedicatory sermon, and it was finally decided that Rev. McAnally, the veteran editor of the St. Louis Christian Advocate, was the proper person to dedicate the building.

At 11 o'clock yesterday morning, the first service was held. Long before that hour persons from the surrounding county within a radius of 15 or 20 miles, arrived at the church, and when the services were commenced every seat in the building was occupied and a large number of persons were compelled to remain standing during the entire morning. After the usual opening exercises, Rev. H.P. Bond, pastor of the new church, introduced Rev. McAnally, who preached an eloquent sermon from the subject: "Man Worships That Which He Loves Best." It was a grand effort and we regret exceedingly that lack of space prevents us from publishing even a brief synopsis of the sermon. The reverend gentleman has been preaching for over sixty years, and has dedicated a great many churches. After he had finished the sermon proper, Rev. McAnally stated that there was a small indebtedness yet remaining on the building, and just as soon as the amount was raised he would dedicate the church.

Rev. Bond then made a short financial statement, in which he stated that the amount required was \$400, and appointed collectors to circulate in the audience and see how much of the amount could be raised. Within a half hour the collectors reported that they had succeeded in raising \$302, leaving a balance of \$98. While the collection was being taken, Rev. Jones, of the Arch street church, and Col. R.E. Anderson made short addresses. At this juncture it was decided to close the morning service, and the congregation was dismissed.

**AFTERNOON SERVICES**

At 3:30 p.m., the church was again filled to its utmost seating capacity. Rev. A. McCullen, pastor of the Park church, preached a sermon from the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians and 22<sup>nd</sup> verse: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran Atha." It was a powerful and appropriate address and pleased the audience very much.

After the conclusion of the sermon the work of raising the balance of the money due on the building, \$98, was commenced, which was raised in a very short time after which the church was dedicated to the cause of Christ by Rev. McAnally. The ceremonies were impressive, and thoroughly enjoyed by all present. They were in accordance with the ritual of the Methodist Church.

**EVENING SERVICES**

At 8 o'clock p.m. Rev. McAnally again preached a powerful sermon, which contained many good thoughts. His text was selected from the 33<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isiah, 20<sup>th</sup>, and the 21<sup>st</sup> verses, with "The Church" as the subject. Rev. McAnally preached the same sermon at Baltimore in the year 1886. He treated the subject in a manner that clearly indicated the fact that he was thoroughly conversant with it, and those who were present were accorded a rich spiritual treat.

At the close of the sermon three children were administered the rites of baptism, after which the Church of Oakwood was organized. The members of the new church represented three generations and quite a large number of persons were enrolled on the membership list.

This closed the days exercises at the Oakwood church and it was a day that will long be remembered by the citizens of that place as well as the persons who were present from abroad, and we hope that Rev. McAnally's prayer, that the opening of a church in that place, will result in much good for the cause of Christ will be answered.

**Continued from page 1**

Young Virginia, along with her mother, Harriett, and younger sisters, Mary, age 8, and Elizabeth, age 6, were effectively on their own in this fledgling town of 2,000 inhabitants.

The town itself, which at least temporarily lost 10 percent of its wage earners to the Gold Rush, suffered nearly as much as the individual families whose husbands and fathers dropped their plows and headed west.

A reporter from the Marietta Ohio Republication wrote about the Hannibal experience on May 22, 1851:

“The emigrants from here to the golden sands of the Pacific, were among the best citizens, because they nearly all belonged to the working class. Many of the lands which they left ... remain unoccupied for the want of labors.”

Mrs. Halsey, left alone to raise her daughters, was the subject of special legislation in the general assembly of Missouri in August 1853, termed “An act for the relief of Harriet Halsey, widow of William Halsey, deceased.”

The act allowed her to make and execute the necessary deeds of Hannibal’s Baptist Cemetery, previously administered by her husband. The act also allowed her to collect all demands against others, growing out of the sale of any lots, in the cemetery.

This status helped her keep her family of daughters financially afloat, until 1856, when Virginia Halsey, by then 18, married William C. Busby, the newly ordained pastor of the Baptist Church at Hannibal. William Busby moved in with his new wife’s family, and continued on as breadwinner during the ensuing decades.

William and Harriet Bolling Halsey, were among Hannibal’s earliest settlers.

## Hannibal minister’s family slept while burglar canvassed home; thought the noise was a rat

Challenner burglary  
Sept. 17, 1876, Hannibal Clipper

“The residence of Eld. E.B. Challenner, southwest corner of Church and Eighth, Hannibal, was entered by a burglar, last night, who had everything his own way for two hours. He was heard walking in different rooms of the house,

by every member of the family, all of whom mistook him for a rat.

After ransacking every nook and corner with the exception of one room, the midnight prowler took his departure, carrying with him two keys. Nothing else about the premises was disturbed. An effort was also made to enter the kitchen of the residence of Mrs. Helm, near Eld. Challenner’s, but with no success, the thief having taken fright and ran away after cutting one of the blinds.”



# A handsome donation

## A surprised minister and a happy congregation

Hannibal Clipper, Dec. 26, 1874

“At an early hour last evening a large number of the members and friends of the Christian Church in this city, assembled in the basement of the church, and brought with them a large supply of articles apparently intended to provide bounteously for somebody’s household. The various articles were tastefully arranged upon a table in the north end of the room, and about 8 o’clock a committee went to the residence of Eld. Elijah B. Challenner, (southwest corner of Church and Eighth, Hannibal) and informed him that his presence at the church was wanted just then. Donning his hat and coat he accompanied the committee to the church, (southwest corner Sixth and Bird, Hannibal) where he was received and escorted to the table, when W.O. Bashore, Esq., on behalf of the members and friends made the presentation in a short, impromptu speech suited to the occasion. Mr. Challenner was taken wholly by surprise, having received no previous intimation whatever that any movement of this kind was on foot. He thanked them for the kindness which had thus been manifested for him; and assured them that while he prized the gifts for their intrinsic worth, the spirit of Christian love and friendship thus displayed was far more highly prized, and would be a source of joy and comfort to him while he lived

“The articles donated consisted of baskets of apples, potatoes, sacks of flour and meal, canned fruits, groceries, cabbages, preserves, jellies, butter, set of knives and forks, pair of splendid blankets, dress goods, a fifty dollar suit of clothes, and a sum of money. It is doubtful if there has ever been a happier meeting in that church than the one last evening.”

In the same newspaper edition:

### “Wasn’t that nice?”

That pleasant and genuine surprise to myself and family, in the basement



of the Christian church, last evening. It is not often that nearly an entire membership can meet and spread a table and keep their pastor in profound ignorance till the very moment of presentation, but so it was in this case. And a rare table it was too.

“For number of contributors and variety of presents in point of utility and value, for hearty good will and interest manifested by the entire large audience assembled for unfeigned pleasure and satisfaction with which it was done. – Never before have I enjoyed its equal, and it has been my good fortune to participate in the liberal offerings of a generous brotherhood on many similar occasions.

“Brother Green shall no longer remain alone in his laudable boating. Come up, my brother, and let us compare notes – but wait till brother Tucker takes my measure. And now brethren let me say to you, one and all, the surprise was so complete, and great that I could not, then, in living words express my real feelings, and it is not in the power of the printed word to open my heart to you now. Suffice it to say, my heart is brim full at your magnificent deed. Many the same kindness extended to me be meted out to you by Him, who, in the language of Paul is ‘able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all you ask for think.’ E.B. Challenner”