

THE YOAKUM RENDEZVOUS!

by Van Beydler

Simon Yoakum of Dixon has been to the Yoakum Rendezvous held each year in Lakeview, Missouri. Each year, every single Yoakum...however you spell the name...in the world is invited to attend. There are actually eighty-five spellings of the name which have been documented including Yoakum, Yocum, Yolkim, Yochum, Jochem, Yoacum, Jochim, Jochens, Yochim and the list goes on. During the rendezvous, the Yoakums have live entertainment, tell tall tales, and do serious genealogical work.

In the early 1800's, James Yoachum left Illinois and his family running from the memory of his wife's recent death. He wanted a new life, a good life in the untamed land west he shared only with a tribe of peaceful Delaware Indians. What he found was a treasure he could never have imagined and what followed was

untold tragedy. Yoachum married an Indian maiden named Winonah and lived the life of an Indian, acquiring an understanding of their language including sign language. In Spring, he would return to Illinois to see his son, Jacob, who lived with James' brother, Solomon Yocum. Each Summer, he would return with provisions. By 1815, he convinced Jacob and Solomon to come with him. The legendary Yoachum Silver Mine came into their hands during the early 1800's after trading blankets, soap and two horses to the Indians. The three brothers built their first cabin home directly across the valley from the mine entrance, so one of them could guard its entrance at all times. They later built James cabin directly in front of the opening and fixed a secret entrance from the house to the mine. James and his Indian wife would find the

mineral ore in the cave below their cabin and place it in saddlebags.

Money, especially silver money, was scarce and the Yoachums decided to make their own. It was not illegal to coin money until 1862 when Congress passed a law prohibiting it.

Descendants of the Yocum pioneers claim to have seen the molds in which the Yocum Dollars were made. It is assumed that Jacob Levi Yoachum was responsible for casting the Yocum Dollar. In the mold the name is spelled Yocum and the coins were the same size as the Spanish dollar, but no attempt was made at imitation.

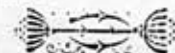
In 1846 or 1847, a double tragedy occurred in the history of the Yocum Silver Mine. The mine caved in one night and it was presumed that James Yoachum and his Indian wife were inside. With the mine closed, the Yocum brothers decided to move

Southwest to the mouth of the Kings River where it empties into the White River. The Yocum Dollar was thought to be a legend by the time the Springfield Daily Leader reported that a coin had been found under the rotted floor of an old cabin being razed after being used for a bunkhouse for a saw mill crew. Four coins were found in the process of completely tearing down the old log

cabin. Will Townsend wrote in the Springfield Daily News and Leader in 1975 that a St. Louis man reputedly found two hundred thirty six coins in a metal box in the area south of Branson, Missouri. Each was roughly two inches in diameter and embossed with the name Yocum.

An historic outdoor drama re-enacting the tale of the Yoachum family is

presented each summer at Lakeview, Missouri at the Lost Silver Mine located near Silver Dollar City. The 1,000 seat amphitheatre is on 400 acres of rolling Ozark hills on the site of the original Yoachum homesteads. Tourists can tour the farm and see the hanging tree as well as see the site of current silver diggings.



(Portions of this article were prepared with the assistance of material written by Artie Ayres, from his book "Traces of Silver," used with the author's permission.)



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