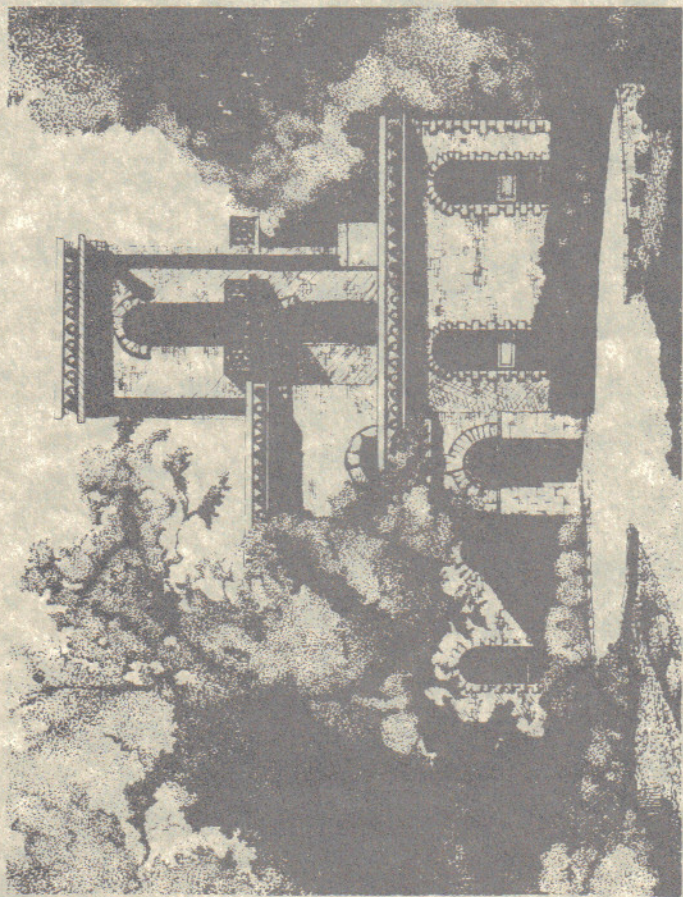




History of Selma Hall

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the fortune which ultimately resulted in the construction of Selma Hall is directly traceable to one John Smith T. The T was for his identification with the State of Tennessee where he lived before moving to Missouri. Smith was born in Virginia in the 1770's and schooled at William and Mary College. He was of a wealthy family and a slave holder.

In approximately 1795, having sold his slaves which had been given him by his father, he purchased 50,000 acres at Kingston, Roane County, Tennessee. In 1803 he settled in Southeastern Missouri and became active in the production of sugar. By 1805 he had purchased large tracts of land in what is now Jefferson County, Missouri.

He was a friend of Merriwether Lewis, governor of the territory of Missouri at that time, and

held several public offices, including: Commissioner of Weights and Measures, Judge of the Court of Justice, and a Colonel in the territorial militia.

In 1813, he enlisted in the Tennessee riflemen in Davidson County, Tennessee, and remained in the Army until 1815. After the battle of New Orleans, he returned to Jefferson County. Throughout this period, active lead mines were operating on his lands at Shibboleth and at Potosi. The lead was smelted at Shibboleth and hauled by ox cart over the Selma Road for loading onto packets at Selma Landing on the Mississippi River. The ruins of that smelter still exist as does the foundation of the "mansion" which he built and lived in at the town of Shibboleth, and the ruins of the general store which he operated. The original mansion was dismantled during World War II with the bricks being shipped to St. Louis for sale.

During the lead operations, Selma Valley became a bustling village with a general store, tavern, blacksmith shop, stables for the oxen and shot tower operation. The location of the shot tower is still evident on Shot Tower Bluff directly across from Selma Hall.

From 1819 until 1825, John Smith T fought with the Mexican Patriot Army against Spain, and also engaged in Indian fighting. Throughout his life he was known as a deadly duelist and legend has it he killed fifteen men.

Although John Smith T was raised a Presbyterian, he donated four hundred arpents of land to a Father Boullier for the St. Joachim Church in Old Mines and in 1832, he deeded additional land to that Church. Shortly after 1832, he purchased a plantation at Hales Point near Memphis, Tennessee, where in 1835 death came to this noted frontiersman, not by bullets, but by a fever.

His daughter Ann (Mrs. James S. White) returned his body to his beloved Selma, where it was interred in the family plot on Cedar Hill directly back of what is now Selma Hall. Due to persistent rumors of buried gold and treasure this family plot has been desecrated over the years, though it's stone-walled enclosure is still fairly intact.

SELMA HALL

John Smith T's daughter, Ann, was married twice. By her first marriage to Dedrick, she had John S. and Julia, and by her second husband, James S. White, she had (Moses?) and James M. James S. White continued in the lead business after John Smith T's death.

Selma Hall was build by Julia Dedrick (granddaughter of John Smith T) and her husband Ferdinand Beauregard Kennett. He was born in Kentucky in 1813, but moved as a child to St. Louis where his father became active in business and politics and amassed a sizeable fortune. One of his brothers was the mayor of St. Louis when the Eads Bridge was dedicated in 1874.

Kennett made a journey down the Mississippi River, became acquainted with James S. White at Selma, met and married Julia Dedrick. By this marriage there were five children, Ferdinand

Beauregard Kennett, Jr., Preston, James, Lotty and Agnes.

Ferdinand Kennett participated with James S. White in both the lead business and the general business enterprises at Selma, branching out later into steamboat ownership and operation, and in a joint venture in lead mining near Joplin. He served as State representative of this district in Jefferson City for many years.

Early in 1850, George I. Barnett, architect, was engaged by Ferdinand to design and supervise the construction of Selma Hall. This structure is a copy of a castle situated on Lake Como in Italy. Construction was begun in 1850 and completed in 1854 at a reported cost of \$125,000. The stone was quarried on the property by slave labor under the supervision of a master stone cutter brought out from Philadelphia for that specific purpose. Often artisans, such as cabinet makers, plasterers, sheet metal workers, etc., were imported from the East, most of them from Philadelphia.

The ornamental iron was fabricated in London. The parlor mantle, Georgian in design, was imported from England, while cornices in that room came from Annapolis Maryland.

There are two main entrances to Selma Hall. The one on the north is the carriage entrance. The second one is on the south leading to the stone stairs which leads to the site of the Selma boat landing. The operational office and warehouses were in the valley at the bottom of these steps.

The stone guest house, located on the west side of the main building, housed the kitchen and part of the help's quarters. All food was prepared there and carried in to the main dining room.

Through the years, Selma Hall has seen much history and rich living enjoyed. Many dignitaries were entertained lavishly at Selma Hall including King Edward VII of England who paid an extended visit in 1857.

The last duel fought in Missouri took place on the sand bar directly across the river from Selma Hall. Participants in this duel (over the slave issue) were B. Gratz Brown, later governor of Missouri (this was the emancipationist), and a Thomas C. Reynolds, slave holder and for whom Ferdinand Kennett performed as second. the duel was fought early on an August morning in 1856. Brown's kneecap was shattered by Reynolds pistol ball. With the offended honor having been satisfied, they remained friends for the rest of their lives.

During the War Between the States, both Union troops and officers were billeted for a time in the Castle, with the Kennett family moving to St. Louis for the duration. The shot tower remained in operation throughout the war and was, of course, of prime importance to both armies.

For many years, a complex of fine orchards was maintained on the three mile long ridge just across Selma Valley. At the west end of this area there is a large grotto, largely concealed, where Ferdinand Beauregard Kennett carved two sets of his initials and the year, 1861. He died in

that same year and was buried along side John Smith
T on Cedar Hill.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a
Robert Brookings (later to found the Brookings
Institute in Washington and Brookings Hall at
Washington University, St. Louis) obtained title to
Selma Hall and its grounds and remained its owner
until May 1, 1902, when it was sold to W. K.
Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh entertained lavishly, and his
parties are still legend in the neighborhood.

During the tenancy of the Kennett family, the
south end of the second floor hall was consecrated as
a Catholic Chapel with mass being said for the
Kennett family and other Catholic people in the
village once each month by a visiting priest. The
Chapel was removed during the tenancy of
Cavanaugh.

The post office at Selma Hall was originally in
the small square stone building just west of the Castle

and south of the guest house. Later on, it was moved into the small alcove room on the west wall of what is now the first floor bedroom.

In 1917, Selma Hall became quite a political football. It had been proposed that this property be obtained from Cavanaugh by the State. Both the farm and the buildings were to be used for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, alcoholics and the mentally disabled. The issue finally boiled down to the question of whether or not the herd of angora goats roaming the place would go with the sale. The owner was adamant in that they would not and that, together with Schock's indifference to the possibility of sale, closed the matter after having been bandied back and forth editorially in local papers for a couple of years.

In 1918, William Schock acquired Selma. he was a wealthy industrialist (India-Homa Oil Co.) who lived in St. Louis. Selma Hall was gutted by fire on March 13 1939, and only a few of the original furnishings were salvaged. Among these were the silver service and the dining room furniture.

William Shock had the structure completely rebuilt, redecorated and refurnished in an appropriate fashion with time period pieces, most of which were purchased in Europe. The unusual wall covering in the dining room was brought from France by Mrs. Schock. It is the work of a Parisian artist who, though never having seen the scenes which he has painted, depicts the scenes of what he thought to be Boston Harbor, the natural bridge of Virginia, the Military Academy at West Point and Niagara Falls. There is one other copy of this paper in existence, and it is in the White House in Washington, having been placed there by Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy.

In June 1953, the Mississippi River Fuel Corporation purchased 4,500 acres of land, including Selma Hall. William Marbury, president of the pipeline company, took a personal interest in the historic building. He continued to restore and maintain Selma Hall.

Through Marbury's efforts, the Mississippi

River Fuel Company became the parent company of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and was eventually renamed the Missouri Pacific Corporation. Marbury's original pipeline company became a subsidiary known as Mississippi River Transmission Company.

Selma Hall became property of the Union Pacific Corporation in 1982 when Union Pacific merged with Missouri Pacific. The pipeline subsidiary that had originally purchased the mansion was sold by Union Pacific Corporation in 1983.

Lovely Selma Hall and its grounds have contributed much to the history of Jefferson County.