

THE LEGEND OF QUEEN BEAVERS



The town of Victoria in Jefferson County was founded by Thomas L. Bevis in 1802. His wife, Prudence (born about 1784 in Illinois) was said to be a beautiful woman of Irish descent, but folks came to believe she was really a witch. After her husband died in 1826, Prudence became known as Queen Beavers (a corruption of the name Bevis) and her evil powers grew stronger. Anything that went wrong in the town was blamed on Queen Beavers, and people became very afraid of her. Sickness, pestilence, and crop failures were believed to be the direct work of the witch's curse.

Stories were still being told about her as late as the 1890s, when Reed McCormack related tales he had been told about Queen Beavers from his childhood. One story claimed that when Mrs. Sullivan Frazier refused to sell her cow to Prudence, the cow jumped the fence and when it was found only gave bloody milk.

Henry Jones, the area blacksmith and reputed witch-charmer, was able to break a spell that the witch had put on a local man by shooting a paper cutout of the witch's likeness with a silver bullet.

Prudence Bevis died about 1858, but her legend lives on in the folklore of Jefferson County. To find out more fascinating local stories, visit the Genealogy Department at High Ridge. (mh/jeffcolib)

Sources: Missouri Historical Review, Volume 2, Oct 1907-Jul 1908, "History of Victoria", pp 15-22;

Witchcraft, Wickedness, and Other Wacky Happenings in Jefferson County History, compiled by Della Lang, 1995; and *Jefferson Democrat*, Hillsboro, Missouri, 30 Sep 1897.