The Early History of Lincoln County, Missouri, and Its Connection to Revolutionary War Soldiers
Lincoln County
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Lincoln County, Missouri is located in Northeastern Missouri, with the Mississippi River serving as its Eastern boundary. Situated above the confluence of the Mississippi & Missouri Rivers, the numerous tributaries of these two great waterways served as a highway for people seeking new opportunity, wealth, and land. The drainage basin is 1.2 million square miles which encompasses 40% of the landmass of the United States. Lincoln County has been under the following jurisdictions: Spain, France, the District of Louisiana, the Territory of Louisiana, the United States of America, the Territory of the Missouri, the State of Missouri, and the county of St. Charles.

During the age of European exploration, Lincoln County was inhabited by indigenous peoples of the following nations: Sac and Fox, Otoe-Missouria, Chickasaw, Illini, Ioway, Quapaw, Shawnee and Osage. These nations waged war with each other and the intruding settlers. Due to the constant threat, a number of forts were built for protection during the War of 1812. Many of these tribes were paid or provoked by the British to raise problems on the frontier in an effort try to keep the national government’s focus away from the war at sea. In 1830, the threat of Indian attack was eliminated by the removal of the native people to reservations in modern-day Oklahoma, Nebraska and Kansas.

This area of Missouri was explored and hunted by French fur trappers. Often, the French tended to live with and adapt to the culture of native tribes. After France ceded this territory to Spain in 1762, in an effort to encourage permanent settlement in the region, the Spanish government dispensed land grants to Europeans. Major Christopher Clark was the first permanent non-indigenous settler in Lincoln County. He first scouted the area in 1799 and soon after brought his family, including six children, from Kentucky. Clark was forced to return to Kentucky after his wife passed away unexpectedly within days of their arrival. Upon his return to this new territory 1801, he constructed the first permanent settlement. This settlement included the building of Clark’s Fort. In 1802-03, the area saw an increase in population. Other early settlers included Jeremiah Groshong, Alexander McLane, Francis Riffle, Ira Cottle, Zadock Woods, William McHugh, David Bailey, John Lindsey, James Barnes, Roswell Durgee, Fredrick Dixon, and Benjamin Allen.
In 1801, the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, heard through diplomatic channels that Spain would retrocede the Louisiana Territory to France. Due to the financial hardship of maintaining a military presence in the French colonies, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, agreed to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803. On March 9, 1804, in Saint Louis, Missouri, the Spanish Lieutenant-Governor, Carlos Deburg Delassus, along with a commissioner of the French government and Capt. Amos Stoddard of the United States, transferred the province of Upper Louisiana to the United States. This is remembered as the Day of Three Flags.

The territory west of the Mississippi River was open to Americans wishing to migrate westward. For their service to the nation and in an effort to increase the population, the United States offered land grants to veterans of the Revolutionary War. Many veterans chose to leave settlements in the Eastern portion of the United States, to homestead new lands west of the Mississippi.


The Missouri Territorial Legislature convened in Saint Louis in December of 1818. In response to an increase in population, the legislators discussed the organization of new counties to be subdivided from established counties in Missouri. Saint Charles County was to be divided into five additional counties. Major Christopher Clark was serving as a member of the legislature representing St. Charles County. After several names were suggested, Major Clark implored that the name Lincoln County be chosen. This was based upon his previous homes in Lincoln County, North Carolina, as well as Lincoln County, Kentucky. Because the transcript for the Territorial Legislature of 1818 was destroyed in one of two fires at the capitol in Jefferson City, there is no definitive evidence the county was named in honor of American Revolutionary General, Benjamin Lincoln. There is a tradition in several eastern states that lists him as the namesake of those. In addition to his service in the Revolution, General Lincoln also served as Secretary of War in the Continental Congress and led the militia to quell Shay's Rebellion.
RESOURCES

https://neighborsofthemississippi.org/flood-facts/general-information/

https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/curriculum/africanamerican/guide/rg951


https://dynamic.stlouis-mo.gov/history/eventdetail.cfm?Master_ID=468

An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Lincoln County, Missouri, Edwards Brothers, 1878 “History of Lincoln County, Missouri” by Dr. Joseph A. Mudd,

https://lincoln.mogenweb.org/history/history-mudd-1.htm

Missouri State Archives.

Figure 1 - Christopher Clark Home Site (Moscow Mills, Missouri). This marker was first erected near the old over pass of Interstate 61 and Lincoln County Hwy C. When Hwy 61 was redone, it was moved to its current location in front of the Bank of Old Monroe in Moscow Mills.
Figure 2 - Historic Marker on Spring Lot (Troy, Missouri).

Figure 3 - Grave of Malcolm Henry, a Revolutionary War Veteran, Near Carter Cemetery (Moscow Mills, Missouri)
Figure 4 - Grave of James Cannon, a Revolutionary War Veteran, in Elsberry City Cemetery (Elsberry City, Missouri).

Figure 5 - Spring Lot (Troy, Missouri). A spring that was located on this spot was where native Americans camped and early European pioneers first settled Troy.