

C Missouri Mule History Project, Records, 1980-1993  
3954 2 linear feet, 148 audio cassettes

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## INTRODUCTION

Records produced by a University of Missouri project to document the history of the state's mule industry. The records consist of oral history recordings and transcripts of interviews with men and women concerning their experiences with the Missouri mule, project produced publications, and promotional materials.

## DONOR INFORMATION

The Missouri Mule History Project Records were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Dr. Melvin Bradley on 29 April 1991 (SHS Accession No. 2831) and 22 December 1993 (SHS Accession No. 3000). An addition to the records was made by Edward A. Wade on 23 February 1992 (SHS Accession No. 2888).

## PROJECT HISTORY

The Missouri Mule Project was begun in 1981 by Dr. Melvin Bradley, of the College of Agriculture at the University of Missouri-Columbia, to gather and preserve the collective memory, through oral history interviews, of the last generation of Missourians familiar with the once very prominent mule industry in the state.

Working closely with Duane Dailey, a photojournalist in the College of Agriculture, Bradley began interviewing men and women throughout the state in 1981. To provide additional funding and support for the project, the Missouri Mule Skinners Society was founded in 1982, and membership dues and other contributions were used for travel and transcription expenses.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The purpose of the Missouri Mule History Project was to document the once vast mule industry in Missouri by gathering and preserving the recollections of Missourians involved with the breeding, marketing, and working of mules. The collection comprises primarily audio recordings and transcripts in an **Interview** series, and a **Publications** series which completes the collection.

The **Interview** series consists of audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews conducted primarily in 1982 and 1983 with approximately 130 individuals, mostly Missourians, involved in the breeding, rearing, training, showing, marketing, and working of mules during the period when the Missouri industry was operating at or near its peak as one of the nation's predominant mule producing states. As many of the informants were in their 80s and 90s, the recollections represent a lifetime's experience, ranging back to the early part of the twentieth century and detailing many aspects of the mule in Missouri. The audio recordings of interviews and accompanying transcriptions are arranged alphabetically by interviewee. Supplementary material is included with some transcripts.

Many of the interviews focus on the use of mules in agriculture and include descriptions of their general working on farms in Missouri: their breeding, care and feeding, training, equipment used, the transition to mechanization, and other details. Mules at work in other types

of commerce, including hauling, road building, logging, mining, and levee building, is also addressed. The interviews often covered broader subjects and relate experiences and attitudes about farming and rural life, government, the economy, folklore, education, and recreation.

A number of veterans were interviewed, and they discuss experiences with the mule as used by the U.S. military, especially in World War II in the difficult terrain of the China, India and Burma theater of operations, and in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.

The marketing of mules is highlighted in interviews concerning the extensive operation of the Guyton and Harrington Horse and Mule Company of Lathrop, Missouri, which supplied hundreds of thousands of Missouri mules for use in World War I. Other interviews focus on the business of mule breeding, trading, buying, selling, and shipping, and other aspects of the once thriving Missouri mule trade.

Another project area of interest was the exhibition of mules, and interviews with showmen and handlers concern competitions at county fairs, the Missouri State Fair, and the American Royal livestock show. Other interviews relate observations and experiences illustrating some of the mule's unusual behavioral characteristics and idiosyncrasies. The current use of mules in parades, shows, hunting, and for trail riding, and the development of the miniature mule through breeding with Shetland ponies are also subjects of interviews.

The **Publications** series consists of publications produced as part of the Missouri Mule History Project. A very useful overview of the interviews, *The Mule Industry of Missouri Remembered*, arranged by topic, was prepared by Dr. Bradley and is found in this series. A copy of the overview follows this inventory. An extensive and detailed study by Dr. Bradley, *The Missouri Mule: His Origin and Times*, which utilizes many of the project interviews as sources and expands on many of the topics of those recollections, reprints of several significant mule related publications, including *History of Jack Stock and Mules in Missouri* by Jack Ashton, 1924, and a 1915 promotional volume of the Guyton and Harrington Mule Company of Lathrop, Missouri, are also in this series. A slide presentation, developed from the project interviews as an introduction to the Missouri mule, and project promotional materials are also found in this series.

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- f.142        *Mules: Missouri's Long Eared Miners* by Melvin Bradley, 1987
- f.143-144    *The Missouri Mule: His Origin and Times* by Melvin Bradley, 1993
- f.145        *Photo Records of the Guyton and Harrington Mule Company Properties*, 1984 reprint
- f.146        *Jack Stock and Mules in Missouri* by Jack Ashton, 1987 reprint
- f.147        *Marsmen in Burma* by John Randolph, 1990 reprint
- f.148        *Memories, or, This is My Life* by L. Edwin Baurichter, 1975
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