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**Editor's Note:** In this issue we feature Steve Kious' "Mark Twain Meets the Brady Bunch," which co-won first place in our 2012 RVGS Writing Contest. Steve is on the left in the photo below.




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## MARK TWAIN MEETS THE BRADY BUNCH

BY STEVE KIOUS

The children of my Brady ancestors grew up in Hannibal, Missouri, and some of them were childhood friends and schoolmates of famous author and humorist Samuel Clemens, commonly known by his pen name of Mark Twain. Some of his friends were models for characters that later appeared in his books, and some incidents from his childhood inspired scenes in his books. One of his friends, Norval Brady, was nicknamed "Gull" and was a member of Clemens' circle.

*"If God had meant for us to be naked, we'd have been born that way" --Mark Twain*

James Brady was born--naked--on October 28, 1801 in Leesburg, Loudoun County, Virginia. His father was also named James Brady and was an Irish immigrant. Leesburg is on the Potomac River about 35 miles northwest of Washington, D.C.

The junior James Brady married Honor Houser, daughter of William Houser and Margaret "Peggy" Lafever, on September 30, 1823.

*"Familiarity breeds contempt--and children" --Mark Twain*

James and Honor obviously were familiar because they had 12 children: Emily Jane, John Moore, James W., Charles Christopher, Margaret Ann, Dorcas Virginia "Jennie," Norval Langdon, Frances Belinda, Alvin, Jefferson, Edward Miller, and Luther. I am a direct descendent of their oldest child, Emily Jane Brady (ca.1824-ca.1859) and her husband, Richard H. Burton.

James Brady was an experienced carpenter and decided to move his family to Missouri. He was attracted to Missouri by news and advertisements for lots which could be purchased in Marion City, Missouri(1)

Charles Christopher Brady (1829-1919) was one of the 12 children. In 1914 when he was in his 80s, he wrote some reminiscences of his life for one of his grandchildren. When he was about five years old in 1834, the family moved to Missouri from Virginia (2). Another account states that the family moved in 1836 (3). They traveled by wagons from Leesburg to Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia). It was in March and the weather was very cold as they crossed the Allegheny Mountains. Three boys--John, James W., and Charles--rode in the front end of one wagon with a light featherbed covered up to their heads, but they still got pretty cold.

From Wheeling they took a steamboat to Hannibal and it took three weeks to make the trip. Charles wrote: "At the Falls of the Ohio, below Louisville, Kentucky, one of the steamboat's boilers had a piece burst out of it and we were at New Albany, Indiana, a week for repairs. The steamboat was named Caledonia and was a slow-going vessel, and was towing three barges. After we got into the Mississippi River, it was very slow going. One day as the boat was hugging the bank of the river, the barge just dragging along the riverbank so near and so slow that some passengers jumped from the barge to the bank and cut large handfuls of small cane for pipe stems and jumped back onto the boat.

"At St. Louis, mother was not well and didn't like muddy river water and gave me a bit--12-1/2 cents--to go to a spring a short distance up the wharf, and bring her a bucketful of clear water. When she gave me the bit, the first thing that came into my head was 'what shall I get'? I started out and soon came to a cake stand kept by an old French woman and my money went for a quarter section of ginger cake. That was the first money I spent in Missouri." (4)

When the family reached Marion City, James Brady learned that it was subject to floods, and there had been some disappointments there. Consequently, he decided to settle in Hannibal instead. In 1836 Hannibal had few occupants. It was really a forest, with few real trees and just trails and paths. There was an immediate demand for buildings and Brady found more work than he could handle. He established his carpenter shop and toolshed near the downtown area. The boys found odd jobs, such as assisting at the ferryboat crossing, but their parents, who had the advantage of an education, insisted that they go to the private school(5)

Samuel Clemens was born in Florida, Missouri, which is about 35 miles southwest of Hannibal. He was born premature and was a sickly child. He was the sixth of seven children born to John Marshall and Jane Lampton Clemens. Only four of the children would survive to adulthood (6). His family moved to Hannibal in 1839 when he was four years old. He began school the next year(7).

***"Don't let school interfere with your education"--Mark Twain***

John and James W. Brady did well at school and were learning fast. Their younger brother Charles begged to go to school, so his mother dressed him in a new blue-checked apron and let him go. Boys wore dresses, pinafores, and aprons until they were seven or eight years old, even up into the 1900s, then graduated into various types of britches.

At one point Charles, his sister Margaret, his brother Norval, and Sam Clemens attended the school held in the basement of the Presbyterian Church and taught by Miss Newcomb. Sam was about six years younger than Charles. The school was called "the girls school" although small boys also went there (8).

***"We were good boys, good Presbyterian boys, and loyal and all that; anyway, we were good Presbyterian boys when the weather was doubtful; when it was fair, we did wander a little from the field"--Mark Twain***

Even in the 1840s boys in Hannibal found a way to entertain themselves. One Saturday, a gang of bigger boys, including brothers Charles, John, and James W. Brady, decided to look for hazelnuts near Lovers Leap. A gang of smaller boys, including Sam Clemens, Norval "Gull" Brady, and their friends, followed them and the bigger boys resented them. The bigger boys discovered a rotten log full of yellow jackets located near the hazelnuts, walked by it, and stopped a short distance away. They watched the younger boys arrive at the place. The little boys, thinking the first group had failed to see the nuts, began picking them.

The big boys began bombarding the log with rocks, and all of the boys screamed and ran from the yellow jackets except Sam, who had a reputation of remaining unruffled during excitement. He deliberately walked down the hill with his nose in the air (9).

***"Never refuse to do a kindness unless the act would work great injury to yourself, and never refuse to take a drink--under any circumstances"--Mark Twain***

On another Saturday, the boys were paddling in the Mississippi River in two skiffs and observed a man hiding a jug of whiskey on the river bank. After he left, the boys retrieved the jug and divided the whiskey into two buckets. Charles Brady had never tasted liquor before and one sip was enough for him. However, the other boys overindulged. Soon it took effect and the boys, whooping, yelling,

and singing, began to drift downriver in their skiffs past Hannibal and landed a bit south of town.

The townspeople had seen the skiffs from the shore and surmised that the boys were tipsy. Of course, everybody knew who the members of the gang were and word traveled fast to their mothers--who were ready for them.

As Charles entered the door of his house, his mother seized him and jerked him across her lap, doffed her leather moccasin-like slipper and began to paddle his behind.

"I did not drink any of it," Charles protested.

"That is no matter, you were with them that did," Mrs. Brady replied.

Just then James W. came in and he had drunk some of the whiskey, so she gave him the same punishment, only more spanks than she inflicted upon Charles. Then both boys were told they should join the "Washingtonians," or Cadets of Temperance. The Washingtonians was a temperance society (10).

Sam Clemens did join the Cadets of Temperance, which was an organization that encouraged young people to refrain from tobacco use (11).

***"In the small town of Hannibal, Missouri, when I was a boy everybody was poor but didn't know it; and everybody was comfortable and did know it"--Mark Twain (12)***

An event recalled by Charles involved a hypnotist giving a lecture in Benton Hall. As was the custom, only men and boys attended these shows. The Brady boys were all there, as well as Sam Clemens and Tom Blankenship (who was the model for Huckleberry Finn). Clemens later wrote of Tom: "He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as ever any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted." (13).

The hypnotist gave four boys a coin and instructed them to gaze at it steadily and not let their attention wander from the coin. After about 10 minutes, the hypnotist waved a magic wand over them and announced that he had hypnotic control over them.

Then he said to the audience: "now, you may come and lay some money down before that boy and he cannot touch it because I will not let him do so." He laid three coins on a table and some of the men in the audience came forward and also laid coins down. The mesmerizer was gloating over his success. The audience was spellbound, marveling at his control. Suddenly, Tom jumped off the keg he was standing on, yanked off his hat and scooped all the coins into it as quick as a flash, leaped to the door and was gone before you could say "scat." In his account of the incident, Charles noted that the program ended immediately (14).

***"Hannibal has had a hard time of it ever since I can recollect, and I was 'raised' there. First, it had me for a citizen, but I was too young then to really hurt the place"--Mark Twain***

Swimming in the Mississippi River was not without its dangers. Clemens recalled that he was pulled nine times from the water in a "substantially drowned condition." His mother tried to laugh off the narrow escapes by telling him, "People who are born to be hanged are safe in water." (15)

In 1925 a reporter from the Hannibal Courier-Post interviewed Norval Brady, who by then was an elderly man but was willing to tell about his early days in Hannibal. He said he believed that many of Mark Twain's stories came from stories of the boyish pranks of their gang, which included Norval, Sam Clemens, and several other boys. He noted that he was always called "Gull" by the gang.

One of the stories he told was about the Mark Twain Cave, then known as McDowell Cave. It was owned by a Dr. McDowell, and at one time he used it for an experiment involving the preservation of bodies, and he had placed the body of a little girl in a copper cylinder in the cave. Stories of this experiment were later repeated by Mark Twain and others. Injun Joe, a central character in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," dies in a cave, called McDougall's Cave in the book.

Norval and Sam attended school together.

"Sam and I often met at the school, if it was a day when neither of us were playing hooky," Norval recalled. "I might say we were brought up together as a rule and often brought down together with a ferule (an instrument, such as a flat piece of wood, used to punish children). The last time Sam was in Hannibal, someone said, 'Gull Brady grew up with you, didn't he?' and Sam replied, 'Yes, but he ought not to be hung for that, he could not help it.'" (16).

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James Brady built many of the early buildings in Hannibal, which had a population of only 30 in 1830. However, by 1840 it had

grown to 1,024 and by 1850 it was 2,020. In 1836, Brady built the Pilaster House, also known as Grant's Drug Store, which still stands. It was a pre-cut house with its parts built in Cincinnati and shipped to Hannibal on a barge. Its intended destination had been Marion City but due to the flood at the time, it ended up in Hannibal. The term "pilaster" refers to the flat columns on the house's exterior. Brady's sons worked with him on most of his projects(17)

*"History has tried hard to teach us that we can't have good government under politicians. Now, to go and stick one at the very head of the government couldn't be wise" --Mark Twain*

Hannibal was chartered as a city in 1845 and James Brady was elected its first mayor. It is unknown if Clemens placed James Brady in the same category as a politician. Brady had provided great wisdom in the planning and decisions regarding the design of buildings and the development of streets and especially the wharf, which was an essential part of the economic life of the town, since transportation from the rest of the world depended upon steamboats.

Another facet of the city life in which Brady was keenly interested was the moral tone of life in Hannibal, such as laws against the use of profanity, cruelty to slaves, limitations of work on the Sabbath Day, etc(18) Brady was re-elected mayor in 1860 and served his last term during the early Civil War years.

James Brady's daughter, Jennie (1837-1881), was vicariously involved in politics. In 1860 she married Eli C.D. Shortridge who, after her death, was elected the third governor of North Dakota in 1893.

Sam Clemens described people he knew in Hannibal in "Villagers of 1840-43." He wrote: "*Laura*. Pretty little creature of 5 at Miss Torrey's. At the Hill Street school she and Jenny (sic) Brady wrote on the slate that day at the noon recess. Another time *Laura* fell out of her chair and Jenny made that vicious remark " (19). It is unknown what the vicious remark was.

Mark Twain's working notes show that he considered portraying Jennie Brady as Jenny Mason in "Schoolhouse Hill," but that character does not appear in the story (20).

Norval Brady recalled that young Clemens was a bashful boy, with a fondness for pretty little girls. "He had to do his 'sparkin' by proxy," he once said. "Once I heard him say to his school desk mate 'John, if you will go and tell *Laura* at recess that I like her, and think she's the prettiest girl in school, I'll give you the next apple I get.' " The "*Laura*" was *Laura Frazer*, the model for *Becky Thatcher* in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (21).

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Clemens' family had constant money problems. His father ran a general store, practiced law, and was elected justice of the peace. He hoped to revive his fortunes by being elected circuit court clerk but he contracted pneumonia while campaigning hard in cold weather and died in 1847, when his son Sam was 11 years old (22). Due to the financial difficulties, the family had moved from Mark Twain's Boyhood Home (which is still standing) into the Pilaster House, which they shared with Dr. Grant from 1846-47 in return for cooking and housekeeping chores (23). This is where John Marshall Clemens died.

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James Brady and his sons Charles and John were among thousands of gold seekers who streamed to California following the discovery of gold there in 1848. James had gotten into debt building a hotel in Hannibal and thought he would try the venture of crossing the plains to California in the hope of getting enough gold to pay off his debt and perhaps earn a little more.

He began planning the trip in the spring of 1849 for making a journey across the plains, which at that time was a great undertaking. James accompanied his wagons and provisions, which were shipped by steamboat from Hannibal to St. Joseph via the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. John and Charles rode horses across the state. On the third day of their journey they stayed with their sister, Emily, who lived in Union Township, Randolph County, Missouri.

Subsequently, they met up with Edward McDonald and his relatives, who were riding in a wagon and who were going to be their companions crossing the plains. It took them a week to cross the state to St. Joseph. Charles was appointed to be the cook because he was the youngest person at 20 years of age.

James arrived in St. Joseph the same day as the others did. They had the wagons and goods unloaded on the west side of the river. James and John came down with cholera but recovered with the help of some medicine that James had prepared before leaving home.

From there they began the long and arduous route to California. They had peaceful encounters with Indians and killed buffaloes for food(24)

By July they had reached Independence Rock after resting at Fort Laramie. Charles tried to chisel his name in the rock as hundreds of other travelers had done but he ended up breaking the chisel and did not dent the rock. His father convinced him that it would be a tedious job and they would make better use of time by pushing on, which they did (25).

By August the group had reached the Humboldt River in California. Charles caught a 5-inch trout using a grasshopper for bait. It was the first trout he had ever seen. Then they arrived at the Truckee River and the trail passed the cabins the Donner Party had stayed in during the winter of 1846-47. Later, James met some of the members of the rescue party at San Jose and talked with them, as well as a girl who had been brought in by the rescuers. She had both of her feet frozen off and she walked on the stubs. She was married and had several children.

The group then traveled through the Donner Pass in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and made their way to Grass Valley. James, using his carpentry skills, made a cradle for washing their gold out of boards from their wagon. A man came along and bought it for \$40. James and his sons were out of money, and James had enough lumber to make another one. Charles only had 20 cents left.

There was some mining at the camp but they heard the diggings were good on the Yuba River so they went there, located a claim, and began their first gold mining. None of them had any knowledge of gold mining so they had to learn by observation, and from others who had been in the country longer than they had. Eventually they got about \$1,600 from the claim. As the rainy season was about to set in, they moved away from the river to the mountains above. James went to Sacramento to lay in provisions for the winter, with John and Charles remaining at Deer Creek. However, John and Charles ran out of food so they decided to go to Sacramento too. They met up with their father there.

James decided to spend the winter in Sacramento because it was almost impossible to get grub to the miners due to the soft conditions of the roads. He ended up building a shack. John and Charles subsequently went to El Dorado County, where they did some mining. Their claim was not very rich but they earned enough money to buy extra food because a diet of bread and pork was apt to bring on scurvy. Everything was high in price--two dollars for a pound of small potatoes, eight dollars for a quart of pickles, and a dollar for a bottle of molasses.

John and Charles continued to work on various mining claims while James did carpentry work in Sacramento through 1852. John's health grew worse with another onset of cholera. James arranged for a man to take John and board him (26) but John died in Greenwood Valley on February 17, 1852 (27). The 1852 California state census shows James living in El Dorado County in October. Charles became the postmaster at Greenwood. James bought into a river claim on Poverty Bar which proved to be quite lucrative. James made more than \$6,000, which is about \$175,000 in today's "real price."

In June 1853 James and his son Charles decided it was time to return to Missouri and engaged passage on a steamer sailing from San Francisco. The voyage took them to San Juan, Nicaragua, then to New York. From there they took trains and boats until they reached home(28)

After their gold rush experience, the Bradys were very well off. James Brady's financial troubles were at an end. Brady and his sons established an iron store near the riverfront and ran it at a good profit. Then they established a tobacco factory and made cigars in the old Brady Hotel building when it was no longer used as a hotel (29).

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While the Bradys were off in California, Sam Clemens was still living in Hannibal. In 1849 he stopped attending school regularly, and in 1850 was working on his brother Orion's newspapers. By 1851 he was running the newspaper while his brother was away.

In 1853 he left Hannibal, never to live there again. He worked as a journeyman typesetter in several cities from 1853-57. He revisited Hannibal at least seven times, with his last visit occurring in 1902 (30). The visit coincided with his acceptance of an honorary LL.D. from the University of Missouri at Columbia (31).

*" When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in 7 years " --Mark Twain*

Clemens' father was long dead by 1856, when Sam was 21 years old. This was the year he gave his first public speech at a printers' banquet in Keokuk, Iowa. In 1859 he received his steamboat piloting license(32) His pen name of Mark Twain refers to a riverboat pilot's cry for a measured river depth of two fathoms.

Clemens didn't travel west until 1861, when he went to Nevada Territory and began prospecting for silver, He eventually worked for the newspaper in Virginia City (33). His first publishing success occurred in 1867 with his story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." At one time he had done some mining in Angels Camp. His cabin there is still standing.

From that point on, Clemens wrote, traveled, and lectured extensively. Some of his well known books include: The Innocents Abroad (1869), The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876), The Prince and the Pauper (1881), Life on the Mississippi (1883), The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884), A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889), and Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894).

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Census records show that James Brady and his family lived in Hannibal, Marion County, Missouri in 1840, 1850, and 1860. A year or two after the Civil War, Brady sold his interest in a grain mill and he and Honor moved to a farm at Hydesburg, Ralls County (which is adjacent to Marion County), Missouri, where they lived for the rest of their lives(34) The 1870 census shows them living in Ralls County, next door to their son, Christopher, with James and Christopher's occupations listed as farmers. In 1880 James and Honor were still living in Ralls County, this time close to their son, Norval, who was also a farmer.

*"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice note saying I approved of it" --Mark Twain*

James Brady died on March 8, 1881, at the age of 79 in Paloma, Adams County, Illinois, where he was staying with a family member. Adams County borders the Mississippi River and is not too far from Hannibal. On the day of James Brady's death, Sarah Bernhardt, the famous French stage actress, gave a performance at the opera house in Quincy, the county seat of Adams County (35).

Honor Brady died on Sept. 29, 1891, at the age of 87 in Harristown, Macon County, Illinois.

*"The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated" --Mark Twain*

The false reports of Samuel Clemens' death came several years before his actual death in 1910. He died in Redding, Connecticut, at the age of 74 and is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Elmira, New York. Halley's Comet appeared in both the years of his birth and death.

Norval Brady died April 12, 1929 at the age of 89. A newspaper article said he was the "last of the boyhood playmates of Mark Twain. The death of Brady, who was the Gull Brady of Samuel Clemens' writings, followed by a few weeks that of Mrs. Laura Hawkins Frazer, the humorist's Becky Thatcher." She died in December 1928 (36).

Norval was also the last of his 11 siblings to pass away. He is buried in the Hydesburg Methodist Episcopal Church Cemetery in Spalding, Ralls County, Missouri, along with his parents, James and Honor, his brother, Edward M, and his wife, Mary. Charles Brady died in 1919 in Campbell, Santa Clara County, California, at the age of 90.



**PHOTOS**

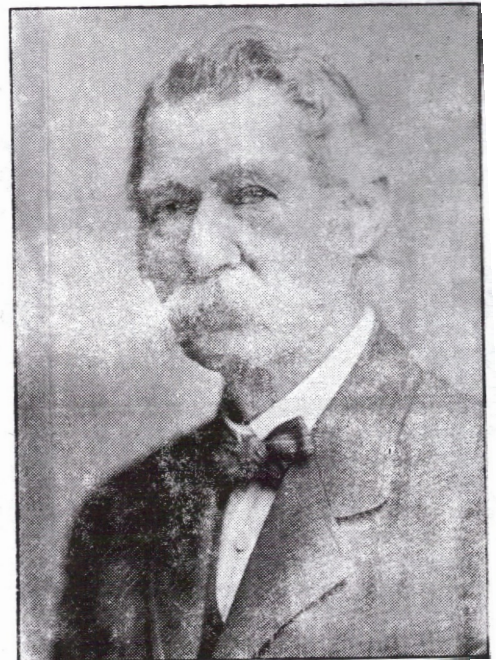
*Pilaster House*



*James Brady*



*Norval Brady*





Six boyhood friends of Mark Twain's who still lived in Hannibal in 1922, including Norval Brady.



Six boyhood friends of Mark Twain's who still lived in Hannibal in 1922. (Courtesy, Library of Congress, Pictures & Prints Division)

FOOTNOTES

1) J. Hurley Hagood and Roberta Roland Hagood, "Life and Times of Hannibal's First Mayor," Hannibal Courier-Post,

## FOOTNOTES

- 1) J. Hurley Hagood and Roberta Roland Hagood, "Life and Times of Hannibal's First Mayor," Hannibal Courier-Post, January 27, 1990, part I.
- 2) Charles Brady, reminiscences written on December 24, 1914.
- 3) Hagood and Hagood, *Ibid.*, part I.
- 4) Brady, reminiscences, *Ibid.*.
- 5) J. Hurley Hagood and Roberta Roland Hagood, "Youngsters Found Time for Fun in 1840s," Hannibal Courier-Post, January 31, 1990, Part II.
- 6) Geoffrey C. Ward and Dayton Duncan, "Mark Twain: an Illustrated Biography," Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2001, p. 3.
- 7) R. Kent Rasmussen, "Mark Twain A to Z," Facts on File, Inc., 1995, p. x.
- 8) Brady, reminiscences, *Ibid.*.
- 9) J. Hurley Hagood and Roberta Roland Hagood, "Settlers Established City's Government," Hannibal Courier-Post, February 7, 1990, Part III.
- 10) Hagood and Hagood, *Ibid.*, Part II.
- 11) Harriet Elinor Smith, editor, "Autobiography of Mark Twain," Volume 1, University of California Press, 2010, p. 354.
- 12) Charles Neider, editor, "Autobiography of Mark Twain," Harper and Brothers, New York, 1959, p. 28.
- 13) Smith, *Ibid.*, p. 397.
- 14) Hagood and Hagood, *Ibid.*, part II.
- 15) Ward and Duncan, *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 16) Hagood and Hagood, *Ibid.*, part III.
- 17) Rasmussen, *Ibid.*, p. 356.
- 18) Hagood and Hagood, *Ibid.*, part III.
- 19) Mark Twain, "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians and Other Unfinished Stories," University of California Press, 1989, p. 95.
- 20) Twain, *Ibid.*, p. 306.
- 21) Gettysburg Times, June 12, 1929.
- 22) Rasmussen, *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
- 23) Rasmussen, *Ibid.*, p. 356.
- 24) Charles Brady, "Voyage of Charles C. Brady to California--1849," written in 1914.
- 25) J. Hurley Hagood and Roberta Roland Hagood, "Early Settlers Traveled West Seeking Their Fortunes," February 14, 1990, part IV.
- 26) Brady, Voyage, *Ibid.*.
- 27) Palmyra, Missouri Whig News Obits 1851-1853.
- 28) Brady, Voyage, *Ibid.*.
- 29) J. Hurley Hagood and Roberta Roland Hagood, "War Divided Hannibal, Affected Business Climate," February 21, 1990, part V.
- 30) Rasmussen, *Ibid.*, pp.189-190.
- 31) Neider, *Ibid.*, p. 589.
- 32) Rasmussen, *Ibid.*, p. xii.
- 33) Rasmussen, pp. xii-xiii.
- 34) Hagood and Hagood, *Ibid.*, part V.
- 35) Camp Point Journal, Adams County, Illinois.
- 36) Salt Lake City Tribune, April 13, 1929.