Mrs. Mary Easton Sibley the Mother of Jackson County

She and Major Sibley Came to Fort Osage in 1815 Where They Lived Among the Indians Until 1827—Was a Courageous Woman.

BY JAMES A. SOUTHERN

Speaking of Mother's Day, which is to be celebrated Sunday, we have been turning back the yellowed leaves of history, wondering whom we might designate as the Mother of Jackson County.

This title might be bestowed upon old Mother Nature since she was a housewife and merchant; but since I want a human being for our heroine, I believe Mrs. George C. Sibley may be said to be the Mother of Jackson County since she was the first white woman to bring culture and refinement to this part of the country.

Major Sibley first served as a clerk in a new Indian store or factory, that the United States government had established at Fort Osage, which later became Sibley. This was in 1807. He had gone with the troops when the fort was built and resided there until the factory system was overthrown in 1827. Evidently he did not approve of the system for in one of his reports to the government he wrote, "I said 'Indian system' so it is called; but it is no more like a system than the yells of an Indian are like music.

Sibley was made Indian agent in 1808 in charge of Fort Osage. During this time as agent he made some important treaties with the Indians and won their good will. He received his title of major for his services in the War of 1812.

Mrs. Mary Easton Sibley

His duties at the government storehouse were to exchange such articles of trade as the Indians would have—blankets, guns, clothing, traps, etc., for furs. This meant that the government had gone into the fur trading business.

Were Married in 1815

In 1815, seven years after Major Sibley had established the store, they did not know Mrs. Sibley. She was twenty-five and pretty, but that was not all, she had the courage and determination to do things. She was a true pioneer and she showed her pioneer children. And she and the major were happy.

Their log cabin had all the conveniences of that time, and it was a model home of pioneer taste. Cruelties of savage life surrounded the little home nestled in the wilderness. The Osage Indians, who had asked for the post within their reservation, were bound by treaty to maintain their village of wigwams within gunshot of the stockade. They had not yet discarded their blanket garb and war parties were habitually coming and going. Successful forays were celebrated with scalp dances. Often the soldiers at the fort were called upon to lose guns on the eve of nine-till. This was the setting into which this young bride and her gallant husband came.

Prominent Travelers Visited Them

Distinguished travelers who went up and down the Missouri river always stopped at the hospitable home of the Sibleys and were royally entertained. They included Prince Maximilian and even the great Audubon. The password of all travelers when they gathered at taverns over the country side was, "You are always welcome at Sibleys."

Mrs. Sibley was an early advocate of woman's rights and was a personal friend of Susan B. Anthony, according to Mrs. Mary Sibley Easton Klos, who imparted this information to Lucinda Temple. She was known for her laughter and her dresses were always of brilliant hues.

The piano brought by Mrs. Sibley to Fort Osage was the first west of the Mississippi and she spent many hours playing on it entertaining friends. It had orchestra attachments.

In a letter to his brother, July 26, 1816, Major Sibley said, "Mary amuses me and herself every day for an hour or two with her piano, on which she performs extremely well, and has lately undertaken to instruct her younger sister, Louisa (who lives with us) on that instrument."
Eston and her husband, James A. Sibley, made their home in St. Charles, Missouri. Together, they had six children, including Mary Easton Sibley, who is the subject of this passage.

Mary Easton Sibley was born in the 1820s. She received her education at the Ladies' Literary School in Shelbyville, Kentucky, and later at the University of Missouri. She was known for her intelligence and her commitment to education for women.

Mary Easton Sibley was an active member of the community, serving as a Sunday school teacher and a member of the Women's Literary Society. She was also a strong supporter of women's rights and education. Her contributions to the community were recognized, and she was awarded a gold medal by the University of Missouri in 1834.

Mary Easton Sibley was married to James A. Sibley in 1850. Together, they had six children, including Mary Easton Sibley. She and her husband lived in St. Louis, Missouri, and were active in the community there as well.

Mary Easton Sibley's life was marked by her commitment to education and her support of women's rights. She is remembered as a strong advocate for women in the community and a role model for other women.