Chapter 7

Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition

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Nineteenth-Century Independence and Moore's Addition
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Introduction

The birth and beginnings of Independence, Missouri, in the nineteenth century follow a pattern of cyclical exuberant and diminished growth characteristic of so many frontier Euroamerican settlements in America. The town's founding as the seat of Jackson County government in 1827, just three miles south of the Missouri River, and the fluctuating fortunes of its inhabitants over the next several decades can be attributed to several local, regional, and national factors—the town's geographic location near the Missouri River and the environmental circumstances of this broad meandering flood-prone river; commercial opportunities created by travel and trade in the Missouri Valley; the economic aspirations and creative imagination of early and developing town residents; and the town's somewhat unique relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) as well as contestants in the national battle over slavery and secession of the South. Between 1827 and 1890, Independence transformed itself many times from: Queen City of the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California trails; City of Zion; battleground of guerrillas, outlaws, and Civil War soldiers; agricultural center; and suburb of Kansas City.

Development of the future Noland house site took place over this sixty-year metamorphosis of Independence and against a backdrop of changing local, regional, and even national economic, political, and social conditions. Located just northwest of the original Independence town plat, the future Noland house site came into private ownership for the first time in 1833. Six years later, following a national depression and the establishment of Independence as a regional trading center, James Moore became the third owner of a sizeable parcel, including the present 216 North Delaware property. His attempt to sell the land finally materialized in 1846 after he platted eighty-five acres as Moore's Addition. Two years later, Moore sold several lots in his addition. Reflecting wildly fluctuating economic and political conditions in Independence and the nation between the late 1840s and the end of the Civil War, between 1848 and 1865, the future Noland property changed hands five times.

The sale price of this land and other lots suggest that rather unsubstantial improvements may have existed until probably the mid-1860s. Then, in May that year, when Independence was no longer a Civil War battleground, the owner, a carpenter and builder, sold the property for $1,200, three times the purchase price in 1858. Between May and December 1865, as the nation and Independence embarked on the long road to recovery from the wounds of civil strife, the future Noland house property jumped again, nearly three times, in value. In December

that year, Anthony T. Slack (and eventually his growing family) became the first long-term owner of and residents on the future Noland house site. Although the house that Slack and his family occupied over the next twenty years is not known with certainty, maps of Independence in the 1860s and 1880s depict a house with an appearance and form that resembles the front portion (east side) of the present Noland house. This chapter tells the story of evolving developments on the Noland property and the historical context in which they took place, between the 1820s and 1890.

Independence: Geographic and Cultural Setting

The original Independence townsite of 240 acres occupied land astride old Indian and hunters' trails on a high ridge, sloping northward to the Missouri River and to the east and west to Little Blue River and Big Blue River, respectively. In the early 1820s, a clearing of a few acres extended across the highest part of the ridge, created and later abandoned by a trapper. A few old girdled dead trees stood in this field, enclosed by a disintegrating rail fence. A dense forest with an impenetrable ground cover of brush, vines, and fallen timber, along with deep impassable gorges, stretched for miles around the old field. A narrow, crooked roadway wound from the hilltop clearing, northward down along the west side of a deep ravine to a bluff above the Missouri River. On the south riverbank, under the bluff, stood an old log house and a narrow winding path that ran east and west along the river, crossing fallen trees and the outlets of deep ravines. This is the landscape destined to become the site of Independence, a landscape that pioneer settler John McCoy described in 1871 at the first meeting of the "Old Settlers of Jackson County" historical society.[1]

Beginnings: Center of Trade, Seat of Government, 1825-1855

Founding and Early Years, 1825-1840

The origin of Independence dates back to the mid-1820s. The city's founding benefited from the 1825 treaties between the United States and the Osage and Kansas Indians. With money from annuities paid for their confiscated lands, Indians bought goods from the earliest Euroamerican pioneers living in and

[1] W. Z. Hickman, *History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Topeka, Kans.: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 243.

around the future site of Independence. These Indian treaties (and the 1830 Indian Removal Act that forced almost all Indians within in the United States living east of the Mississippi River to relocate west of the Missouri River), opened the fertile rolling hills now in Jackson County for private ownership and settlement. Commercial opportunities in this pioneer settlement expanded enormously when Santa Fe Trail traders, eager to shorten the overland distance between the United States and Mexico, began loading caravans of wagons further west on the Missouri River. Fort Osage, established in 1808 as the first military and trading post in the Louisiana Purchase, and the trading post of fur trapper and trader (representing Astor's American Fur Company), Francis Chouteau, founded in 1821 near the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers (slightly northwest of present-day Kansas City), served as supply points for Santa Fe Trail travelers. In the spring of 1825, a great Missouri River flood swept every vestige of Chouteau's trading post away. That year the loading place for overland traders to Mexico became established further west to a place a short distance north of the future Independence townsite. By 1827, Independence had become the eastern terminus of the Santa Fe Trail and the westernmost settlement in the United States.[2]

The State of Missouri government acknowledged this small settlement's early marketing vigor and commercial promise when, on December 15, 1826, the Missouri General Assembly organized Jackson County (also embracing present-day neighboring Bates and Cass counties), named in honor of Indian War hero and soon-to-be president General Andrew Jackson. The county was then divided into three large townships: Fort Osage, Kaw, and Blue townships. Blue Township would soon become the site of the new county seat. Three general assembly commissioners soon selected a wooded ridge with sixteen springs for the county seat of government. George Champlin Sibley of Fort Osage (later renamed Sibley) surveyed the 240-acre townsite and laid out the Independence plat according to the "Shelbyville square plan," derived from the town plan of Shelbyville, Kentucky. A central undivided square block, surrounded by blocks with lots facing the square, dominated the Independence town plan.[3] A temporary

[2] Bernd Foerster, *Independence, Missouri* (Independence, Mo.: Independence Press, 1978), 13, 15; *Political History of Jackson County: Biographical Sketches of Men Who Have Helped to Make It* (N.p.: Marshall & Morrison, 1902), 7-8; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 244-45.

[3] Independence was one of 57 of Missouri's 114 county seats to be laid out on a Shelbyville square plan. This plan flourished first in Tennessee during the 1810s. Independence was one of the first counties in Missouri to adopt this town plan. Shelbyville squares in Missouri date from the 1820s to 1861. Marion M. Ohman, *A History of Missouri's Counties, County Seats, and Courthouse Squares* (Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1983), 33-34.

log courthouse, measuring 18 x 36 feet, was erected at present-day Lexington and Lynne streets. The following year, the county court awarded a contract to low bidder Daniel P. Lewis, for $150, to construct a permanent brick courthouse on the central square, set aside for that purpose in the town plat.[4] The first sale of lots in the Independence townsite took place on July 9-11, 1827. Most individual lots sold for $10 to $20. A few buyers paid from $40 to $49 per lot. Flournoy and Noland family members and John Thornton, all associated with the Noland house property later on, bought several lots in the newly platted town.[5]

Located three miles south of the Missouri River on a high ridge encircled by rolling hills covered by forests and prairie land, the new seat of county government was ideally located for developing commercial trade. Independence gradually became a market place for pioneer farmers in the area. Most of these immigrants were of Scotch-Irish descent, and hailed from the trans-Appalachian states of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. The small village also supplied travelers with goods for long westward overland treks. In 1830, three years after the town's birth, a caravan of mule- and oxen-drawn wagons and carts, organized by Jedediah Smith, Dave Jackson, and Bill Sublette in St. Louis, made its way up the meandering sloughs of the lower Missouri River to Independence. This wagon train became the first of hundreds more to stop in Independence for supplies on their way to the middle Rocky Mountains to trap and hunt for fur in the vast country of the Blackfeet Indians.[6]

Not long afterward, steamboats loaded with supplies regularly plied the 300-mile distance from St. Louis to Independence. At least two landings on the Missouri River were built to serve Independence at that time: the Independence Landing at so-called "Wayne City," built in the early 1830s about three and one-half miles due north of the courthouse square, and the Blue Mills Landing, established in 1832 northwest of the town. Goods were transferred to wagons at these landings, driven to Independence, and loaded onto wagons and carts bound for Mexico or the Rockies. In 1831, the "courthouse built of brick, two or three merchant stores, and fifteen or twenty dwelling houses, built mostly of logs hewed on both sides," made up the frontier village of Independence, according to Ezra Booth, a Mormon newcomer.[7]

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[4] *History of Jackson County, Missouri Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc., Indexed Edition*, 1881, reprint (Cap Girardeau, Mo.: Ramfre Press, 1966), 638-39; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 106, 161.
[5] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 13; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 635-36; Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (Tucson, Ariz.: Patrice Press, 1997), 80.
[6] Ibid., 76-77.
[7] Ibid., 71, 78-79.

That year Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder and prophet of the newly created Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), proclaimed Independence to be the "City of Zion," a place that God had given to Mormon members by divine inheritance. Soon Mormons primarily from New York and Oregon streamed into town; bought land; built homes, stores, and a school; operated a ferry; farmed; and started a newspaper, *The Evening and Morning Star*. The early Scotch-Irish settlers in the area viewed these claims as inflammatory and threatening to the existing social and governmental structure of the county. It was not long before intolerant settlers, in an effort to expel the Mormons, committed acts of horrific violence against them. In November 1833, the Mormons were driven out of Independence.[8]

During the 1830s, Independence continued to grow in size and importance as a trading center for overland travelers. In May 1832, several parties with 30 to 150 members stopped for supplies in Independence before beginning their westward trek: the large hunting and trapping parties of Captain Bonneville, Captain Sublette, and Captain Blackwell heading for the Rockies; a company bound for Santa Fe; and Captain Wyeth's party of thirty bound for the mouth of the Willamette River to prepare for settling the Oregon country.[9] Charles Latrobe, a fellow traveler of American author Washington Irving and Count Albert Alexandre de Pourtales, visited the infant county seat in 1832. His description of the village, which appeared in Irving's 1835 *A Tour of the Prairies*, provided a glimpse of this bustling settlement, then comprised of a half-dozen log huts, two or three hotels, and a few stores.[10]

> The town of Independence was full of promise, like most of the innumerable towns springing up in the midst of the forests of the West.
> . . . It lacked at the time [a bank, printing office, and church], but was nevertheless a thriving and aspiring place, in its way; and [a] fortune [had already been] made here in the course of its brief existence, by a bold Yankee shopkeeper, who had sold $60,000 worth of good here in three years. . . . A little beyond this point, all carriage roads cease, and one deep black trail alone, which might be seen tending to the southwest, was that of the Santa Fe trappers and traders.[11]

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[8] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 14-15; William Patrick O'Brien, *Independence Square: A Convenient Guide to the Past for Today's Pioneers* (N.p.: n.p., 1985), (unnumbered pages 1-2 of text).
[9] Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 76-78.
[10] O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 1).
[11] Ibid.,(page 1).

Just two years later, in 1834, the town had grown considerably larger, and boasted a population of 250 inhabitants.[12] Ornithologists John Townsend, traveling with Nathaniel Wyeth's Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company expedition that year, observed about fifty scattered houses "composed of logs and clay, [that] are low and inconvenient. There are six or eight stores here, two taverns, and a few tippling houses."[13] Unimpressed with Independence, Townsend and fellow travelers decided not to stay in the town but took up residence in a house on the landing until their departure. By the late 1830s, a few log and wood-frame buildings encircled the central courthouse square: Woodson Noland's two-story frame hotel and nearby large stable (eastern side), a shop and saloon (northern side), Owens and Aull general merchandise store (southwest corner), and a congery of one-story rooms and shops (southern side).[14]

Early Ownership of the Future Noland Property

Only a year earlier in 1833, the land on which the Noland house now stands transferred into private ownership when Jones Hoy Flournoy paid the State of Missouri $160 for approximately eighty acres northwest and adjacent to the Independence town plat (Deed Book 264, p. 526). This sizeable parcel was said to be part of the so-called "Seminary Lands" at that time.[15] Jones H. Flournoy, along with other Flournoy family members, was one of the earliest settlers in Blue Township, and owned considerable land in and around Independence. He and two brothers, Hoy B. and Solomon Flournoy, had come to Missouri in the mid-1820s, and first settled in the eastern part of Jackson County. He soon afterward moved to Independence and engaged in general merchandising. Around 1826, Jones Hoy Flournoy built a substantial one-story brick house that stood at present-day 126 South Pleasant Street in Independence, where he and his wife, Clara Flournoy, probably lived. (The Flournoy house was saved from demolition by Independence historian William J. Curtis and moved in 1963 to 1107 South Cottage Street.)[16]

In 1836, Cornelius and Sarah Haskins Davy bought this parcel from Jones and Clara Flournoy (who acquired dower rights to this land), along with other lands totaling 101.50 acres for $2,000 (Deed Book D, p. 446). Born in Ireland around 1792,

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[12] *Political History of Jackson County*, 14.
[13] Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 78, 79.
[14] "Independence as It Was in 1838," *Jackson Examiner*, 3 & 10 July 1903.
[15] John A. Sea, Examiner of Land Titles, No. 03287, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition, Independence, Missouri, Mary Ethel Noland Papers, Harry S. Truman Library.
[16] Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 152, 276; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 297, 298; Foerster, *Independence, Mo.*, 22.

Cornelius Davy and his wife came from Kentucky to Independence around 1835, when Davy was in his mid-forties. (A son, Thomas, had been born in Kentucky in 1834, according to the 1850 census of Jackson County.) Davy became a prosperous merchant in Independence.[17] It is likely that both Flournoy and Davy may have used most of the land on and around the Noland house site for agricultural purposes, reserving only a small parcel of the total for any structures.

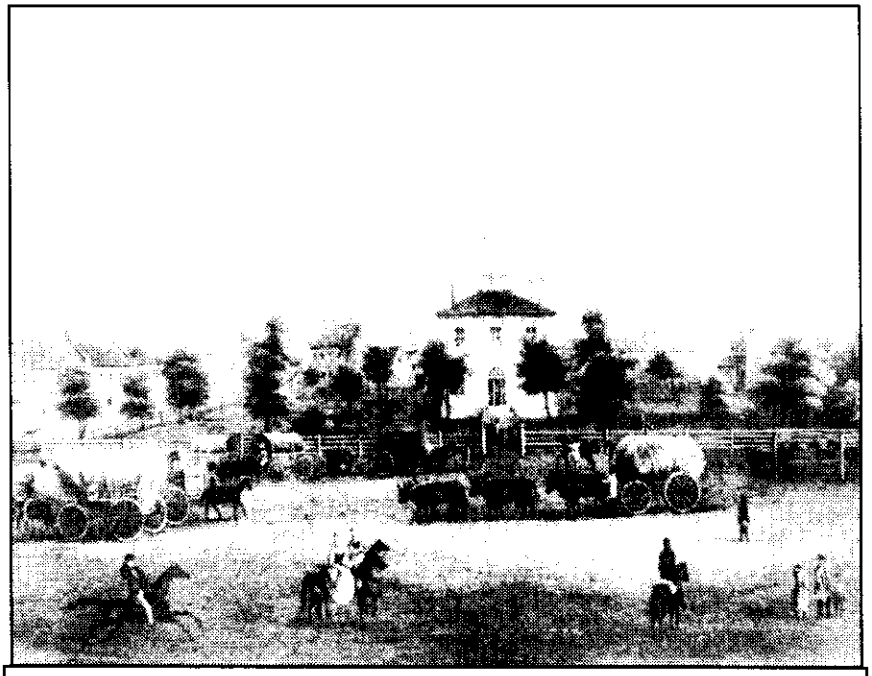
In 1839, following the Panic of 1837 and subsequent national depression, James F. Moore bought eighty-six acres, along with other lands, from Cornelius and Sarah Davy for $5,000 (Deed Book F, p. 464). (The Flournoys sold seven acres of the original ninety-three to Azariah Holcomb.) James F. and Sarah Moore and their family may have occupied a house within the city limits of Independence at that time (and not in Moore's Addition). Less than one year later, Moore, who was then living near Shelbyville in Shelby County, Kentucky, gave Independence attorney Benjamin F. Hickman a power of attorney to sell part or all of the 135 acres of land that Moore owned in Jackson County, a house and lot located within the Independence city limits, and land in adjoining Platte County (Deed Book G, p. 573 and Deed Book L, p. 422). Hickman was unsuccessful in selling Moore's land, and it remained in the Moores' hands for the next six years.[18]

Independence—Marketing Mecca, 1840-1855

By the late 1830s, Independence had all the trading business that it could handle. This was true despite some competition for business from merchants in the small settlement of Westport, founded directly west of the county seat near Missouri-Kansas border. Here settlers had begun to develop a lucrative trading business with Indians on the nearby reservation. Both West Independence and Westport, with its stable rock landing on the Missouri north of town, benefited from Missouri River steamboat travel that became progressively more abundant, faster, and cheaper. Travel upriver between St. Louis and western Missouri landings in the 1840s only took three and one-half days (instead of two to three weeks by land) and cost only $4.00 for passage on the deck. Growing volumes of wagons and goods arrived in the courthouse square from the river landings in April and May each year. In 1841, sixty wagons loaded with 150,000 pounds of goods for trading with Mexico departed from

[17] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition; Poppino, comp., "Jackson County, Missouri, Census of 1850."
[18] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.

Independence. Two years later, 230 wagons carried 450,000 pounds of supplies of town. Business boomed.[19]



Emigrants preparing for their overland trek to the Oregon Territory gathered in Independence Courthouse Square in early summer of 1846.
Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society.

From 1840 to the early 1850s, Independence became a great crossroads of travel and trade—a regional hub of marketing. A great stream of travelers converged on the town by the thousands: trappers, Santa Fe Trail traders, missionaries to the Far West, immigrants on their way to the Oregon country beginning in 1843, volunteers and soldiers from Fort Leavenworth on their way to the Mexican War in 1846-1847, and gold-seekers lured to California by the discovery of gold there in 1849. Supplies poured in from the East by way of St. Louis for sale by Independence merchants. Blacksmithing and the manufacture of wagons also became large businesses in the town. An enormous volume of humanity poured out of this outpost, heading southwest and west. Every spring, a sea of tents encircled the Independence Courthouse Square.[20]

[19] Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 80; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 115.
[20] O'Brien, *Independence Square* (page 2); Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 15; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 646; Nagel, *Missouri*, 60-63.

Francis Parkman, noted chronicler of the West, described an industrious colorful scene during his visit to Independence in the spring of 1846:

> The Town was crowded. A multitude of shops had sprung up to furnish the [Oregon] emigrants and Santa Fe traders with necessities for their journey; and there was an incessant hammering and banging from a dozen blacksmiths' sheds, where the heavy wagons were being repaired, and the horses and oxen shod. The streets were thronged with men, horses and mules.[21]

Writing nearly one hundred years later about the western frontier on the eve of the Mexican War, historian Bernard DeVoto painted the most vivid picture of Independence in the spring of 1846:

> [Independence] was still Eden but with metropolitan additions, and the flood poured through it. All conditions of mankind were there, in all costumes: Shawnee and Kansa from the Territory and wanderers of other tribes, blanketed, painted, wearing their Presidential medals; Mexicans in bells, slashed pantaloons, and primary colors, speaking a strange tongue and smoking shuck-rolled cigarettes; mountain men in buckskins preparing for the summer trade or offering their services to the emigrant trains; the case-hardened bullwhackers of the Santa Fe trail in boots and bowie knives, coming in after wintering at the other end or from Fort Leavenworth, miscellany of transients whose only motive was to see the elephant wherever the elephant might be. Freight poured in from the steamboat landings, the great wagons careened through the streets, day by day the freshet of movers came in from the east, the lowing of herds pullulated over the town, the smithies and wagon shops rang with iron, whooping riders galloped their ponies through the mud, the groggeries were on long aria, and out from the town little clusters of tents grew and grew.[22]

In the spring of 1846, a dozen blacksmith shops, one operated by African American Hiram Young, who had bought his freedom, encircled the courthouse square.[23] Blacksmiths worked at their forges fourteen hours a day trying to satisfy the impatient

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[21] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 16.
[22] Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision, 1846* (Boston, Mass.: Brown and Company, 1943), 138.
[23] Martha B. Ingram, "Hiram Young: City's First Black 'Smith'," *Independence Examiner*, 22 February 1979, 2D.

demands of emigrants preparing for their overland treks. Thousands of cattle grazed around town and plodded down the main streets in town, prodded by men and dogs. Every night more than 400 guests, sleeping two to a bed, crowded into Smallwood Noland's new Merchant's Hotel, built on the site of a previous hotel and tavern that had been destroyed by fire in 1845. By late May 1846, all the grass and edible vegetation for miles around, except on the fenced courthouse square, had been eaten or pulverized by the sharp hooves of wandering livestock. By 1848, most of the twelve thousand overland settlers residing in Oregon had made their way through Independence.[24]

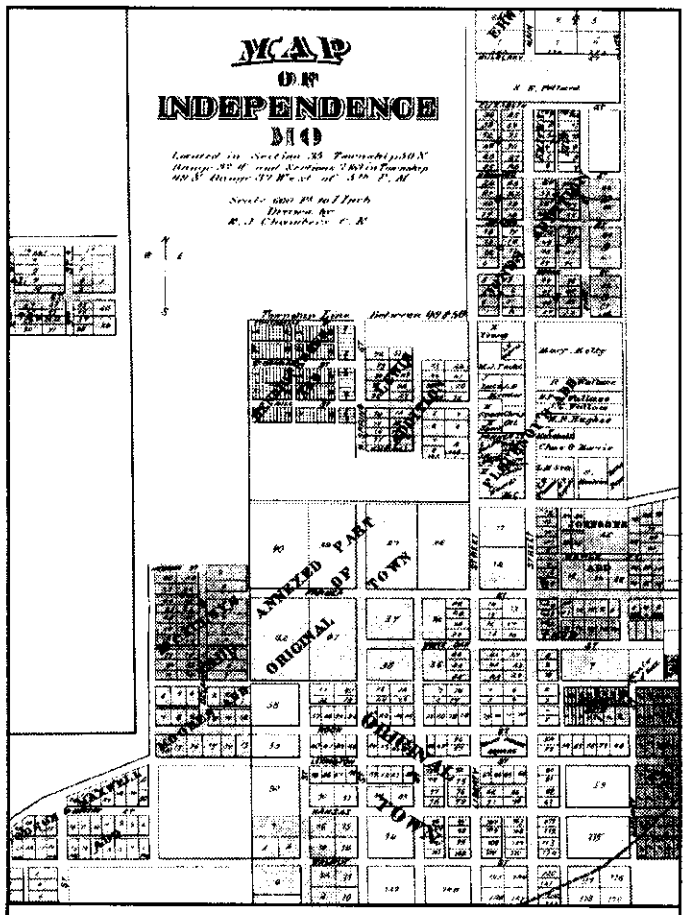
Evidence of Independence's vitality and growth as a trading center and government seat were everywhere to be found in the 1840s and early 1850s. In 1845, the U.S. government established a port of customs in Independence. Independence saw the founding of its first flourmill in 1846. In the spirit of enterprise and ambition to unite Independence square with the Wayne City Landing directly north on the Missouri, businessmen laid three miles of track between the two points and began operating a mule-drawn railway in 1849. Also in 1849, Independence became an incorporated city, adopting its own charter and electing its first mayor, early settler and leading merchant William McCoy. In 1850, four Independence men were awarded a contract for the first regular U.S. mail service to Santa Fe and Salt Lake City; the first mail left Independence in July that year.[25] By this time, Independence boasted a population of over 1,000. As the population increased, new dwellings, both log and clapboard structures, were built on previously undivided and undeveloped land. In 1846, James and Sarah Moore platted the second addition to Independence, (following the Hansbrough Addition in 1845), located just four blocks west of the Independence Courthouse Square. Between 1845 and 1853, a total of ten additions to the original town were platted .[26]

Moore's Addition (Future Noland Property) Platted and Lots Sold

Independence's vigorous commercial activity in the 1840s must have encouraged James F. and Sarah Moore once again to try and sell the land they had owned since 1839 just four blocks west of the Independence Courthouse Square. In 1846, the Moores instructed their attorney, Benjamin Hickman, to have their eighty-five acres surveyed and divided into roughly three blocks with a total of eighteen lots. In the 1846 plat map of

[24] Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 81-82; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 116; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 643-44; Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 18.
[25] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 634-35, 644; 646.
[26] Ibid., 647; O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (pages 2-3).

Moore's Addition, so-called "Tanyard Road" (now Truman Road) formed the northern boundary of the addition. An alley paralleling Tanyard Road bisected the two northernmost blocks. "Rock Street" (later West Maple Avenue), so named for the rock quarry that had existed at its east end and for the road's rock



Moore's Addition, platted in 1846, became the site of the homes occupied by the Noland, Gates, and Wallace families. Reprinted by the Jackson County Historical Society in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Jackson County, Missouri* (1877).

base under dirt/mud,[27] ran east and west through the middle of the addition. Lexington Avenue formed the southern boundary of Moore's Addition. North Delaware Street did not exist in the plat of Moore's Addition. Benjamin F. Hickman filed the plat map and legal description for the Moore's Addition to the City of

[27] Woodruff, "A. My Neighborhood," Woodruff Personal Papers, Independence, Missouri.

Independence in 1847 (Plat Book 1, p. 3). The future Noland house would be built on the southern portion of lots 4 and 5.[28]

Lots in Moore's Addition began to sell soon afterwards. William B. Hay bought nine lots in Moore's Addition in August 1848, including lots 4 and 5 (on which the future Noland house would be built) from Benjamin Hickman, attorney for James F. and Sarah Moore. William Hay paid $800 for all nine lots. Around this time, Hay, a Jackson County resident and merchant, and several others promoted the construction of a railroad to connect overland traffic through Independence with steamboat traffic on the Missouri River at Rickman's Landing. By February 1849, this group of railroad capitalists raised $50,000 for the incorporation of the Independence and Missouri River Railroad Company.[29]

By August 1849, Hay had overextended himself financially and was deeply in debt. He owed several individuals a total of nearly $8,5000. He gave three lawyers (Samuel H. Woodson, William Chrisman, and Abraham Comingo) power of attorney to sell or lease his nine lots in Moore's Addition as a means of raising money to liquidate his debts (Deed Book O, p. 296). Over the next several months, several individuals sued William Hay for his failure to pay off his debts (Deed Book R, p. 17). Liens were filed against five lots in Moore's Addition owned by William Hay (including lots 4 and 5, the Noland house lots). On September 10, 1850, the county sheriff sold all five lots (and other lots owned by Hay) at a public auction on the courthouse steps in order to pay the several plaintiffs who had filed suits against Hay for unpaid debts. By that time, William B. Hay, his wife, Emma, and two sons were living in the home of lawyer Richard Reese, presumably having lost their own home. [30]

Jonathan R. Palmer, the highest bidder in the public auction, paid the Jackson County Sheriff a total of $2,487 for all rights to and interests in several lots in Moore's Addition previously owned by Hay. Palmer paid $120 for lot 4 and $122 for lot 5 (Deed Book R, p. 17). (He paid $120 for lot 2 and $100 for lot 3, the site of the Gates-Wallace-Truman house.) If any improvements existed on these lots at the time, they must have been quite unsubstantial. Palmer, mayor of Independence at that time and a patron of the arts, practiced law in Independence with John Henry Harper.[31] Perhaps never intending to keep these lots, within a month after acquiring them, Palmer sold lots 4 and 5 plus other lots in Moore's Addition, to John B. Slaughter, who

[28] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.
[29] Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 279.
[30] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition; Ron Cockrell, *The Trumans of Independence: Historic Resource Study* (Omaha, Neb.: National Park Service, 1985), 13.
[31] Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 202, 203.

served as Independence mayor in January 1851 (Deed Book P, p. 557).[32] It is very unlikely that Palmer could have made any substantial improvements on lots 4 and 5 during the brief period (less than a month) he owned them. The new owners, John B. and Margretta S. Slaughter, held on to lots 4 and 5 from 1850 to 1857, a time of diminishing growth in Independence and rising tensions in western Missouri and across the United States.

Years of Decline and Turmoil, 1850-1865

Decline of a Trading Mecca, 1850-1861

Several circumstances converged in the late 1840s and early 1850s to bring about Independence's decline as a trading mecca on the western frontier. Flooded river landings, poor roads between Independence and the Missouri River, outbreaks of cholera, and agricultural developments around Independence all combined to end the town's monopoly as a trading center. By the late 1840s, the landing north of Independence at Wayne City had clogged up with sand as a result of repeated spring floods, including the devastating flood of 1844, as well as the continually changing current of the river. Although the landing was opened for steamboats again, a sizeable sand bar formed in front of it in 1856, and no landing less than four or five miles from town could be found.[33] Additionally, the gradual conversion of open prairies between Independence and the western Missouri state border into fenced farmland separated by small crooked roads disheartened westward-bound travelers with cumbersome wagon caravans and ranging livestock that were difficult to contain on narrow roads.[34]

Competition for Santa Fe, Oregon, and California trade from other Missouri River towns, especially Westport, Westport Landing, and Kansas City, began to draw traffic away from Independence as early as the late 1840s. Both villages had good landings for unloading goods from steamboats to be transferred to caravans of wagons. Both were further upstream on the Missouri River, shortening the overland travel of westward-bound traders and emigrants and avoiding passage around a growing number of fenced cultivated farmers' fields west of Independence. Both were west of the exceptionally difficult crossing of the ravine at the Big Blue River, which flowed north into the Missouri River. The infant village of Kansas City, advantageously laid out in 1846 on the Missouri, began to grow in importance as a trading center. In

[32] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.
[33] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 667.
[34] Franzwa, *Oregon Trail Revisited*, 82; O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 2); Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 245, 644.

1852, the mule-driven three-and one-half-mile railroad connecting Independence with the Missouri at Wayne City was abandoned due to financial difficulties, thus making Independence's access to the river more tedious. Not long afterward, a few enterprising Independence businessmen attempted to recapture some of the western trade by building a rock road, the first rock road in Jackson County, between Independence and the landing at Wayne City. Their efforts were to no avail. By the mid-1850s, trade had bled away from Independence and had become firmly rooted in Westport, Westport Landing, and nearby Kansas City. Between 1856 and 1860, during the heyday of steam boating on the Missouri, at least fifty-six steamers laden with passengers and an average of 500 tons of goods each, plied the Missouri River between St. Louis and Kansas City.[35]

Mounting tensions over slavery and, eventually, secessionist sentiments were probably the greatest hindrances to Independence's continued economic growth in the 1850s. In 1821, Missouri had been admitted to the Union as a slaveholding state. In the 1840s, Missouri's economy and population began to boom. The state's population increased from 385,000 in 1840 to 680,000 in 1850. By 1850, its slave population had reached 87,000; it would climb to 115,000 by 1860. The production of tobacco and hemp on plantations in many western Missouri counties rose swiftly during these years, with the labor of thousands of slaves contributing immensely to farmers' prosperity. This situation led many people, especially speculators and would-be settlers, to demand that lands west of the Missouri River in Kansas Territory (reserved for Indians many years earlier) be opened for settlement and farming. After a bitter debate, the U.S. Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which allowed residents of Kansas Territory to decide for themselves whether Kansas would be a slave or free state.

A bloody feud soon began along the western border of Jackson County and the eastern border of Kansas. Many of the residents of western Missouri were determined to make Kansas a slave state in order to discourage Missouri slaves from running across the border to gain their freedom. Independence was decidedly southern in its economic outlook and sympathies. Border war erupted in 1855 when ardent abolitionist John Brown followed five of his sons to Kansas with a wagon full of guns, ammunition, and sabres and ruthlessly attacked Lawrence. Several months later, when the Brown band attacked a proslavery settlement on Pottawatomie Creek and brutally murdered their

[35]Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 18-19; Hickman, *History of Jackson County*, 118, 199-200.

victims, the Westport, Missouri, *Border Times* newspaper proclaimed "WAR! WAR!" on its front page.[36]

Soon a pro-slavery Missouri militia bearing guns patrolled all roads to Kansas, stopped riverboats, seized weapons, and subjected travelers to frightening interrogations. Other incidents along the border, such as the "Wakarusa War" and the Osawatomie Massacre, destroyed economic harmony in western Missouri, particularly Independence. Many families (that of Anderson Shipp and Mary Jane Truman included) decided to leave Independence and Jackson County during these troubled times. Building activity dropped precipitously after the mid-1850s. The violence of "Bleeding Kansas" contributed to the rapid decline of Independence's economic vitality and building activity as a trading crossroads and became one of numerous episodes leading to a civil war between the North and South. By the time President Abraham Lincoln declared war against the southern Confederacy in April 1861, opening the Civil War, Independence and the Missouri-Kansas border had been experiencing violence, terrorism, and bloodshed for nearly six years.[37]

Civil War Turmoil, 1861-1865

Independence and Jackson County experienced the Civil War in its most violent and tragic manifestations. Although inherently pro-southern, the town's residents tried to strike a middle ground between pro-Union and pro-Secessionist sentiments on the eve of the nation's Civil War. Consequently, the county seat soon found itself the target of attacks by both the pro-Union Kansas Jayhawkers under "Grim Chieftain" James Lane and the pro-Confederate band of guerrillas led by William Clarke Quantrill. Both groups committed unspeakable acts of brutality throughout Jackson County.

In addition, Independence became the scene of two major Civil War conflicts between Union and Confederate soldiers. Residents of the county were subjected to the infamous Order Number 11 as well. In June 1862, Independence became a federal military post. Two months later, the united Confederate forces of Quantrill, Colonel John T. Hughes, and Colonel Upton Hays attacked the garrisoned Union post in Independence and seized its stores of arms and ammunition. The town reeled from the chaos and destruction that resulted.

In October that same year, Independence became the scene of a second Civil War battle. Late in the month, Confederate General Sterling Price, leading 30,000 troops on a northern war march from Arkansas to Kansas City, arrived in Independence not long after many residents had evacuated. For

[36] Kelley, *Shaping of the American Past*, 303.
[37] O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 2); Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 19.

two days, fighting between Union and Confederate troops took place around the town. After the fall of Independence to the Confederates, Price and his army pressed on to Kansas City.[38]

In 1863, Brigadier General Thomas Ewing issued the infamous Order Number 11 from the District of the Border headquarters in Kansas City. Its impact on the general citizenry of Jackson County was profound and long lasting. This order demanded that all residents of Jackson, Cass, Bates, and part of Vernon counties living outside Independence (and outside a few small towns) leave their homes within fifteen days unless they could demonstrate their loyalty to the Union. Additionally, Order Number 11 notified all rural residents in these counties that if they did not remove all grain and hay from their fields, it would be destroyed. Many rural residents fled from Jackson County. Federal troops often burned abandoned homes and crops. Many homes in Independence were also burned or severely damaged. In a letter written in December 1863 describing conditions in Independence, William Bone described one house occupied by an "old man who cut up some 10 to 15 hogs in the parlor room. A number of good business houses on the square are now occupied as horse stables by the Kansas 11th."[39] By the end of 1863, the courthouse square became a crowded refugee camp of displaced rural Jackson County residents.[40]

At one time during the Civil War, probably in 1862, a group of women took possession of the old brick Methodist-Episcopal Church south of the alley bordering the future Noland house property, which faced North Delaware Street. According to the *Jackson Examiner*, which reported the incident many years later after the new Watson Memorial Methodist-Episcopal Church had been built (in 1903), "a number of the women of the church went to the church and remained there night and day, and dared the soldiers to take them out by force. Thus they held the property. Mrs. [Virginia Willock] Wallace was one of these."[41] The neighborhood of the future Noland house unquestionably experienced the turmoil of the Civil War in a direct and personal way.

For years after the surrender of the Confederate Army in April 1865, Independence and Jackson County residents suffered from divisiveness caused by the physical upheaval and emotional scars of the war. Civil troubles and bloodshed continued in Independence and Jackson County when the so-called "Home Guard," an armed guerrilla group, formed for the alleged purpose

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[38] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 292-93; Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20.
[39] Quoted in O'Brien, *Independence Square* (page 2).
[40] Ibid., (page 2); Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 19; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 45-46.
[41] "Death From a Fall," *Jackson Examiner*, 29 May 1908.

of self-protection. Peace did not arrive in Independence until August 11, 1866, when the guerrilla troops laid down their arms. In addition, the "Iron-Clad Oath" was imposed on Independence residents. The oath required that all voting citizens disclose their activities during the Civil War before the county registrar. Such disclosures, especially if disputed, often pitted neighbors and friends against each other and created acrimonious feelings that lasted for years. [42]

Independence turned inward and began to focus more on its cultural and social institutions, including churches and fraternal organizations. By 1867, Independence residents could choose between several different churches—the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist-Episcopal, Christian, and Roman Catholic. In 1861, a Baptist Church and, in 1866, a Methodist-Episcopal Church were organized expressly for the African American community in town. In 1867, a few members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints returned to Independence after being driven out almost thirty-five years earlier. By the early 1870s, at least five fraternal organizations—two Masonic lodges (AF & AM), two Odd Fellows (IOOF) lodges, and one Knights of Pythias—gave men the opportunity to socialize and undertake charitable pursuits.[43]

Independence's protracted inner turmoil after the Civil War allowed Westport Landing and Kansas City to usurp political and economic leadership from the county seat. Pro-Union merchants located at Westport Landing, twelve miles west of Independence and near the Kansas City townsite, took charge of the county records during the war. In 1869, the town also became the site of the first railroad bridge across the Missouri River in the area. Two years earlier, in 1867, the last overland wagon train outfitted for the West left Independence for Fort Leavenworth and beyond. More than eighty years later, long-time Independence resident Samuel Woodson recalled watching the last freight caravan prepare to leave town: "The prairie schooners were loaded on the west side of the square," ninety-one year-old Woodson fondly reminisced. "Each one was pulled by four or six mules. . . . The wagon boss [rode] up and down among the wagons, as the supplies were loaded."[44] Kansas City soon afterward became the undisputed center of commerce and a center of county government activity.[45]

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[42] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 295; Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20.
[43] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20-21, 55; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 651-59, 662-63.
[44] "Samuel Woodson Remembers When Last Wagon Freight Started West," *Independence Examiner*, 2 October 1948; Hickman, *Jackson County History*, 125.
[45] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 20, O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 2).

Building developments in Independence reflected the years of economic decline and civil turmoil. By the mid-1850s, new construction had slowed considerably. It nearly halted between 1859 and 1865. Only six new additions were platted between 1853 and 1867. Although four additions were platted in 1858, probably due to the real estate speculation that accompanied the construction of a macadam rock road between Independence and the Wayne City landing, the suggestion of building developments is probably artificial and did not materialize. No additions were platted between 1859 and 1867.[46] Many existing buildings received extensive damage during the Civil War. Repair, reconstruction, and new construction became immediate tasks of building contractors once the war ended and even before civil order and peace returned to the town. The return of political stability and social unrest, even though tenuous, must have slowly encouraged some new construction within a year or two after the war.

Moore's Addition During Years of Decline and Turmoil

Activity in Moore's Addition reflected general economic and political conditions in Independence between the early 1850s and the end of the Civil War. During the period of gradual economic decline, James B. and Margretta S. Slaughter owned lots 4 and 5 (Noland house site) in Moore's Addition for seven years, from 1850 to 1857. Then, as tensions grew between pro- and anti-slavery factions in western Missouri, the Slaughters sold these lots (plus other lots), in February 1857, for $500, to James T. Thornton and Francis P. Hord (Deed Book Z, p. 527). Before the end of that year, James Thornton, of Turner and Thornton banking house on the courthouse square, bought Hord's interest in only lots 4 and 5, but not the other land, for $300 (Deed Book 26, p. 181). Born in 1835 in Kentucky, Thornton was twenty-three years old at the time. The substantial increase in the value of these two lots in just a few months suggests that Hord and Thornton may have made some improvements to the property (or that they may have speculatively increased the price) in 1857. Whatever improvements existed on lots 4 and 5 in 1857 could have been accessed only from Tanyard (Truman) Road. North Delaware Street did not yet exist in Moore's Addition.[47]

In March 1858, Frederick F. Yeager bought lots 4 and 5 from James T. and Mary H. Thornton for $400 (Deed Book 27, p. 335). In 1858 Delaware Street was extended to Tanyard (Truman)

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[46] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 634-35, 648.

[47] James A. Ryan, "Preliminary Survey Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*, by M. A. Solomon, R. H. Claybaugh, Architects, 1975, Heritage Commission Files, City of Independence, Missouri.

Road in Moore's Addition, separating lots 4 and 5 from lots 2 and 3.[48] The Noland house site was now better situated for further development, since it had access from Delaware Street. Frederick and Susan Yeager retained ownership of lots 4 and 5 for the next seven years of growing tensions and civil strife, until the Civil War ended in 1865.

Frederick Yeager must have made substantial improvements to lots 4 and 5 in Moore's Addition during his ownership, probably near the close of or immediately after the Civil War. The value of the property jumped from $400 to $1,200 between 1858 and May 1865, when the Frederick and Susan Yeager sold these two lots to Charles D. Sayre (Deed Book 42, p. 284). Frederick F. Yeager was born in Boyle County, Kentucky, on April 28, 1828 and received his education in the public schools there. He pursued farming until he was about nineteen years old, when he turned to carpentry and house building. He also studied architecture and became proficient in designing as well as building houses. In 1850, he moved to Independence where, in 1852, he married Susan M. Ray, who had come to Independence from Kentucky at a young age. In 1854, he expanded his carpentry business to include the lumber trade. In 1869, Yeager completed all the carpentry work done in the prominent three-story, brick, Italianate style Chrisman-Sawyer Bank building, constructed at the corner of Liberty and Lexington Avenues on the Independence Courthouse Square at a cost of $14,000. Over the next forty years, Yeager constructed numerous houses and commercial buildings in and around Independence, thus contributing to the physical development of the town. Yeager also contributed to the civic vitality of the town by serving on the Independence City Council[49]

Frederick Yeager may have been the carpenter, who made further changes and improvements to lots 4 and 5 in Moore's Addition after selling this property to Charles D. and Eliza Sayre in May 1865. In August of that year, Sayre borrowed $800 against lots 4 and 5, perhaps to make improvements on the property (Deed Book 43, p. 376).[50] Between May and December, when the Sayre couple sold this property to Anthony T. Slack, these two lots again jumped in value from $1,200 to $3,500 (Deed Book 47, p. 277).[51]

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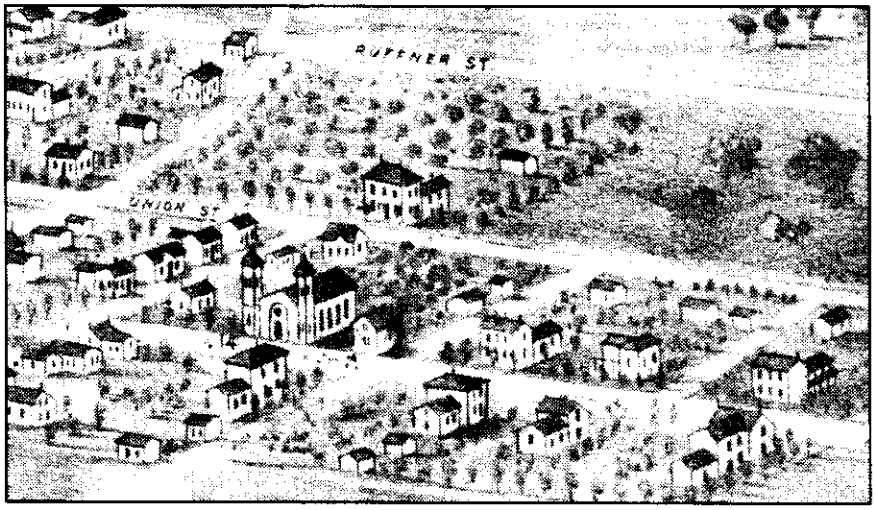
[48] The name Yeager is sometimes spelled "Yager." John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition. Also see Cockrell, *Trumans of Independence*, 15.
[49] *History of Jackson County*, 645-46, 883-84; Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 469.
[50] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.
[51] Ibid.

Although substantial improvements must have been made during 1865 to lots 4 and 5, it is difficult to determine exactly what improvements were made and where they were made on the lots, which together measured approximately 160 x 220 feet. An 1868 bird's-eye-view map of Independence provides a clue about the location and appearance of the structure on this property that may have been built or added to three years earlier.[52]



This enlargement of a section of the 1868 bird's-eye view of Independence shows a dwelling just to the right of the twin-towered Methodist-Episcopal Church, built around 1868 in the middle of the block on property adjoining the future Noland house. A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri* (1868), reprinted by the Jackson County Historical Society.

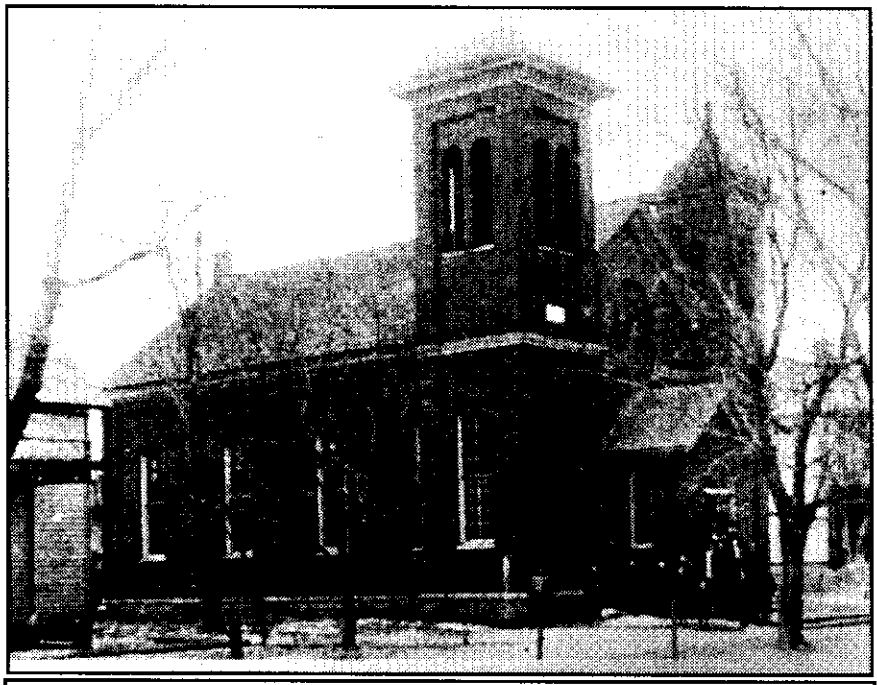
[52] Although the accuracy of this map has been questioned, it appears to be a reliable source of information about Independence in 1868. Other known design features and locations of structures that existed in 1868 are correctly depicted in this "Bird's Eye View." This map, for example, shows the distinctive twin-towered Methodist-Episcopal Church in the middle of the block just south of the Noland house site. Probably completed just before or as this map was being drawn, the church did stand near the middle of this block, facing North Delaware Street (although it was probably best accessed from Rock Street, later West Maple Avenue). This church stood near the middle of the block until 1902-03, when the Watson Memorial Methodist Church was constructed further south on the block at the corner of North Delaware Street and West Maple Street. The 1868 "Bird's Eye View of Independence" also shows the correct number of windows on the north and east walls of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, as well as the nearby Georgian style David Porter family house built in 1860 and still standing in 2000 on West Maple Street. A. Ruger, *Bird's Eye View of the City of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri*, 1868, reprint (Independence, Mo.: Jackson County Historical Society, n.d).

This angled view of the city, looking from east to west, shows a two-story, gable-roof house, with narrow paired windows on both the first and second floors of the east gable end facing Delaware Street. The house resembles the present front portion of the Noland house, without its wrap-around front porch and rear (west) one-story extension. The house depicted on the map, however, is not in the exact location of the present Noland house; the map shows the house standing near the corner of Delaware and present-day Truman Road and not at its present location about seventy-five feet south of the corner.[53]

Slack Family and Cyclical Growth in Independence, 1865-1890

Slack Family on Lots 4 and 5 (Future Noland House), 1865-1885

Anthony Slack and his family arrived in Independence from Indiana immediately after the Civil War and took up residence on the future Noland house property. They witnessed



A portion of the wrap-around front porch and the south side of the future Noland house can be seen just north of the twin-towered Methodist-Episcopal Church in this turn-of-the-century photograph. Courtesy of the Jackson County Historical Society, taken from *An Illustrated Description of Independence, Missouri* (1902).

[53] Sue Gentry, Mary Sue Luff, and Martha Milton, editors, *A Pictorial History of Independence, Missouri* (Marceline, Mo.: Heritage House Publishing, 1992), 24.

the gradual return of tranquility to Independence in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Anthony Slack also contributed to emergence of Independence as a vital agricultural marketplace in the 1880s.

Anthony T. Slack and his small family arrived in Independence in 1865, perhaps only a few weeks before buying the house on lots 4 and 5 in December of that year, just as winter arrived. For the next twenty years, the Slack family occupied this house (the Noland house). Anthony Torbert Slack was born on April 23, 1833 in Newton, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, about twenty-five miles from Philadelphia. At age four, he moved with his parents to Muncie, Indiana, where he received his education. He spent his youth on a farm and continued his involvement in agricultural pursuits until 1861. Slack also embarked on a business career in Muncie and Indianapolis. Slack married Josephine Harlan in Indianapolis. Two children were born to this marriage; one child died in infancy. During the Civil War, Anthony Slack served in the commissary department of the Forty-Seventh Indiana Volunteers under his brother, General James R. Slack, of Huntington, Indiana.[54]

Not long after the Slacks moved into the future Noland house in winter of 1865-1866, Josephine Slack died, leaving Anthony with one child, Harry S. Slack. On January 16, 1868, Slack, then thirty-five years old, married twenty-three year-old Maria Moore, who had been born in February 1844. (Maria Moore was reportedly the daughter of James F. Moore, who platted Moore's Addition.[55] It is uncertain whether Anthony and Maria Slack raised Harry S. Slack or he went somewhere else to live. Seven children were born to Anthony and Maria Slack between 1868 and 1885. They included Arthur T., born October 10, 1868 (who died in infancy); Edwin Moore, born April 7, 1871; James H., born September 7, 1872; Lulu (Brown), born August 12, 1872; Anthony Torbert, born July 20, 1880; Paul R., born April 21, 1883; and Josephine Hervey (never married), born October 11, 1885.[56]

The Slacks' expanding family, as well as Anthony Slack's growing financial prosperity certainly must have influenced building developments on the Slack property on North Delaware. In August 1870, eight months before the birth of the Slacks'

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[54] "Death of A. T. Slack," *Independence Examiner*, 19 February 1915 (typed obituary), Heritage Commission Files for 216 North Delaware Street, City of Independence; *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 880.
[55] Ardis Haukenberry, granddaughter of Joseph and Ella Noland, reported that Maria Moore's father built the Noland house for his daughter when she married. Haukenberry to James A. Ryan , c. 1975, 216 North Delaware Street, Heritage Commission Files, City of Independence.
[56] "Maria Moore," in RootsWeb's WorldConnect Project (genealogy project) at: http://worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.com.

second child, Anthony Slack borrowed $1,000; the Slack property served as collateral for this loan (Deed Book 75, p. 457)[57]. It is possible that part or all of the $1,000 was used for an improvement, such as an addition, to the Slack (Noland) house to accommodate the expanding of the family. In April 1871, Edwin Moore Slack was born in the Slack (Noland) house at 216 North Delaware, according to Ardis Haukenberry, who reported a conversation with Virginia Lee Slack, the daughter of Edwin Slack.[58]

Anthony Slack may also have used all or part of the $1,000 he borrowed for his business. Slack operated a hardware store in Independence for the ten years from 1866 and 1876. In the early 1870s, Independence still suffered from the growing economic vitality of its western neighbor, Kansas City. A newspaper correspondent for the St. Louis *Republican* described lackluster conditions he found in Independence in 1871:

> The trade of [Independence's] palmy days has all departed and gone to more western towns, and Independence is left alone 'under the shadow of Kansas City,' with only her local trade. No more are the streets thronged with dusky Indians and swarthy Mexicans, as was the case twenty years ago, and the sight of an ox or mule tea, or prairie schooner . . . would be a strange sight there to-day. Thus from a once busy, bustling frontier town it has settled down into a quiet pleasant place, with a refined and hospitable society and considerable wealth, the proceeds of business in its early days. . . . This is what might be termed an orchard town, beautifully located, and where the dwelling houses are so hidden by foliage and large clumps of forest trees, which have been left standing, that one could scarcely believe at a glance down the green avenues that the place was inhabited . . . how prettily [the houses] look with their neat porches covered with roses and honeysuckle and all manner of sweet climbing shrubs and flowers.[59]

Despite the romantic appeal of this idyllic scene, the newspaper correspondent was quick to note that Independence had lost it energy and its optimism. The streets were now dull and quiet. The correspondent reported that many merchants believed that they "had no chance" under the cloud of booming Kansas City. The construction of a new two-story brick

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[57] John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.
[58] Ryan, "Preliminary Survey Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*.
[59] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 666-67.

courthouse on the square in 1872 seemed to bring no instant relief from the feeling that Independence had a doomed gloomy economic future.[60] Anthony Slack may have shared this view. His hardware business may have needed a financial boost as well, in an effort to bring farmers and building contractors into his store.

For unknown reasons, Anthony Slack closed his hardware store and, in 1876, opened a grocery business. His success in this venture seems to have coincided with Independence's emergence as a vital agricultural marketplace for surrounding Jackson County farmers. By the early 1880s, Slack's business occupied a substantial stone building measuring 23 x 83 feet on the south side of the courthouse square (on West Lexington Avenue.) Slack's inventory at that time included "a large stock of crockery, glassware, queensware and a full line of staple and fancy groceries." Slack reportedly enjoyed a "large patronage," and he actively "worked for the interests of his many patrons."[61]

Beginning in the early 1880s, the Slack family witnessed a great surge in the optimism, growth, and development in Independence, based largely on schemes to develop transportation links between Independence and rapidly growing Kansas City. In 1881 a few prominent Independence citizens proposed building a seven- and-one-half-mile grand drive between the western edge of Independence and the eastern suburbs of Kansas City. Subscriptions totaling $15,000 had already been raised by the end of that year. "This enterprise," the author of an 1881 history of Jackson County believed, "when completed, will . . . rapidly enhance the value of real estate."[62] The author went on to affirm that "the most attractive building spots to be found anywhere upon this continent" were along the side of the proposed boulevard, three miles west of Independence.[63] Four years passed before businessmen realized their ambitious plans. In the fall of 1885, the grand boulevard opened.[64]

Anthony Slack, like many Independence merchants, profited greatly from the city's growth and prosperity in the 1880s. "The merchants do a thriving business, supplying the wants of a large farming area," boasted the *Sentinel* newspaper in early 1886. Independence is "a great distribution point for agricultural machinery and implements of all kinds and for buggies and wagons of every make," the newspaper continued. "The buildings of the city, especially the business blocks, are, as a rule, very handsome. . . . There are also many fine and even

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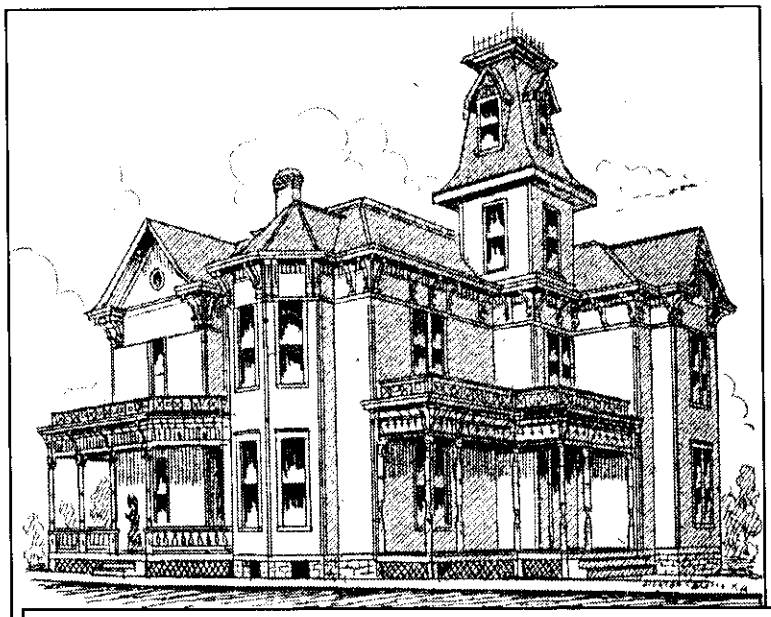
[60]Ibid., 666, 639.
[61] Ibid., 880; *Independence City Directory* (Kansas City, Mo.: R. S. Dillon & Co., 1888-89).
[62] *History of Jackson County*, 1881, reprint, 647.
[63] Ibid., 648.
[64] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 54.

elegant private residences, showing wealth and refinement. In fact, Independence is noted for the culture within her borders."[65] Summing up all of the city's advantages for Independence residents and prospective newcomers, the *Sentinel*, proclaimed:

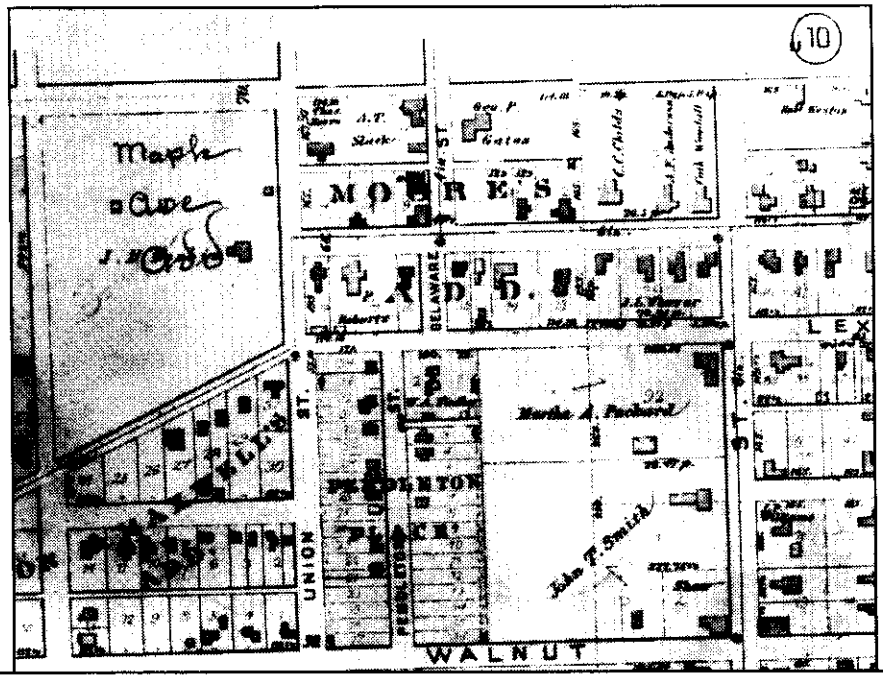
> Independence is by no means the center of the world, but it is the foundation of one of the prettiest, pleasantest, healthiest cities in the world. Good people, good houses, good streets, good schools, good colleges, good water, good climate, good atmosphere, good light, good railroad facilities; and a magnificent country, free from malaria, and abounding in fat chickens and fresh eggs; Jersey cattle and sweet butter; Short-horn, Hereford, Devon, Aberdeen-angus cattle and good beef, and a thousand other good things, are some of the inducements for good people to come here and make this their home.[66]

Anthony Slack's business and financial health must have benefited from the surging growth of Independence as an agricultural center and Kansas City suburb during this period. In 1885, Slack hired building contractor James M. Adams to construct a palatial two-and one-half-story, ten-room Queen Anne style mansion just north of the Slack (Noland) house, at the corner of North Delaware and Rock (Truman) Road. The new Slack house cost $7,000. Only one other new house built in Independence in 1885 cost more—the fourteen-room home of George P. Gates, constructed for $8,000.[67] An illustration of the new Slack house was prominently displayed in the January 2, 1886 issue of the *Independence Sentinel*, which summarized the past year's building developments. The Slack couple and their five children, then ranging in age from five to fourteen, had probably already moved into their spacious new house at 220 North Delaware Street by the time the Slacks' last child, Josephine, was born in October 1885.

[65] "Our Beautiful City," *Sentinel*, 2 January 1886, 8, Jackson County Historical Society.
[66] Untitled, *Sentinel*, 2 January 1886, 11.
[67] "The Building Boom," *Sentinel*, 2 January 1886, 4. The majority of houses built in 1885 ranged in price from $1,500 to $3,000.



The Slack family moved from the future Noland house in 1885 upon the completion of their palatial new residence just to the north of their old home at 216 North Delaware Street. From the *Independence Sentinel*, January 2, 1886.



The outline of the new large Slack family house and the future Noland house are clearly visible just to the right of the words, "A. T. Slack," at the center top of this 1886 map of Independence. From *Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri* (1886).

Slack Family Ages, 1885-early 1920s

An 1886 map of Independence shows the outline of the new and the old Slack houses. Although not very accurate in its details, this map presented the old Slack (Noland) house as a small rectangular form with little setback from North Delaware Street. The building had neither a rear (west side) one-story extension nor a slightly projecting southern portion (to which the wrap-around front and side porch was later attached).[68] It has been speculated that not long after the Slack family moved into their palatial new house, Anthony Slack made improvements to the family's old house in preparation for renting it out.[69] Slack may have had the exterior of the old house "modernized" by adding decorative shingles and spindle work in the gable ends, design features characteristic of the Queen Anne style, which was popular at that time and would not have been in vogue in 1870 when Slack borrowed $1,000, possibly for earlier improvements. The slightly projecting southern wall and the wrap-around front porch, supported by turned posts and decorated with spindle-work details under the eaves that replicate those decorative details on the new Slack house, may have been added around 1887.

Ethel and Nellie (seated) in the Noland house yard, with turned balusters on the wrap-around front porch barely visible behind them.
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library.

[68] *Atlas of the Environs of Kansas City in Jackson County, Missouri* (Philadelphia, Penn.: G. M. Hopkins, 1886.)
[69] Ryan, "Preliminary Survey Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey.*

Rear alterations (or an addition) may have also been made around that time. Slack may have used some of the same materials and even the same building contractor that he had used on his new house to repair and update the old Slack (Noland) house. The house probably took on its present overall form and exterior appearance (except for the small two-story addition on the south wall) around 1887, when it received the last of a series of modifications.

In 1887, Independence's building boom intensified with the proposed construction of two railroads. The Citizens Street Railway, started in June 1887, ran from south to north between old South Liberty depot and the College Street, then east to Noland Road. (In March 1888, a steam motor replaced mules to power this railway.) Also in 1887, entrepreneur Willard E. Winner completed his Kansas City, Independence, and Park Railway, known as the "Dummy Line," for commuters and shoppers. The company ended its run at the company's ticket office on West Lexington (not far from the real estate office of Joseph Noland) and never used the tracks constructed along South Noland Road. However, more than anything else, Winner's railroad doubled and tripled land values and initiated a building boom in both Independence and Kansas City, especially along present-day Independence Avenue, Highway 24, and Winner Road, where lots were accessible to both Independence and Kansas City.[70]

In both Independence and Kansas City, real estate values soared. In 1885, land in Independence valued at a total of $1,000,200 changed hands; in 1887 the total valued of real estate transferred was $18,200,000. By 1887, over fifty Independence real estate agents (including Joseph Noland) experienced the doubling of land values; one agent reported selling $526,826 worth of real estate in 1887. Building contractors constructed 200 homes in Independence that year.[71] In Kansas City the enormous real estate activity was no less spectacular. At the close of 1887, the *Kansas City Times* reported that: "the amount of transfers recorded was far beyond the expectation of the most sanguine, reaching $18,000,000, or six times that of the preceding year."[72] In addition to railroad construction and the boom in real estate activity, the commercial buildings on the Independence Courthouse Square became the home of agricultural firms like Gudgell and Simpson, which became a national leader in the Hereford breeding industry.[73] Everyone's

[70] Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 54; Pearly Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 470-73.
[71] Wilcox, *Jackson County Pioneers*, 469-70.
[72] Quoted in Foerster, *Independence, Missouri*, 54.
[73] O'Brien, *Independence Square*, (page 3).

image of a fast-growing city contributed to the great boom in the mid-1880s, a boom unequaled in the city's history. By the end of the decade, many considered Independence a "Royal Suburb" whose interests "must hereafter be identical with that of Kansas City."[74]

Sometime around 1887, the Slacks began renting out their old family house (the future Noland house). Located near both the Methodist-Episcopal Church and the Baptist Church, the old Slack house made an ideal parsonage. Baptist Church pastor, Reverend J. S. Connor, is listed as the occupant of the old Slack house in the 1888-1889 Independence city directory.[75] Other ministers may also have rented the old Slack (Noland) house between 1889 and the late 1890s. A family named Taliferro (or Taliaferro) reportedly occupied the old Slack house up until 1900.[76]

In August 1900, Joseph and Ella Noland began renting the house and moved in with two of their three children, Nellie and Ethel Noland. In 1904, their eldest, soon-to-be widowed daughter Ruth Ragland and her family moved into the Noland house. Eight Noland family members occupied the house between 1904 and around 1921. (See next chapter for more details.)

The Slack family continued to own the Noland house until 1908 and occupied their spacious home next door at 220 North Delaware Street until 1924. Anthony Slack retired from his business in 1893 at age sixty, when Independence was in the grips of a national depression. For the next twenty years, he was able to spend more time with his family of six children. By the early 1900s, some of his children who had married and begun families brought their children to visit their grandparents. Lulu Slack, who had married Dr. Columbus Brown in 1902 and moved to Herrin, in southern Illinois in 1906, came with her four children (born between 1903 and 1908) nearly every summer to visit her parents.[77] Edwin Moore Slack, who married Eva Lee Masters in 1904 and lived nearby in Kansas City, also came with their daughter (Virginia Lee Slack, born in 1911) to visit the aging Slack couple. The Slack grandchildren made good playmates for the three young Ragland children living next door in the Noland house. [78]

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[74] *Independence City Directory*, 1888-89), unnumbered pages describing Independence.
[75] Ryan, "Preliminary Research Form" for 216 North Delaware Street, in *Independence Historical Survey*.
[76] James A. Ryan, "Conversation with Ardis Haukenberry," March 24, 1976, Heritage Commission Files, City of Independence, Missouri.
[77] "Wife of Dr. Brown Dies," *Herrin Spokesman*, 26(?) May 1953.
[78] Ardis Haukenberry, "Childhood Memories of North Delaware Street"; *Independence Examiner*, 26 February 1912.

By 1905, it seems that Anthony Slack, then seventy-two and retired for twelve years, began struggling to pay taxes on the Noland house property. In July 1905, he borrowed $700 and used the Noland property as collateral (Deed Book 260, p. 123). No known improvements were made to the house at that time. One year later, in October 1906, Slack borrowed $1,500 and, again, used the Noland property as collateral (Deed Book 253, p. 414). No known substantial improvements were made to the house in 1906-1907. It seems probable that Slack used the borrowed money to pay for taxes owed on the property. When Anthony Slack sold his old house to Joseph Noland in July 1908 for $2,300, Slack owed state, county, and city taxes and a special street paving tax on the Noland property, due in 1907, totaling $718.[79] Seven years later, in 1915, Anthony T. Slack died at age eighty-two.

Maria Moore Slack continued to live in the large Slack home for another nine years. Then, in March 1924, the *Independence Examiner* announced that Mrs. Slack then in her late seventies, sold her house on North Delaware to Roy Johnson. According to the newspaper article, Johnson planned to move the house toward the west end of the Slack property and convert it into an apartment house. He also planned to build three small houses on the Slack house site facing North Delaware.[80] For an unknown reason, Johnson never moved the enormous Slack house, but demolished it instead.[81] Before the end of 1924, Johnson built three small closely spaced bungalow houses on North Delaware Street, just north of the Noland house property. He also erected in 1924 a three-story brick apartment building, clearly visible in historic photos taken in the Noland's rear yard. All four buildings are standing in 2000.

Before witnessing the demise of the Slack family mansion, Maria Moore Slack had probably moved to Herrin, Illinois, to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Lulu and Columbus Brown. She died of pneumonia in Herrin on December 22, 1927 at age

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[79] J. F. Buchanan, (notary public and conveyanger), regarding A. T. Slack and taxes on Noland property, 17 July 1908, John A. Sea, "Abstract of Title" for lots 4 and 5, James F. Moore's Addition.
[80] "Slack House Sold," *Independence Examiner*, 24 March 1924.
[81] Ryan, "Conversation with Ardis Haukenberry," March 24,1976.

eighty-three. Maria Slack was buried next to her husband Anthony Torbert Slack in Mount Washington Cemetery.[82]

[82] Maria Slack cemetery records, internment number 12048, Mount Washington Cemetery, Independence, Missouri.