



CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI

LIBERTY LANDING

The town of Liberty, Missouri developed in 1822, five years before the creation of Independence, Missouri to the south. Nonetheless, Liberty did not begin to grow by leaps and bounds until 1827, at the time of the establishment of Fort Leavenworth farther up the Missouri River. Transportation between the fort and Liberty was by boat and by wagon. The Liberty to Leavenworth Road developed rather quickly for use by the military. Obviously others used that road too. John Barber White, in the 1919 book *The Missouri Merchant One Hundred Years Ago*, says regular Liberty Landing steamer service did not begin until 1826. Further, White states the steamboat service would have begun in late March or early April in the early years. In the 1830s into the 1860s, Liberty was an active river port for steamers, but the coming of the railroads dramatically reduced that traffic. Due to a change in the Missouri River, Liberty now does not touch the river. Nonetheless, if one looks for the current short road named “Liberty Landing Road”, a person has found the vicinity of the original Liberty Landing.

Thaddeus A. Culbertson

1850 March 25

“...Liberty Landing was reached about 10 O’clock this morning, and there we made a very short stay. The town is about 10 miles [over estimation] from the river. ...”

*****During the nineteenth-century historic trail era, naturalists of many kinds took exploratory expeditions throughout the West. In 1850 Culbertson took such an expedition to the Badlands [Mauvaises Terres] to collect fossils. This explorer went by steamboat from St. Louis to St. Joseph and then by carriage to Ft. Pierre. After collecting fossils in that locale, the party boarded a steamboat and went farther up the Missouri River than any steamboat had traveled. Afterwards the party returned on the Missouri to St. Louis before going home to Pennsylvania. This traveler states that Liberty Landing was 10 miles from the town of Liberty. This is an over estimation. Many say the two were about three-and-a-half miles apart. **Source:** Culbertson, Thaddeus A. *Journal of an Expedition to the Mauvaises Terres and the Upper Missouri in 1850*. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin 147*. Wash. D.C.: Govt. Printing Office, 1952, quote from p. 19.

REGULAR MISSOURI RIVER PACKET

1853 April 14

“THE ENTIRELY NEW AND ELEGANT STEAMER **POLAR BEAR** WILL leave St. Louis every other Tuesday at 4 o’clock, P.M., for St. Joseph, Weston, Fort Leavenworth, Parkville, Kansas,



Independence, Liberty, Richfield, Sibley, Camden, Wellington, Lexington, Dover, Waverly, Carrollton, Miami, Brunswick, Glasgow, and all other points below [on river]. Commencing her regular trips from St. Louis, Tuesday, February 22d, March 8th and ... [ending the season] November 1st, 15th, and 29th. On her return will leave St. Joseph every other Monday, commencing February 28th ... through December 5th.”

*****This advertisement in a Missouri newspaper apparently was a regularly running ad because the ad gives the dates of the stops from February 22nd on, even though the advertisement was in an April issue of the newspaper. This ad does give Liberty as one of many stops for a particular steamboat regularly running between St. Louis and St. Joseph. The advertiser clearly is showing that the steamboat will not be running during most of the two coldest months of the year when ice might be a detriment to steamers on the Missouri River. **Source:** “Regular Missouri River Packet”, *Glasgow Weekly Times* (Glasgow, MO), April 14, 1853, p. 4. Accessed online from newspapers.com on August 13, 2020.

Mary Elizabeth Lightner 1863 early June

“...[while riding a steamer] We passed Liberty landing and Independence, things remain about as they were twenty years ago. ...”

*****A steamboat would not have passed Independence as that town was and is not on the river. The reference to “Independence” may have been to Wayne City which was on the river. Most of those who disembarked at Wayne City did so with the purpose of going to Independence. The Lightner family was with a party of Mormons that left Minnesota on a steamer on May 25; stopped at Montrose, Iowa across from Nauvoo, Illinois on May 29 for the boat to unload grain; and disembarked at St. Joseph on June 6 where they had time to change their clothes for the first time since leaving Minnesota. The party continued to Omaha on steamer before embarking on a westward overland journey. **Source:** “Journal of a Mormon Woman, 1863: Mary Elizabeth Lightner”, 95-108, quote on p. 100, in Holmes, Kenneth L., editor. *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1862-1865*, Vol. 8. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1999 [reprint of 1989 edition].

