

"Articles of Human Interest"

Note:

This Table of Contents is for a set of Articles contained on web pages created by
The former Audrain County Coordinator and her MOGenWeb Volunteers

They are being preserved here for reference.

The Articles will all be found below the TOC

Accidents:

"TURNER BALLEWHIT BY TRAIN, DIES SATURDAY" (1936 newspaper article)

"Major Fires and Natural Disasters" in Audrain County

Misc:

"Orphan Trains" coming through Missouri, did they stop in Audrain County??

DOG TEAM OF WILLIAM SOPHER

Ellis House

Lewellyn Home

The "Shoe Factory" in Mexico

"TURNER BALLEW HIT BY TRAIN, DIES SATURDAY

MEXICO LEDGER September 17, 1936:

contributed by Jeffrey Carmean

Roy Turner Ballew, 54 year old Mexico carpenter, was fatally hurt while his wife, Mrs. Amelia Ballew escaped injury when their Chevrolet coach in which they were riding was accidentally struck by the fast eastbound Wabash passenger train No. 2, shortly after noon here Saturday.

The accident occurred 1:15 p.m. at the Missouri Avenue crossing, when the Ballews who were waiting for a freight to pass, failed to see No. 2 as it sped down the track. Their car was directly in its path. Mrs. Ballew noticed the train as it was almost upon them and told her husband they would have to jump out. She barely managed to get out of the car before it was hit. Mr. Ballew getting as far as the running board of his automobile.

The Ballew car was carried forty feet down the track and thrown to the north between the Wabash and Alton tracks. It was demolished. Mr. Ballew with deep cuts about his head and body and several broken bones, was rushed to the Audrain Hospital where he died a half hour later.

Mr. Ballew, a life long Audrain County resident, was born August 14, 1882 on a farm north of Thompson, the son of J. H. and Mrs. Mattie Shipp Ballew. He was married in 1917 to Miss Amelia Leibengood of south of Mexico. They have resided in Mexico a number of years, and six weeks ago moved to the modern new home they had just completed on North Wade Street. Mr. Ballew had a wide circle of friends. The Ledger extends sincere sympathy to the family.

Surviving Mr. Ballew are his widow; his father who resides at Fayette and two sisters Mrs. Louis Ryan and Mrs. A. L. Thomas of Springfield, O. An only brother, Robert Ballew died three years ago and his mother in the spring of 1935.

His father and uncle, Joseph Ballew also of Fayette and Mrs. Thomas were here for the funeral.

A verdict that Turner Ballew, Mexico carpenter, met death when 'accidentally struck' by the fast Wabash passenger train Number 2 at the Missouri Avenue crossing Saturday, was returned by a coroner's jury at

The Ballews were returning to their home on North Wade Street after visiting friends with whom they were to have gone to the Ozarks for a Sunday outing. Frank Rashaw engineer of Number 2 stated he had seen the car on the crossing and started whistling far up the tracks, and that he was still blowing the whistle when the crash came. Funeral services were conducted at 3 p.m. Monday at the Mexico Christian Church of which Mr. Ballew was a member, with the Rev. J. B. Robertson, pastor, officiating. Burial was at Elmwood Cemetery and pallbearers were J. E. Curry, Garvin Guy, Sam Bishop, Walter Gregory, Frank Towson and Henry Duffin. Music included quartette selections by Dr. R. W. Van Wyngarden, Lee Edwards, Harry McGee and W. S. Eller. Mrs. Ramon Carroll played the organ accompaniment.

11 a.m. Tuesday after hearing the testimony of seven witnesses. 'A fracture of the third cervical vertebra' was given as the immediate cause of death. The inquest was conducted by Dr. W. K. McCall, county coroner, at the H. A. Precht and Son Undertaking Parlors. Ballew was fatally hurt Saturday afternoon when his automobile was struck at the crossing, and funeral services were conducted Monday. Principal witnesses were Mrs. Aurelia Ballew, widow, who was with her husband when the accident occurred and jumped from the automobile barely in time to save her own life, and Frank Rashaw, engineer of the train which hit the car. Others testifying were Harry Myers, Dr. R. W. Van WynGarden, Phil Dean, A. L. Mundy, and W. E. Foose, fireman on Number 2. Jurors were F. J. Toohey, foreman, George L. Clanton, C. A. Dunn, G. O. McGee, W. E. Sword and J. B. Armstrong."



from Mexico Weekly Ledger Jan. 23, 1913 pg 3 col 5
DOG TEAM OF WILLIAM SOPHER

William, the 11 year old son of J. I. Sopher of this city, has a dog team which has attracted much attention here and which he recently refused \$100 for. The team was trained by the boy and pulls both wagon or sled almost as fast as a good sized pony.

The dogs are a cross between bull and shepherd, are a year old and willing workers. William gets into his wagon with a boy friend and his team starts without a hitch. He is justly proud of his trained dogs and is to be complimented for his success in teaching them. The dogs are known as Prince and Watch. The latter will drive single. They have pulled as much as 600 pounds.

from Mexico Weekly Ledger Jan. 23, 1913 pg 3 col 5



Major Fires and Natural Disasters in Audrain County
Mexico had more than it's share of major fires in the downtown area.

This is not the entire list of fires in the downtown area
refer: 1884 History of Audrain County and Centennial History

May 27 1871 Cyclone at Vandalia overturned a building belonging to the King Brothers and blew a box car from the tracks.

1873 Mexico, like all other cities, has had some fires. The two largest and most destructive occurred in the same year; the first on June 6, 1873, and the second September 7, 1873. The fire of June 16th de-stroyed eight business houses. Among these were the buildings of George Kunkle, John Schumacher, J. L. Llewellyn, Daniel Leonard, Mark Roberts and others. The fire in

September was the more de-structive, consuming some nine or ten business houses with their contents. The damage to buildings and their contents aggregated (both fires) fully \$200,000, three fourths of which was covered by insurance. Refer: 1884 Audrain County History Chapter 10

August 29 1880

P.T. Barnum Circus was in town, on the Landon Craig Fairgrounds, located at what is now Woodlawn Place. The main circus tent was destroyed with high winds.

December 26 1882
fire

The frame buildings, south side of the square, which was once the site of the first courthouse were burned, later replaced with brick structures

May 25 1891

Cyclone, Tornado or Storm- north and west of Mexico- Killed were Balsam Kunkel, Sophia Doerge, Homer Rogers and H. C. Hunt. Injured included: Mr. & Mrs. S. S. Norris and 2 children, Mrs. Emily Seal, Miss Addie Seal, Miss Gertrude Fletcher, Henry Kunkel and son Otto, Mr. & Mrs. William Doerge and their son and daughter, Mr. & Mrs. William Yostmeyer and two children, Mr. & Mrs. Squire Jarman, Mr. & Mrs. J. F. Harrison and two children.

May 27 1896

Major Tornado- across many parts of Missouri including the Saint Louis Area. Audrain County was hardest hit in the Bean Creek area, north east of Mexico, with the loss of life. Fatalities included Eliza Ware age 7 daughter of J. G. Ware; Hilda Blase age 6; Eulah Miller age 9; Rose Hodge age 6; Eugene Lott, Pearl Hodge age 8, _____ Erdel son of Frank Erdel, _____ Knoebel son of Albert Knoebel, Riley Hagan age 22 of Laddonia. The children were all students Bean Creek or Dye Schools.

The storm touched down at Bean Creek and Dye Schools after entering the county between Clark and Renick, traveling northeast, crossing the Alton RR east of Laddonia and also touched down again at Vandalia. The damage at Vandalia included a course of destruction five blocks wide through the town, with residences, churches and businesses damaged or destroyed. The "light plant" was completely wrecked. refer: Centennial History of Audrain County From <http://www.tornadopproject.com/past/pastts95.htm> death count differs from above.

May 27, 1896

What may have been the first tornado of the day killed a woman near Bellflower, Missouri. At 3:15 PM, three students died and sixteen were injured in the destruction of the Dye School in Audrain County, Missouri. A few minutes later, the same tornado killed one student and injured nineteen at the Bean Creek School. At 6:15 PM, two children died on a farm in Osage County, Missouri. At about 6:30 PM, two tornadoes touched down almost simultaneously from separate storms. One leveled entire farms near New Minden, Hoyleton, Richview, and Irvington, Illinois. The other was the third deadliest tornado in US history, taking a total of at least 255 lives. In Saint Louis, Missouri, people died in homes, factories, saloons, hospitals, mills, railroad yards, and churches, as a half-mile-wide swath was cut across the center of the city. At least 137 people died at Saint Louis. Other people living on shanty boats may have perished in the Mississippi River, but were not counted because their bodies were washed downstream. At East Saint Louis, Illinois, the funnel had narrowed but may have also intensified. Devastation there was more complete, and 118 people were killed. Twenty seven more people died in other Illinois tornadoes this day.

July 2 1892

Wind blew the roof of the Waterworks away.

August 6 1892.

Tornado in the "Worcester" neighborhood

May 23 1893	Damage in the county from a tornado
January 21 1913 fire	Ferris Grand Opera House
April 12 1913 fire	Central Hotel (Greer Building)
July 28 1916 fire	Buckner Building
July 30 1916 fire	Tatlow Building
January 3 1920 fire	Fatality- The Orpheum Theatre burned, with the loss of the life of O. D. Thompson, father of the manager Shirely C. Thompson. Mr. Thompson was trapped on the second floor. (\$60,000.00) Included a \$10,000 pipe organ
April 29, 1927 fire	New Grand Opera House (location was later the Gorrell Motor Company)
May 9 1927	A cyclone that hit at night south of Mexico resulted in the deaths of Mrs. Rober E. Biggs age 65, north of Auxvass and Jewell Culver age 2 son of Mr. & Mrs. Harold Culver near Benton City. Injuries included members of these families and other near by house holds. Culver Family Website
August 7 1930 fire	Fatality - Frank Kunkel, an employee of C. C. Wonneman & Sons, was fatally burned when the fuel oil tanks caught fire while he was filling the tanks
December 27 1933 fire	Hamilton Apts, formerly the Clarkson or Windsor Hotel burned with \$ 50,000.00 loss
May 23 1934 fire	Barth Building, north side of the square
June 9 1934	Tornado went though Mexico
? 193_	Pollock Mill- grain piles smouldered for months after the fire.



The "Orphan Trains" to Missouri
 Typical Advertisement which would run in local newspapers.
 This ad was repeated in various local area newspapers across Missouri

Wanted HOMES for CHILDREN	
A company of homeless children from the East will arrive at _____ MO., ON FRIDAY, <u>MAR. 25th,</u> <u>19</u>	
<p>These children are of various ages and of both sexes, having been thrown friendless upon the world. They come under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society of New York. They are well disciplined, having come from the various orphanages. The citizens of this community are asked to assist the agent in finding good homes for them. Persons taking these children must be recommended by the local committee. They must treat the children in every way as a member of the family, sending them to school, church, Sabbath school and properly clothe them until they are 17 years old. The following well-known citizens have agreed to act as local committee to aid the agents in securing homes:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John Smith, George Brown, Tom Johnson</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Applications must be made to, and endorsed by, the local committee.</p> <p>An address will be made by the agent. Come and see the children and hear the address. Distribution will take place at the _____ Friday, Mar. __, at 1:30 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B. W. TICE and MISS A. L. HILL, Agents, 105 E. 22nd St., New York City. Rev. J. W. SWAN, University Place, Nebraska, Western Agent</p>	

There were "Orphan Trains "that ran on both sides of the Missouri River. One such train came through Lincoln County, Missouri, Montgomery County and westward; others through Osage County, Cole County, and on to the west.

The Children's Aid Society of New York celebrated their 150 anniversery in 2003. A gentleman named Charles Loring Brace saw the plight of countless orphaned, homeless or abandoned and neglected children on the streets of New York City. He founded the Children's Aid Society in an effort to better the

future and circumstances for these children,

The numbers were overwhelming and his idea of placing them in another environment and atmosphere led to the children being sent to farm families with good moral standards across many states. They were not indentured, but were expected to take their place within the families and share the work that is natural to farmers and families. Frequently farm families needed another pair of hands. The benefit of this idea was usually mutual for both child and foster parents.

Some of the older children were paid for their work just as if they were "hired hands". The children were from ages six to seventeen or eighteen.

This "movement" started in 1853 and ran until the early 1900's. It involved placement in at least forty five states. Missouri was one of the forty five states. refer: Ancestry Magazine issue January/February 1995 states:

"The practice began with the New York Children's Aid Society, but it was taken up by other charities – the Children's Mission to the Children of the Destitute (Boston), the New York Juvenile Asylum, the New England Home for Little Wanderers (Boston), and the New York Foundling Hospital. By the late 1800s, charities in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois also adopted the program, sending children to states farther west"

Each agency had its own placement policies; the New England Home for Little Wanderers, for example, strongly encouraged legal adoption, but New York Juvenile Asylum placements were by legal indenture only. Agencies, however, varied little in procedure.

As a rule groups of children were gathered together and put under the charge of agents employed by the placing charity. The groups traveled to pre-planned destinations where local citizens had been told to expect the children. Upon arrival, the children were taken to "some big building" – an opera house, a church, or courthouse – where they were displayed before the curious citizenry who had turned out for the orphan train. Local families or "employers" chose who they wanted to take home, and the agents were supposed to ensure that the homes were suitable.

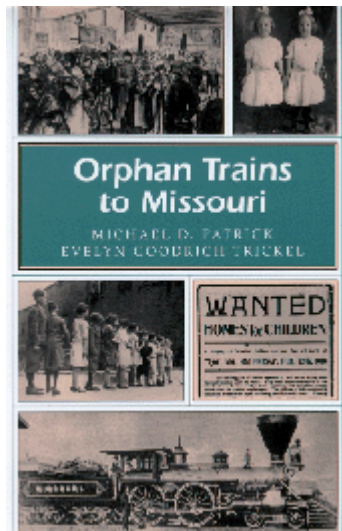
From the Children's Aid Society:

".....Educated to be a minister, Brace was determined to give children an alternative to life in the squalid slums and teeming New York City streets. His theories were grounded in the conviction that institutional care stunted and destroyed children. According to Brace, the answers to transforming New York's orphans and street children into self-reliant members of society were gainful work, education, and a wholesome family atmosphere.

Charles Loring Brace's work transformed the face of social services and social reforms in New York City and across the nation. His imprint — his legacy — has benefited millions and millions of children. Of course, much has changed since his time — including the concepts of children's rights and parental responsibility — but Brace's imprint remains an enduring one."

From the Orphan Trainriders website:

".....Seventeen years ago, Mary Ellen Johnson first learned about a group of children who had been taken by train from the east coast and placed with families in rural America. Research revealed that at least 250,000 mostly homeless, abandoned, and neglected children were sent "West" in this manner. Soon Johnson founded the Orphan Train Heritage Society of America, Inc. (OTHSA), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the history of the seventy-five year period (1854-1929) and the individual stories of the children involved."



Orphan Trains to Missouri

Michael D. Patrick and Evelyn Goodrich
Trickel

"Cheap fares, the central location of the state, and numerous small farming towns along the railroad tracks made Missouri the perfect hub for the orphan trains, even though many areas of the state were still largely unsettled. Researchers have estimated that from 150,000 to 400,000 children were sent out on orphan trains, with perhaps as many as 100,000 being placed in Missouri"

This does not constitute an endorsement of this book, but because it is pertinent to the subject, this is provided for educational purposes only. For more information and ordering information go to the University of MO. Press page at: <http://www.system.missouri.edu/upress/spring1997/patrick.htm>

TROY, MO., ON FRIDAY, FEB. 25th, 1910
An address will be made by the agent. Come and see the children and hear the address. Distribution will take place at the Opera House, Friday, Feb. 25, at 1:30 p.m.
B. W. TICE and MISS A. L. HILL, Agents, 105 E. 22nd St., New York City. Rev. J. W. SWAN, University Place, Nebraska, Western Agent

New York's homeless children sought better lives in the Midwest. Many found the home they never had with families in Missouri and other states.

by Jim McCarty

Children from New York's orphanages came to the Midwest by the trainload in a huge migration that lasted 75 years. Estimates put the number of children relocated at 150,000 to 400,000, with some 100,000 coming to Missouri.

"In every American community, especially in a western one, there are many spare places at the table of life," Brace wrote. "There is no harrassing struggle for existence. They have enough for themselves and the stranger too."

Brace's plan was simple. He would send notices to Midwest towns announcing the time and data a train-load of orphans would be arriving. The trains would leave New York City carrying the children and two adult agents from the society. Applications must be made to, and endorsed by, the local committee.

As the train made its stops the children would be paraded in front of the crowd of onlookers. Some needed another farm hand. Others genuinely wanted to give a child a home. The train left a small part of its cargo at each stop until finally all the children found homes.

The first such "orphan train" went to Dowagiac, Michigan, in 1854. The trains would run for 75 years with the last one pulling into Trenton, [Grundy County] Missouri in 1929.

Missouri's location as a railroad crossroads made it the perfect destination for many trains. Researchers

estimate 150,000 to 400,000 orphans were sent west. As many as 100,000 may have been placed in Missouri.

Brace's group wasn't the only one sending orphans to the rural Midwest. *Catholic Charities of New York* also got into the act, perhaps because they saw Catholic children being placed in Protestant homes. In 1869 the *Sisters of Mercy* started the *New York Foundling Hospital*. Soon the Catholic group was sending its own "mercy trains" west.

While following Brace's lead, the Catholic trains differed in that they found homes for the children before they left New York. The parish priest served as the screening committee. He would announce the trains from the pulpit and those who wanted a child signed up, specifying whether they wanted a boy or a girl.

No one knows why the orphan trains ended. A 1901 Missouri law banning them certainly wasn't effective because it was never enforced. Most likely the social programs that came about in the 1930s made them unnecessary.

In many cases the orphan train experiment was successful, in others the right match of foster parent and orphan didn't happen. There were instances of abuse and neglect, forced labor and not enough food.

The story of the orphan train has a place in the history of just about every Missouri town located anywhere near a railroad. These tales of kindness and cruelty, of hope amid the despair are being preserved so that others can know the orphan train story.

Credits: From Rural Missouri, July 1997. Reprinted with permission.



from Mexico Weekly Ledger Jan. 23, 1913 pg 3 col 5

DOG TEAM OF WILLIAM SOPHER

William, the 11 year old son of J. I. Sopher of this city, has a dog team which has attracted much attention here and which he recently refused \$100 for. The team was trained by the boy and pulls both wagon or sled almost as fast as a good sized pony.

The dogs are a cross between bull and shepherd, are a year old and willing workers. William gets into his wagon with a boy friend and his team starts without a hitch. He is justly proud of his trained dogs and is to be complimented for his success in teaching them. The dogs are known as Prince and Watch. The latter will drive single. They have pulled as much as 600 pounds.

from Mexico Weekly Ledger Jan. 23, 1913 pg 3 col



THE ELLIS HOUSE

The large plantation type red brick house located twelve miles north of Mexico was built during the civil war by Squire John Ellis. He was born in Callaway County in 1820 of parents who had come from Virginia. In 1850, he and his wife, Rebecca Darby of Maryland, brought their three children into north Audrain. For years they lived in a four room log cabin not far from the site where the brick house was built. In the pasture a miniature brick yard was set up under the direction of Andrew Harrison, who started the A. P. Green Fire Brick Co. Clay was dug from the Ellis pasture and molded by hand into bricks. The civil war delayed the construction.

The house was built with double brick walls laid by Cauthorn and Hendrix. Sixteen helpers helped keep bricks ready for the house which faced the east. Squire Ellis took no chances in his direction and used a compass to get the house "square with the world". Evans and Gibbs were the carpenters using lumber hauled by mule teams from Hannibal. The eight room house with high ceilings and long windows had a basement dug under the kitchen and dining room, and across the back was added a two story porch.

Squire Ellis' wife died before the brick house was completed and she was the first person buried in Berea Church Cemetery which was northeast of the farm.

Capt. Bryson was wounded in a Civil War skirmish on the Joe Botts farm and was carried on a home-made stretcher one night to the Ellis farm where he was hidden in bushes along the branch southeast of the house for three weeks. He recovered and married a neighbor girl, Miss Mundy. Until 1957 the farm remained in the Ellis family. At the death of Squire Ellis in 1886, his son, John II, became the owner of the 2,000 acres of land that he operated as a farmer and stockman. In 1909, Clyde W. Ellis, a grandson of Squire Ellis, moved to the farm with his bride, Lucy Baker. They lived here until ill health caused Mr. Ellis to sell the farm.
See also 1884 History of Audrain Co., Mo. pgs. 737, 738 & 739



Llewellyn Home
Copied from YESTERDAY IN MEXICO, 25 Years Ago
The Mexico Ledger Feb. 8, 1997 page 10

The old gray house at 315 N. Jefferson St. which was the home of one of Mexico's most prominent citizens and held one of the finest privately owned libraries in the state, has its days numbered. The home of the late J.F. Llewellyn is to be razed soon according to its owner, Dr. P.C. Lahs. Dr. Lahs said he has no specific plans for the site at this time. The rambling two-story house with a wrap around front porch and tall, stately lines, has been owned by Dr. Lahs for the past several years, he said. The home, nearly a hundred years old, was once a cultural center for Mexico, chiefly because of the reading interests of Mr. Llewellyn and his rich heritage. Mr. Llewellyn, who died in 1917, was a pioneer druggist and came to Mexico in 1869. His parents were natives of England and he studied Pharmacy and Chemistry in Louisville, Ky., where he was born in 1845. Mr. Llewellyn was a lineal descendant of Llewellyn ap Gryffydd, the last Welsh prince, who was slain in 1282 by a vassal of King Edward I...The history of his lineage was kept in his library, supplemented extensively by clippings which were bound and filed by him for more than 40 years. The site for the Carnegie Libraru on North Washington Street was given to the city by Mr. Llewellyn, who tho constantly sought information through reading. For nearly 40 years the Llewellyn drug store on the west side of the square was the headquarters for the 'weather' in Mexico. He was local observer for the United States Weather bureau, and officials of the bureau asserted his records were the most nearly perfect of any of those received by the Department from its correspondents. His family continued the tradition of being weather correspondents after his death. In 1885 he established in Mexico the first electric light plant in the city and one of the first in the country....His wife, the former Callie Duncan of Mexico, who died in 1943, was one of the organizers of the Wednesday Club...Mrs. Abbie Llewellyn Snoddy, their daughter, was a state president of the Missouri Federated Clubs and an editor of a national musical magazine. Mr. Llewellyn's three sons, all pharmacists, continued to run the drug store after their father's death. The three brothers, Henry D., Frederick W. and R. Merritt, all were graduated from the St. Louis College of Pharmacy. The drug firm was sold in 1936 to W. L. Jesse of Moberly, and then became known as Jesse's Drug Store.

from Weekly Intelligencer Aug. 11, 1910 2/3

The old house on north Jefferson street just north of J. F. Llewellyn's residence, which was occupied by Miss Sarah Baskett for many years until recently, was one of the first houses built in that part of town. The house was erected by William Scott, a son of the Rev. Stephen Scott, a Presbyterian minister who lived here many years ago. The old house is being torn down preparatory to moving a portion of it to another lot.

"I quite well remember that house" said P. M. Morris to a reporter for The Intelligencer. "I boarded there several years and attended school in Mexico. That was out in the country in those days and the brush had to be cut away and a clearing made when the house was built, I believe, in 1855.

"There were several other young fellows boarding there and going to school in Mexico. We attended school in the old brick Methodist church which stood where the City Hall now stands.

"I have seen many teams "stalled" on the big hill on what is now called North Jefferson street. It was the Paris road in those days and was a main thoroughfare leading out of town. And that road got muddy, too, in rainy seasons.

"My room-mate was W. J. Bruton. Another young fellow who boarded with the Scotts was Clif Quisenberry; he was killed during the war. There were also a lot of carpenters who boarded in that little house.

"They hauled the lumber from Hannibal to build that house. It was a long haul but that was the nearest point, I suppose. It was well built as can be seen from the timbers that were used in its construction.

"I remember once going out of my room about sundown to get some firewood, one evening in the fall of the year, when I heard a shot fired. Pretty soon word came to town that Jim Rodman had shot Wes Ricketts and the town was in an uproar of excitement."

Mr. Morris said that Prof. W. P. Hart taught school in the old brick church here, in the late fifties. He told of a number of interesting incidents of his early school days in Mexico. Mr. Morris is now 76 years old and is quite familiar with the early history of Mexico, having come here from Tennessee in 1855.

Lastly...

[Photographer Lewis Hine's Images of Child Workers in Kirksville, Missouri in the early 1900s, and His Drive for Social Reform](#)

Documentary photographs

The above gives a better picture and story than the files found in the old Audrain Pages.

Reformatted: 23 February 2025

Audrain County portion of the [MOGenWeb](#)

