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PROVENANCE

This collection was a gift of Fayette Stewart to the State Historical Society of Missouri on 20 December 2010, SHSMO-RA1513

DESCRIPTION

These are the family papers of Robert Q. and Frieda Hamilton. The Hamiltons and their children, Bobette, Quinten and Fayette, moved from Illinois to Shannon County, Missouri in November 1958. They operated a country store, filling station and a fourteen-kiln charcoal-manufacturing plant at Timber, a former postal village on Highway 19.

The Hamiltons were near neighbors and members of the Shannondale Community Church, now Shannondale Community Center, operated by the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the United Church of Christ. The Timber community was closely associated with the activities at Shannondale. Two years before the Hamilton family arrived in Timber, the era of one-room schools ended in Shannon County, after which the community built a new three-room school. In 1971, the Timber School District was consolidated with the Eminence District. Shannondale acquired the former school building. It became Timber Lodge, Shannondale’s largest indoor facility and gathering place for many of the activities in which the Hamiltons were involved. In 1979, the Hamiltons rented a tract of their land to the Timber Recreation Association, a community effort to develop a ball field and fairgrounds. The Timber Recreation Association raised $13,000 in donations to improve the site, which hosted 1st Annual North Shannon County Fair on July 13-15, 1982. The Hamiltons continued the arrangement through 1999. The Hamiltons also helped create the Timber Community Volunteer Fire Department. The organizational meeting was held September 23, 1996 at the Timber Lodge.

Robert Hamilton grew up on an Illinois farm and had a lifelong interest in farm equipment. He bought his first antique tractor in 1978, followed by several other pieces of vintage equipment. Hamilton said the “old ways of farming” returned to their lives as they used the restored farm equipment on their property. The Hamiltons hosted an “Old Time Threshing Bee” at the Timber ball park, and demonstrated threshing at events at Rolla in 1988 and the Alley Mill Centennial Event in 1994.
Many items in the collection illustrate the close connection of the Hamiltons with Shannondale Community Church Center. Shannondale first held meetings in the Cornell School in November 1929 as a result of mission work begun earlier by the Rev. Paul A. Wobus of St. Louis and local evangelist Zenith (“Zene”) Yount. The rural ministry in the Ozarks was adopted by the Missouri Conference and the Board of Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ. In addition to traditional religious services, Shannondale’s community projects included acquisition of a 4,000-acre oak and pine forest. It was dedicated on October 23, 1949 as the Shannondale Community Forest.

Programs at the Shannondale Community Church Center include week-long camps with activities such as boating, hiking, cook-outs, hay rides, excursions, work camps, and worship participation. The Christianson Native Craft Workshop, founded in 1975 by Francis Christiansen and members of the United Methodist Church, has become an annual summer event featuring traditional folk arts and crafts. It is hosted at Shannondale’s Timber Lodge and the Paul A. Wobus Memorial Craft Center.

Robert and Frieda Hamilton were involved in many capacities in the developments at Shannondale. A feature in the Shannondale Associates’ Reunion newsletter in 1992 recounted Robert’s regular delivery of locally-cut firewood to St. Louis as part of the “Inner-City Firewood Project” and Frieda’s tenure as pianist at Shannondale. Both Hamiltons served as directors of the craft program. Robert and Frieda Hamilton are buried in the Pilgrim’s Rest Cemetery at Shannondale.

The Shannondale development benefitted from the early leadership of Paul Wobus and his successor, Rev. Vincent W. Bucher. Historical details on the mission venture may be found “Notes on Shannondale History,” circa 1941, in Folder 15, and in Rev. Wobus’s 1963 history in Folder 19. Researchers will find additional historical information Wobus’s unpublished manuscript, “Early Days in Our Ozark Church Program” (SHSMO-R0009), and Shannondale Community Church Center scrapbook (SHSMO-R0015). The Froeschner Memorial Nature and Visitor Center at Shannondale contains a history archive and natural history museum.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Robert Q. Hamilton papers contain personal papers associated with the family’s filling station, charcoal manufacturing, antique farm equipment at Timber in Shannon County, Missouri. The papers reflect the family’s close association with Shannondale Community Church Center, a mission of the Missouri Conference of the United Church of Christ. Other papers show civic involvement with the Timber volunteer fire department, recreation association, and North Shannon County Fair.

FOLDER INVENTORY

Folders 1-8 TimberCommunity
F. 01: Hamilton Store & Service Station, business papers, 1982-1986
F. 02: Timber Community Volunteer Fire Department, papers, 1996-1998
F. 03: Timber Recreation Association, bylaws, lease, news article, 1979-1999
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F. 04: North Shannon County Fair, flyers, 1982-1986
F. 05: Timber School, papers, 1956
F. 06: Missouri Extension Homemakers Association, Shannon County Club, papers, 1976-1977
F. 07: Hamilton family papers, 1958-1994
F. 08: Photographs (loaned for copying), 1958-1961

Folders 9-19 Shannondale Community Church-Center, 1953-2008
F. 09: Brochures & postcard (n.d.)
F. 13: Anniversary celebrations, commemorative booklets, 1959-1979
F. 15: Community Forest: Songs of the Forest” dedication commemorative booklet (1941); Resource Management Plan (1975-1993); Memorial Plantings map and listing (1991)
F. 16: Community Church, bulletins, 1968-1998
F. 17: Community Church, newsletters, 1986-1988
F. 19: Newspapers and clippings, 1953-2008

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