

The McConachy Clan

ROCK BRIDGE MILL

From "Boone County Album" p. 58, published by Columbia (*Missouri*)
Daily Tribune, 1971 -- sent to us by Mary Mantz Griffith, August 1977.

'In 1822 Gilpin S. Tuttle built one of the county's earliest mills at scenic Rock Bridge, located some three miles south of Columbia. The site took its name from the natural bridge spanning Little Bonne Femme Creek.'

"Through the years Rock Bridge farm, grist mill and merchandising business changed hands many times. Here David S. Lamme and John W. Keiser established what was thought to be the first paper mill in the State. In November of 1834 the Columbia '*Missouri Intelligencer*' was printed on the paper, and in September 1835 the St. Louis '*Missouri Republican*' used the product which it claimed to be as good as, if not superior to any west of the Allegheny Mountains.

The enterprise proved unprofitable, however, and was a short-lived venture.

"John H. Bryan distilled whiskey at Rock Bridge in 1841 and offered it in exchange for corn, rye or wheat. Three years later the farm and mill were sold to James McConathy and the whiskey, sold under the label of McConathy Rye, became famous for its high qualities. The traffic of four-ox teams hauling barrels of whiskey to Providence and Columbia was said to be so great that it hurried the deterioration of the Providence Plank Road.

Two years before his death James McConathy asked his son, Henry, to return from San Francisco and take charge of the distillery and farm. James died, February 3, 1866. The mill, distillery, store and 800 acres of land were sold to James and David Emmitt in 1872. Three years later, May 27;1875, Henry McConathy purchased the Columbia Woollen Mills, an old brick building on Ash Street which was used by the gas company for a number of years. McConathy also operated a distillery in the building, known as the seat of a flourishing '*jug trade*'. The establishment was owned by the McConathy family until 1895.

"David Emmitt, an owner of the Rock Bridge property, was commissioned as postmaster for the area in 1875, a position which he held until 1881. A fire destroyed the mill on April 2, 1889. Later the general store and a blacksmith shop at Rock Bridge were moved south to the top of the hill, and the new site was given the French name, '*Pierpont*'.

The article includes a picture of the Emmitt Distillery with the notation: '*The Emmitt Distillery which burned in 1889. A later building was built using the same chimney. The last vestiges of that building disappeared in the 1920s. The chimney lasted until the 1930s*'

A second picture of the Columbia Woollen Mills also with the article, captioned:
'*This building Ash and Orr streets was owned by Henry McConathy. For years it served as a warehouse & Distillery. It was demolished 1970*'.