

The City of Jefferson: The Permanent Seat of Government, 1826–2001



The City of Jefferson—1826

“The appearance of the place [is] somewhat fatiguing”

Ambivalence, uncertainty, and discomfort hung like clouds of gloom over the Missouri General Assembly members who gathered in the City of Jefferson (more commonly known in later years as “Jefferson City”) for their first official meeting on the third Monday in November 1826. They had become accustomed to the relative comfort provided by the much larger settlement of St. Charles, site of the temporary capital since Missouri’s admission to the Union in 1821.

Indeed, calling the place named for the third president of the United States a “city” in 1826 reflected a quite liberal use of the term. Jefferson City had thirty-one families in 1826 and no more than a handful of businesses, including one hotel (the Rising Sun), a general store, a gristmill, a distillery, several tan yards, and multiple dram shops and taverns, most of them hastily opened to accommodate the newly arriving lawmakers. So ill prepared was the city to host the first meeting of lawmakers in the new state capital that a number of legislators were forced to stay in tents. More fortunate members, such as Dr. William Carr Lane, who was also mayor of St. Louis, found housing with city residents. In a letter written in 1826, Lane noted that he roomed with “Major Ramsay” and that he paid “\$4.50 per week besides something for washing.” Lane’s pay for his legislative work was \$2.25 per day. He noted that “We lodge in a cabin containing 3 beds, such as they are.” He concluded: “I will not detain you with details, but sum up all in this—the business of Legislating does not please over much.”

One of the first institutions established in the City of Jefferson as a consequence of its status as state capital was a newspaper and printing office owned by Calvin Gunn, who hoped to make money by serving the new government’s printing needs. Gunn called his newspaper the *Jeffersonian Republican*, a title used to describe the members of the political party that arose in opposition to the Federalists during the last decade of the 18th century.

In the first issue of his newspaper (June 24, 1826), Gunn wrote “a brief sketch of the City of Jefferson” for “our distant subscribers.” Much of Gunn’s description represented commentary on the physical characteristics of the place, including “a series of promontories,” where the Capitol, Governor’s Mansion, and prison would set subsequently, and the “intervening dells” between them that “render the appearance of the place somewhat fatiguing [sic].” Although the town was still aborning, Gunn assured his readers that “improvements is [sic] the order of the day.”

The First State House

“‘Tis a rough looking city indeed”

The first state building erected in the new capital city was a combination governor’s house and legislative hall, erected near the site where the Governor’s Mansion now stands. In a November 18, 1826, article, Gunn described the building as a ten-room structure, sixty by forty feet, “fronting the Missouri [River], on an eminence of two hundred feet above the level of its waters.” It was in this building fourteen months later that Missourians came together for the first statewide political convention held in the new capital city. In January 1828 a number of the state’s residents gathered to endorse the selection of Tennessean Andrew Jackson as president of the United States. In addition to choosing Jackson as its candidate, the convention, chaired by future governor Thomas Reynolds, also nominated Daniel Dunklin to serve as Missouri’s chief executive. Although Jackson was elected in 1828, Dunklin had to wait until the 1832 election to be chosen as governor of the state.

Old Hickory was honored, also, in an annual celebration held on January 8 of each year outside the new state house. This gathering commemorated General Jackson’s decisive victory at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. One such celebration nearly ended in disaster when celebrants exploded five pounds of gunpowder in front of the Capitol. As the local newspaper exclaimed: “Such a report was never heard before or since in the City of the Hills. It was distinctly heard at Fulton . . . the Legislature did no business for a week, for there was not glass enough in the city to refill the windows of the capitol and wagons had to be sent to neighboring towns to make out a supply.”

Despite the assurances of Calvin Gunn in 1826 that “improvements” were the order of the day in the City of Jefferson, many people thought that converting this wilderness outpost into a functioning, urban, governmental center was nothing more than a pipe dream. No one captured this sentiment better than John Shriver, a civil engineer from Baltimore, hired in the late 1820s to survey a national highway from Wheeling, Virginia, westward to Missouri’s new capital. In a letter dated August 9, 1829, Shriver wrote to his brother of his impression of the City of Jefferson: “‘Tis a rough looking city indeed, and one which does not bid fair to become of much importance.” Two years later, James S. Rollins visited the City of Jefferson. Some years afterward, he recalled that the city “was at that time a small and insignificant village.”



Sketch of Jefferson City, c1850

Missouri State Archives

Choosing a Capital Site

How had it happened that this seemingly forsaken place had been chosen to serve as the capital of the state of Missouri? The first Missouri legislature, elected in August 1820, in anticipation of the state's admission to the Union, convened in St. Louis in September 1820. Fourteen state senators and forty-three representatives chose St. Charles as the state's temporary capital and appointed a five-member commission to choose a permanent seat of government. Eager to ensure input from all Missourians, legislators specified that commissioners must be chosen, "one from each part of the state, and one from the center."

The five commissioners, James Logan of Wayne County, John Thornton of Howard, Robert G. Watson of New Madrid, John B. White of Pike, and James B. Boone of Montgomery, met at Cote sans Dessein, in southern Callaway County, on the first Monday in May 1821. Commissioners had been directed by the state constitution to choose a site on the Missouri River, within forty miles of the mouth of the Osage River. Framers of the constitution hoped that by placing these geographic requirements on the site, they would ensure the capital's central location and its accessibility to all Missourians. Ironically, the Missouri River, which in the 1820s was a major artery for travel into the interior of the state, would become in less than a century an obstacle to gaining easy access to the capital. Indeed,

making the capital city accessible to all Missourians would be a major concern of state legislators for the next 175 years.

In addition to the requirement that the new permanent seat of government be on the Missouri River and near the mouth of the Osage River, legislators decreed that the capital site should contain at least four sections (2,560 acres) of unclaimed public land, not yet distributed by the government of the United States. This last provision excluded a site that many Missourians thought might be chosen: the town of Cote sans Dessein, where the commissioners met. Founded in 1808 by old stock migrants to the region, Cote sans Dessein was in southern Callaway County, on the north shore of the Missouri River, and was in the midst of highly desirable agricultural land.

The site ultimately chosen to be Missouri's capital city was available largely because it was deemed by many to be undesirable land: it was rocky and hilly, thought by many to be unfit for major agricultural production. The commissioners themselves had referred to this site as "too poor to support any considerable population or extensive settlement." Thus, almost no one had settled there, making it one of the few places along the Missouri River and near the mouth of the Osage that could provide the required amount of unclaimed land.

Despite the criticism of Jefferson City as the site for Missouri's permanent seat of government, many people held out the hope that the new cap-

ital city would prosper. Among the supporters of Jefferson City as a capital site was Gov. John Miller, a native of Virginia who was elected as Missouri's chief executive in 1826. Gov. Miller believed that constructing public buildings in Jefferson City would increase the city's chances of remaining the capital.

A New Residence for the Governor and a New Capitol Building

“A new impulse to business of every description”

In 1831, Gov. Miller proposed that the state build a penitentiary in Jefferson City. Opponents of the plan, many of whom preferred that the penitentiary be built in or near St. Louis, from where, it was assumed, a majority of the inmates would come, delayed passage of a bill authorizing the Jefferson City site until 1833.

Meanwhile, Gov. Miller, who was a bachelor and could live comfortably in two rooms of the state house, was replaced by Gov. Daniel Dunklin of Potosi. The new governor was a married man with six children. Soon after his election in August 1832, he began a campaign to persuade legislators to appropriate money for a new governor's residence. The legislature provid-

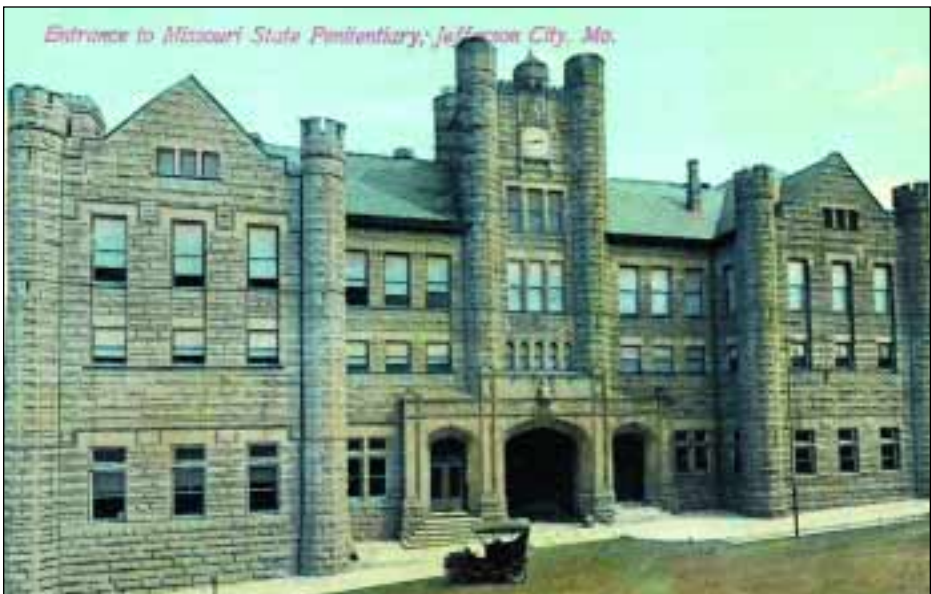
ed \$5,000 and a new house was built just to the south of the existing combination Capitol and governor's home. Gov. Dunklin and his family occupied the building in 1834.

Three years later (1837), fire destroyed the state house that had been built in 1826. State government moved temporarily into the Cole County Courthouse while a new Capitol was being built on a high bluff west of the site of the original structure. The *Jeffersonian Republican* noted in 1838 that “an appropriation for a State House has given entirely a new impulse to business of every description” in the capital. The paper added, “for every thousand dollars appropriated for the improvement of the seat of government, the State is benefited four thousand, by the increase in value of unsold lots, of which the state is yet a large holder.”

Controversies Surrounding the Penitentiary

“Where are the many industrious mechanics that formerly gave our town life and prosperity”

Meanwhile, also, the Missouri State Penitentiary was ready finally to receive its first inmates in 1836. The placement of the penitentiary in Jefferson City had a dramatic effect upon the



Entrance to Missouri State Penitentiary, c1910

Missouri State Archives

development of the capital city. Missouri legislators, committed to the Jeffersonian notion of the need for minimal government (“That government is best which governs least”) and a low rate of taxation, tried to figure out a way to operate the prison at the least possible cost to the state.

In 1839, legislators placed the penitentiary under a “lease system” that allowed private entrepreneurs to pay the state for the right to manage the prison, in exchange for which they could hire out the prisoners for their own private gain. By 1841, an advertisement in the local *Jeffersonian Republican* advertised the following convict-made goods at the prison: plows, wagons, carts, drays, trace chains, harness, single-trees, chairs, bureaus, bedsteads, tables and other furniture, boots and shoes, bricks, cigars, bacon and lard. In addition, the lessees advertised prison labor for landscaping and grounds keeping, blacksmithing, house and sign painting, and for “Building of any kind, at a moment’s notice.” Even the City of Jefferson used convict labor. The 1842 minutes of the city’s Board of Aldermen reveal numerous expenditures for convict labor on street repair, building construction and furniture. Women sentenced to the Missouri State Penitentiary during the early 1840s were sometimes hired out to work as domestic servants for local businessmen.

Working inmates in this way had two unanticipated consequences. The first, and most obvious, was that convicts working outside the prison walls were more likely to escape. A “Report of the Inspectors of the Penitentiary,” issued in 1845, indicated that 50 inmates (28% of the total number incarcerated) had escaped over the previous 20 months. Often townsfolk joined prison guards in chasing and trying to recapture convicts. If the legislature happened to be in session when an escape occurred, lawmakers often adjourned, picked up weapons at the state armory on the Capitol grounds, and joined the chase!

The fact of frequent escapes unsettled legislators and local residents alike. Even more unsettling, especially for its long-term implications, was the challenge convict labor posed for the free labor system upon which capitalism was based. The editor of the *Jeffersonian Republican* posed the question this way in 1842: “Where are the many industrious mechanics that formerly gave our town life and prosperity?” He answered, of course, that they had been “driven away, for want of employment,” because of convict labor. The prison, its inmates, and the use of their labor, would remain sources of controversy in the capital city into the twenty-first century.

Antebellum Growth of the Capital City

“Good living, clever fellows, and the most lovely women in the world”

Despite the charge that “industrious mechanics” were bypassing the capital city, Jefferson City’s population grew steadily during the first several decades of its existence, reaching a total of 1,174 by 1840. A glimpse of what one visitor to the city thought of the capital and its residents can be gleaned from a letter written in 1840 to the editor of the *Jefferson City Inquirer*. The visitor, who signed his letter “A Traveller,” noted that he remained a guest at the City Hotel for more days than he had anticipated because of the hotel’s “well filled cellars and larder and most bountiful table.” He praised the state house as a “magnificent and stupendous pile of free stone,” and commented on the beauty of the courthouse, the prison, and a number of private dwellings. He commended the capital city to “traveling bachelors,” in particular, because it featured “good living, clever fellows and the most lovely women in the world.” Highlights of “A Traveller’s” stay in Jefferson City included viewing a dramatic performance of *William Tell* and “dancing parties” at the courthouse.

Legislators tried to facilitate access to and communication with Jefferson City in a variety of ways, none of which was more important than the promotion of the building of a cross-state railroad. While other communities vied in a variety of ways for railroad service to their towns, sometimes offering large grants of land and money, Jefferson City earned access to the Pacific Railroad by virtue of its status as the capital city of Missouri. The law that authorized the expenditure of public funds to build a railroad across the state, passed in 1849, stipulated that the new form of transportation must pass through the capital city. Two years later, in anticipation of the completion of the railroad to Jefferson City, the state capital was connected to St. Louis by telegraph service. Thus, Missourians between St. Louis and Jefferson City, at least, could know what was going on in the capital.

Political Division in the Capital City

“Blood up to the armpits”

Political division became apparent in the City of Jefferson during the 1830s and 1840s, although the anti-Jackson party known as the Whigs, formed during the mid-1830s, was a decidedly minority party in the capital city. In a

late life reminiscence written in 1901, local physician Dr. Robert E. Young recalled an occasion during the 1840 campaign when Democrats drinking at a local saloon decided to confront Whigs drinking at another saloon. According to Young, a fight that threatened to leave combatants standing in “blood up to the armpits” was narrowly averted. Tension between the two groups had been exacerbated by a steamboat captain who displayed on his craft a log cabin, the symbol of the presidential campaign of Whig candidate William Henry Harrison.

Politics became increasingly divided in Missouri and the capital city during the decade and a half leading up to the Civil War, especially after the debate over the expansion of slavery crystallized in the wake of the Mexican War (1846). The issue of whether or not slavery should be allowed in the territory acquired from Mexico divided Missourians. Those persons who traced their ancestry to the South generally supported the expansion of slavery. Those whose ancestors came from the North tended to oppose it. Recent European immigrants, likewise, often opposed the expansion of slavery into new territories.

The Fight Over Slavery

“Free Soilers” v. “The Courthouse Clique”

The friction intensified when Missouri’s senior United States Senator, Thomas Hart Benton, defied a directive from the Missouri General Assembly and took a stand against the expansion of slavery. Benton’s actions divided Missourians, including residents of the capital city, into pro- and anti-Benton factions and resulted in Benton’s defeat in the 1850 Senate race.

The fight over the expansion of slavery prompted a group of capital city residents to try to create a new city adjacent to the City of Jefferson during the 1850s. Led by German immigrant and physician, Dr. Bernard Bruns, and prominent local resident Thomas L. Price, the anti-expansionist group created the Jefferson City Land Company and began to buy property just west of Jefferson City, from roughly modern-day Bolivar Street to Gray’s Creek.

The Jefferson City Land Company subsequently launched a campaign to attract “Free Soilers” to the region, hoping thereby to undermine the power of the pro-expansionist “courthouse clique” which they claimed had a stranglehold on local government. The Jefferson City Land Company hoped to attract “especially mechanics and manufacturers with machinery.”

A key element of their community was to be “a first-class University,” where the Free Soil philosophy could be promulgated. Controversy over the idea of a Free Soil community adjacent to the state capital prompted a heated debate in the hall of the House of Representatives, with Claiborne Fox Jackson, slave owner, Southern sympathizer, and future governor, leading the fight against such a development. Although the Land Company purchased a considerable amount of property west of the Capitol, the idea of building a new city never came to fruition.

The Civil War

“We are living in very stirring times”

The Civil War brought interest in and action to the City of Jefferson. Union and Confederate sympathizers alike hoped to persuade the state of Missouri to join their side. On the evening of January 3, 1861, newly elected Gov. Claiborne Fox Jackson minced no words in letting Missourians know how he felt on the issue. In his inaugural address, he proclaimed his belief that “The destiny of the slaveholding States of this Union is one and the same. So long as a state continues to maintain slavery within her limits, it is impossible to separate her fate from that of her sister States who have the same social organization.” Gov. Jackson made it clear that he thought it was in Missouri’s best interest “to stand by her sister States, in whose wrongs she participates, and with whose institutions and people she sympathizes.”

Gov. Jackson called for a state convention to be held in which delegates could debate and decide whether or not Missouri should join the abhorning Confederacy. The General Assembly set February 18, 1861, as the date for electing delegates to such a convention. By the time that date arrived, seven states had seceded from the Union.

The state convention met in Jefferson City on February 28, 1861, but voted almost immediately to re-convene in St. Louis, where the atmosphere was more favorable to the state of Missouri remaining in the Union. After debate on the issue, delegates to the convention voted overwhelmingly not to secede. Perturbed but not persuaded by the vote, Gov. Jackson acted to move Missouri into the Confederate camp anyway. Included in his machinations was the establishment of a pro-Southern military encampment in St. Louis that bore his name: Camp Jackson. German immigrants living in Jefferson City during the early months of the war, widely known for their loyalty to the Republican Party and to the Union cause, feared reprisal by the governor. Henrietta Bruns, who lived a block south of the Capitol, where the governor flew “a tremendous-



View of Jefferson City showing new fortifications and the arrival and departure of troops, *Harpers Weekly*, Oct. 19, 1861

Missouri State Archives

ly large secessionist flag," watched state militiamen drill on the Capitol grounds and wrote warily to her brother back in Germany, "We are living in very stirring times."

By June of 1861, federal General Nathaniel Lyon, Commander of the West, had tired of what he regarded as Jackson's treasonous activities. He led a force of two thousand soldiers to Jefferson City to remove the governor from office and arrest him. Alerted to Lyon's plan, Gov. Jackson escaped the capital city just ahead of the Union troops, taking with him the state seal, which he intended to use to certify as "official" documents created by his rump government. Among the state officials accompanying Jackson on his hasty retreat out of town were B.F. Massey, secretary of state; Alfred W. Morrison, state treasurer; William S. Moseley, state auditor; and, John F. Huston, register of lands. In addition, at least seven pro-Southern legislators fled with the governor.

Jackson and his cabinet were replaced by a provisional government, headed by Gov. Hamilton R. Gamble. Federal troops occupied the capital city for the remainder of the war. In 1862 residents of the City of Jefferson chose the German immigrant and Radical Republican Bernard Bruns, one of the founders of the Jefferson City Land Company, as their mayor. Bruns's victory over Democrat C. Clay Ewing was

made possible because of the disfranchisement of a large number of Democrats who refused to take a loyalty oath to the Union as provided for by the state provisional government.

Only once during the war was Jefferson City seriously threatened by Confederate forces, and that was in October 1864, when General Sterling Price, former governor of the state, approached the city from the south, only days after his fight at the Battle of Pilot Knob, in Iron County. General Price spent the night on the outskirts of the capital city, presumably planning his attack. But the attack on the capital never came. The general and his soldiers bypassed Jefferson City, leaving the capital unscathed, and local citizens wondering why he had not attacked. Some speculated it was because he did not want to endanger the many friends he had made while he lived in the city as governor, from 1853–1857.

One consequence of the war for Jefferson City was that its population grew significantly as a consequence of an in-migration of people who sought to escape Union and Confederate soldiers and their sympathizers who roamed the countryside, pillaging and harassing the citizenry. African Americans, in particular, sought safety in Jefferson City, in large part, it seems, because of the presence there of so many Union soldiers and because the so-called "Radical Republicans" controlled state government. Radical Gov.

Thomas Fletcher, elected in 1864, supported the Radical position on a number of issues, including the abolition of slavery, access to public education for freedmen, and the right to vote for African American males. By January 1865, the black population of Jefferson City had grown to 565 persons, an increase of 70% over the number present just five years earlier.

Establishing Lincoln Institute

The city's African American population grew even more over the next decade because of the establishment of Lincoln Institute there in the Fall of 1866. In September 1866, Richard B. Foster, a white minister from New England who had served as an officer in the 62nd United States Colored Infantry, a unit composed of Missouri freedmen, arrived in Jefferson City with money pledged by the men of his unit to open a school for blacks. Foster had gone first to St. Louis, but had run into intense hostility there. He came to Jefferson City because he believed that the presence in power of Radical Republicans would guarantee a warmer reception.

Although Foster encountered opposition among some townfolk to the idea of establishing a school for blacks in their city, he was able to open the school as a private facility soon after

arriving in the capital. Over the next several years, State Superintendent of Schools Thomas A. Parker, also a Radical Republican, tried to establish public schools for blacks throughout the state. It soon became apparent that a shortage of black teachers was a major obstacle. Black parents did not want their children to be taught by whites.

A solution to this problem, proposed by African American political leader James Milton Turner, was to make Lincoln Institute a state supported facility for the training of black teachers. Lincoln received its first state appropriation (\$5,000) in 1870 and the use of twenty-five Missouri State Penitentiary inmates to build the first building on what is now the Lincoln University campus. The school was taken over entirely by the state in 1879 and continued to be the only state supported institution of higher education for African Americans in Missouri until integration occurred in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's famous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954.

The tenure in office of the Radical Republicans was short-lived. Democrats complained that Republicans had run up the state debt to \$36 million during the war and that they had used the power of the central government to encroach on local rights and privileges. A Democratic governor was elected in 1872 with a promise of restoring fiscal conservatism to state government and returning much power back to local communities.



James Milton Turner
Missouri State Archives

The 1875 Constitution

Creation of a Prison Factory System

Fiscal conservatism and local rule were key concepts enshrined in a new constitution adopted by Missouri citizens in 1875. One consequence of the effort to cut down on the amount of money needed to run state government was a renewed effort to force convicts to finance their own incarceration. Prison and governmental officials decided to have the state construct factories inside the prison walls, and then negotiate multi-year contracts with private entrepreneurs for the use of convict labor. Gov. John S. Phelps summarized the plan in his 1879 message to the General Assembly: "[I]t would seem reasonable to expect the prisoners would not only be able, by their labor, to earn an amount sufficient to support themselves, but also to pay the salaries and wages of the officers and guards."

This new prison factory system brought to Jefferson City a number of entrepreneurs who would not, under other circumstances, have chosen the city as a place to set up business. One of the first of these was August Priesmeyer, president and founder of A. Priesmeyer Shoe Co., who

moved to Jefferson City in 1874 to open a factory inside the prison walls. Priesmeyer managed the business largely with the help of his nephew, Henry F. Priesmeyer, and a Scottish immigrant named John Tweedie Sr. Tweedie took over the business during the early twentieth century, and he and successive generations of his family became pillars of the commercial and civic communities of the capital city.

Another immigrant to the Jefferson City community because of the prison factory system was Lester Shepherd Parker, who came to Jefferson City in 1895 as superintendent and general manager of the Jefferson Shoe Company, a Chicago-based business that had been incorporated in Illinois in 1885 and that operated a factory inside the Missouri prison. Parker established his own prison factory in 1896 and subsequently built one of Jefferson City's finest homes, a striking Neo-Classical Revival house across the street from the drab and sometimes dangerous prison. Parker became a civic booster and city promoter, who as an avocational painter and poet, did much to promote the cultural and artistic health of the community.

Yet another businessman who moved to Missouri to operate a prison factory was James A. Houchin, who came to Jefferson City from Illinois in 1890 to take a job as a bookkeeper and stenographer with the Charles R. Lewis Clothing Manufacturing Company, also a prison factory. In the mid-1890s, Houchin launched his own effort at establishing a prison industry. His Star Clothing Manufacturing Company became one of the leading prison factories during the early twentieth century. The Houchins, with the help of convict labor, erected a magnificent home in the 600-block of E. Main St. (later called Capitol Avenue). The Houchins' home became an important social gathering place for politicians. Presumably because his business was so closely tied to state government, James Houchin became a political activist, deeply involved in Democratic Party politics throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. He served as the statewide coordinator of Joseph W. Folk's successful gubernatorial campaign in 1904. In 1912, Houchin sought the Democratic nomination for governor in his own right, but lost to Elliott Major, who went on to be chosen governor in the general election. Houchin tried again in 1916, this time losing to Frederick Gardner.

The Houchins entertained frequently. Soon after their house was built, they began holding receptions for members of the legislature and their families during each session. According to a 1944 newspaper article about the Houchin house, written on the occasion of its sale, "three or four hundred people usually attended these

receptions which were elaborate and characteristic of a lavish bygone day." The usual menu was "chicken salad, oyster patties, olives, beaten biscuits, ices, cakes, bonbons, and coffee, with punch served in the sun room by young ladies." On one occasion, the Houchins' daughter Myrene recalled in 1944, her parents entertained two nights in succession, first for legislators and then for their Jefferson City friends. A total of seven hundred people attended these two events. Mr. and Mrs. Houchin, their daughter Myrene, and her husband, Jack Hobbs, continued to be leading Jefferson City socialites and civic boosters of the capital city throughout the first half of the 20th century.

A New Governor's Mansion Creates a New Social Atmosphere in the Capital City

In September 1867, a correspondent for the *St. Louis Republican* wrote an extensive piece for readers back home on "First Impressions of the Capital." Although he acknowledged that many people came to Jefferson City because "here are gathered and disbursed the public revenues [and] here are held the reins of public authority," he asserted, also, that "The first impressions that the city of Jefferson make upon a stranger are generally unfavorable."

Why the negative feelings? Because, the *Republic* correspondent asserted, "The town is generally full, more or less, of strangers, attracted here by the pressure of urgent business with the departments and that over, they have no desire to remain." The fact that so many transients visited the city led local residents to treat them inhospitably, unless the stranger arrived "recommended or known," in which case local citizens were capable of exhibiting "generous feeling . . . toward a guest." Notwithstanding its deficiencies, the correspondent claimed, "Society here is refined and cultivated, a large mixture of which consists of the families of retired officers of State, who have remained here attached to the place by its advantages of health, culture and economy."

Many people thought that the capital city became a more hospitable place after Gov. B. Gratz Brown and his family moved into a new Governor's Mansion on January 20, 1872. The new Mansion, designed by St. Louis architect George Ingham Barnett in the fashionable Renaissance Revival style, replaced the older structure just to the south, whose dilapidated condition had become an embarrassment to legislators.



Governor's Mansion

Missouri State Archives

The new three-story Governor's Mansion, with its Great Hall, Double Parlor, and thirteen bedrooms, was built to entertain and to impress. Among the first guests to visit the spacious new structure was the Grand Duke Alexis, the twenty-two-year old son of the Russian Czar. The Grand Duke, who was returning by train to the East coast after a buffalo hunting trip in the West, was accompanied by General George Armstrong Custer. Grand Duke Alexis spoke briefly to the Missouri General Assembly and then he and General Custer joined Gov. Brown and others for an "unostentatious . . . but brilliant" lunch at the Mansion. Later, the Grand Duke provided many residents of the capital city with a rare opportunity to see a royal personage when he received local well-wishers and curiosity seekers at the Madison Hotel, across the street from the Mansion.

The day after the Grand Duke's visit, Governor and Mrs. Brown held a grand ball at the Mansion to celebrate its official opening. Estimates of the number of guests in attendance ranged as high as two thousand, no doubt the largest crowd to gather in the capital city for a social event to that date. Although one journalist praised the gathering as "one of the most magnificent entertainments which ever occurred west of St. Louis," others present complained of the gawking, pushing masses who, among other things, "jammed . . . into Mrs. Brown's beautiful rooms . . . particularly the supper room, and rifled things like a flock of locust."

The opening ball at the Governor's Mansion established the use of the great house as a place of hospitality and entertainment in the capital city. Party conventions, inaugural balls and other celebrations were held there. For many years during the late nineteenth-century the grandest gathering in the capital city, at least during the winter months, was a New Year's Day Ball, supervised by the state's adjutant general.

A less joyous occasion came in 1887, when Gov. John Sappington Marmaduke died in the Governor's Mansion on December 18 of that year after a bout with pneumonia. A former general in the Confederate Army, and the son of an antebellum Missouri governor (Meredith Miles Marmaduke), the younger Marmaduke was a popular chief executive. His funeral was the most elaborate and well attended state funeral witnessed in Jefferson City prior to the funeral of Gov. Mel Carnahan in October 2000. Gov. Marmaduke lay in state in the main hall of the Governor's Mansion from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on the day of his funeral. The funeral was conducted in the Mansion by Bishop Daniel S. Tuttle of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri and the Rev. John Gierlow of Grace Episcopal Church in Jefferson City. Newspaper accounts of the funeral reported that a procession extended more than a mile, from the Governor's Mansion on Madison Street to the State Cemetery on East McCarty Street, where Marmaduke was buried.

Other Late Nineteenth-Century Visitors to the Capital City

Two years after Marmaduke's death, the noted suffragist Susan B. Anthony visited the capital city and delivered a lecture in the Hall of the House of Representatives to Missouri legislators and an overflow crowd of curiosity seekers and supporters on "the question of the enfranchisement of women." Miss Anthony was accompanied by Mrs. Virginia L. Minor of St. Louis, one of the earliest supporters of the franchise for women during the post-Civil War generation, and a long-time president of the Missouri chapter of the National Woman Suffrage Association. In announcing Miss Anthony's presence in the state capital, the editor of the local *State Tribune* commented that "She will not likely make many converts, but nevertheless the venerable lecturer is entitled to a respectful hearing."

Six years later, perhaps influenced by Anthony's pleas for equality, capital city women formed what, arguably, became the most prestigious women's club of the twentieth century: the so-called Tuesday Club. The Tuesday Club's first meeting was held in the home of the Rev. and Mrs. J.T.M. Johnston. Rev. Johnston was the pastor of the local Baptist church. An election was held at the first meeting, with Mrs. George B. Macfarlane, wife of a Missouri Supreme Court judge, chosen as president. Mrs. Mourtou Jourdan, whose husband worked in the state attorney general's office, was elected vice president. Early club by-laws indicate that the organization existed primarily "for literary purposes,"

although the club history suggests that the organization's members quickly learned that they could serve the common good by applying the power of their individual and collective intellects to a search for solutions to the social problems of their day. Denied access to the "normal" avenues of power available to their spouses (voting and office-holding), club women wielded power informally, by influencing their husbands, who were prominent leaders of the business and governmental communities, to take action on the issues that concerned them. As the club's history indicates, "Women did not have the right to vote then but they became expert in getting results another way." Among the club's early projects was an effort to help establish a local public library. Apparently from the beginning, the Tuesday Club invited First Ladies of Missouri to join their exclusive organization as honorary members.

Arguably, the most popular national political leader to visit the capital city during the 1890s was the three-time Democratic presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan. The "Great Commoner," as he was known, made multiple trips to Jefferson City as both a Chautauqua speaker and as a political campaigner during the 1890s. In 1899, for example, he delivered an oration on the virtues of "Free Silver" to a crowd of five thousand people from the steps of the Capitol. According to a local newspaper account of the event, Bryan, whose speech had taken two hours, "apologized somewhat for trespassing upon the time of the audience." Rather than being offended or bored, the crowd responded with "many calls for him to proceed further."



**Missouri River Bridge
Opening, 1896**
Missouri State Archives

The Fight Over Removal of the Capital Bridging the Missouri River

Bridging the Missouri River

The presence and popularity of the Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City and the increase in social activities accompanying the "Gay Nineties" notwithstanding, some Missouri residents continued to question the wisdom of retaining the permanent seat of government in Jefferson City. One thing that especially bothered many of the state's citizens was the absence of a bridge across the Missouri River into the capital city. The "Big Muddy," which an earlier generation had seen as a highway for travel to the capital city, had become, in the age of the railroad, an obstacle to access.

Fearful of losing the designation as the capital city, a number of businessmen, including the recently arrived entrepreneurs associated with prison industries, launched an effort to build a bridge across the river. Calling themselves the "Commercial Club" (later the name was changed to "Chamber of Commerce") these men spearheaded an effort to erect a \$225,000 toll bridge across the river. The completion of the bridge in February 1896 diminished, if it did not end altogether, the criticism of Jefferson City's status as the capital city.

The favorable climate for business created by the Commercial Club, and the continuing opportunities for doing business with state government, made Jefferson City a community of great hope as the twentieth century dawned. On May 12, 1900, the *Jefferson City Daily Press* carried an article written by a local reporter who offered an assessment of the capital city's economic viability as it moved into the new century. For much of its existence, the reporter charged, Jefferson City had the reputation of being "an old foggy" town run by "old fossils who had held the town down." But then, the reporter concluded, "the Jefferson City people got a move on themselves and galvanized a little life into the old fossils."

In truth, the "life" came more from the outsiders (such as Priesmeyer, Parker and Houchins) who moved to the capital city because it was the seat of government, rather than from the "old fossils" who had been around a generation or more. Among the most progressive of Jefferson City's early twentieth century business and community leaders was Hugh Stephens, who moved from Columbia to Jefferson City at the turn of the century to manage a print shop purchased by his father, Edwin W. Stephens, a Boone County printer and publisher. The Jefferson City print



Hugh Stephens, Jefferson City Chamber of Commerce.
Missouri State Archives

shop, known as the Tribune Printing Company, and later the Hugh Stephens Printing Company, existed primarily to serve the printing needs of state government.

With his place of business only two blocks east of the Capitol, and engaged in a business that took him to the Capitol often, Stephens quickly became a key figure in state and local affairs. Ultimately, Stephens was elected to the presidency of the Commercial Club and served for an unprecedented eight terms. Among his many contributions to his adopted city, and to his state, was his effort to promote the accessibility of the state capital to all Missourians by means of better highways. He was a leading proponent of building U. S. Highways 54, 63, and 50 through Missouri, for example, and making sure that these important cross-state highways intersected in Jefferson City.

The Capitol Fire and its Consequences

Tragedy befell Jefferson City and the state of Missouri on the night of February 5, 1911, when a lightning bolt struck the dome of the Capitol. The ensuing fire could not be contained with fire fighting equipment available. Firefighters and citizens alike watched helplessly while the fire raged out of control. When the heavily timbered dome collapsed into the interior of the Capitol, all present knew that the structure was doomed.

A valiant, and largely successful, effort was made to retrieve historical documents from the burning building. Among the people pressed into service for this dangerous mission was a group of Missouri State Penitentiary inmates. Gov. Herbert S. Hadley commuted the sentences of several of these inmates out of gratitude for their efforts.

One consequence of the Capitol fire was a re-emergence of the debate over whether or not Jefferson City should remain the state's permanent seat of government. Opponents of the idea mounted an effort to oppose the passage of a bond issue aimed at financing the rebuilding of the Capitol. Supporters of retaining the city as the site of the capital, led by the city's Commercial Club, countered with a campaign of self-promotion. The day after the fire, local banker Sam B. Cook took a train to St. Louis to enlist the assistance of key legislative leaders in the quest to retain Jefferson City as the permanent seat of government. Cook, another "outsider" who had a dramatic impact on the capital city, had moved from Mexico, Missouri, to Jefferson City in 1900, after being elected as secretary of state. Although defeated for re-election in 1904, Cook opted to remain in the capital city, where, in 1905, he assumed the presidency of the Central Missouri Trust Company, a bank whose first president was a former Democratic governor of the state, Lon V. Stephens. Asked by a newspaper reporter why he had chosen to make Jefferson City his home, Cook replied, "I have for some time been very favorably impressed with the State capital, both in a business and a social way. It is one of the most solid towns in the State, and in my judgment there is no city of like population that has so bright and substantial a future."

Formation of the Jefferson City Country Club

Sam B. Cook and others apparently used the Jefferson City Country Club to lobby "leaders of public opinion across the state" to support the effort against moving the capital. Organized at a meeting chaired by Gov. Herbert S. Hadley on September 7, 1909, at the Monroe House (dubbed by some contemporaries as "the Republican hotel"), the country club opened on May 8, 1911, with a charter membership of one hundred men. Penitentiary Warden Henry Andrae, one of the charter members, had "arranged a detail of inmates to help clear and construct the golf course." Gov. Hadley was elected as the club's first president. Other charter members, in addition to Hadley and Andrae, included Attorney General Elliott W. Major,

Adjutant General F.M. Rumboldt, and a number of prominent businessmen who operated factories inside the prison. According to a local Jefferson City newspaper of the time, it was common during the summer of 1911 "to see crowded excursion trains switched from the Missouri Pacific mainline tracks to the Bagnell Branch and proceed gingerly over the uncertain roadbed to the Country Club, where barbecues had been prepared."

Among the visitors to the Jefferson City Country Club in 1911 was the Republican president of the United States, William Howard Taft, who had traveled to Missouri to attend the State Fair. The president and his military aide, Major Archibald Butt, joined Gov. Hadley and the Rev. Paul Talbot, rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Jefferson City, in a round of golf.

Ultimately, the proponents of keeping the capital in Jefferson City succeeded. Their victory was solidified on August 1, 1911, when Missourians voted by a three-to-one majority to authorize issuing \$3.5 million in bonds to build a new Capitol in Jefferson City. Late that night, when victory appeared certain, a crowd of Jefferson City revelers went to Sam Cook's home, a half block south of the Capitol, aroused him from his sleep, and persuaded him to march at the head of an impromptu parade, celebrating the event. Newspaper accounts of the incident indicate that Cook was clad only in his pajamas, a lounging robe, and slippers, but that his head was adorned with a silk hat and he carried a cane.

The New Capitol

The decision to build a new Capitol building in Jefferson City had at least one negative effect on Sam Cook's personal life. The Capitol grounds were expanded greatly, resulting in the destruction of the home he shared with his wife and three children in the 200-block of Washington Street. It would be only one of many displacements caused by the building of a new Capitol over the next century. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new structure occurred on May 6, 1913. Labor problems plagued work on the Capitol. Nonetheless, on June 24, 1914, the building's cornerstone was laid before a crowd of approximately 12,000 people and on August 12, 1914, a flag raising ceremony celebrated the completion of the building's steel frame.

Era of World War I

Work on the new state Capitol neared completion in the summer of 1917, just as the United States entered World War I. The decoration and formal dedication of the new structure was



Completed Missouri State Capitol, 1917
Missouri State Archives

delayed as Missourians joined other American citizens in gearing up for the war effort.

Emblematic of the city's contribution to the war effort was a Fourth of July picnic held at McClung Park in 1917. McClung Park, also known as State Park Number One, was a state-owned facility named for prison warden D.C. McClung who used idle convicts to clean up the fifteen-acre piece of state property and turn it into a state park, complete with park benches, pavilions, and a dance floor where prison bands played for dancing capital citizens on weekends in the summer. According to the *Daily Capital News*, special trains and caravans of automobiles brought central Missourians from outlying communities to the capital city for the July 4, 1917, picnic. The gathering was designed as a fundraiser sponsored by the newly established local Red Cross chapter to help in the relief effort. It attracted a crowd of approximately ten thousand people.

Support for the war effort was modeled by Gov. Frederick Gardner and Mrs. Gardner, who planted and worked in their "Victory Garden" on the grounds of the Governor's Mansion. Likewise, Mrs. Gardner joined with other ladies who belonged to the city's prestigious Tuesday Club in sewing pajamas and other clothing, as well as preparing bandages, for American soldiers in France.

World War I and its aftermath brought national, and no doubt unwanted, attention to Jefferson City in 1918, when the first of two of the most radical women in the country arrived in the capital city to serve a prison term for violating the federal Sedition Act. This law prohibited speaking out against America's involvement in World War I. There was no federal prison for

women in the country at the time, so the U.S. Department of Justice sought a place of confinement among the country's state prisons. Missouri's low bid netted it the dubious distinction of housing in the capital city the notorious anarchist and Russian immigrant Emma Goldman, and Socialist Kate Richards O'Hare.

Goldman and O'Hare were confined in the state's women's prison, a building that fronted on Lafayette Street, inside the walls of the men's penitentiary. From the perspective of state prison officials, these women were anything but model prisoners. They complained widely and often, largely through the medium of letters to newspapers and magazines throughout the country, of the prison's shortcomings: its unsanitary living conditions, which included the lack of adequate bathing facilities, rancid food, and the presence of rats; the drudgery and difficulty of work assignments in stifling heat and bone chilling cold; and, the general dehumanizing treatment they received at the hands of poorly-trained guards who owed their positions to political connections.

Goldman and O'Hare's time in prison was helped only slightly by the fact that O'Hare had known and worked with Warden William R. Painter when he had been Missouri's lieutenant-governor. She had met Painter and his wife while she was living in St. Louis and working on behalf of state minimum wage legislation. O'Hare used her acquaintance with Painter to gain access to Gov. Frederick Gardner. Her pleadings to the two men, as well as her complaints to U.S. Department of Justice officials, and her constant letter-writing, led to slight improvements in conditions in the women's prison. One of the bright spots for O'Hare and her fellow female convicts came in the summer, when they were allowed to walk



Prominent men of Jefferson City with Gov. Major, center, at the country club, c1920

Missouri State Archives

to McClung Park for Saturday afternoon outings. In the winter, inmates were sometimes shown silent movies on the weekends. No doubt the warden and the governor were greatly relieved when the troublesome prisoners O'Hare and Goldman were finally released from custody, Goldman in 1919 and O'Hare in 1920.

The Roaring Twenties

The Jefferson City Country Club continued to be an important place of recreation and relaxation for Missouri politicians during the era of World War I and beyond. Like his predecessors Hadley and Major, Gov. Frederick Gardner joined the country club and was selected its president in 1920. Mrs. Gardner later recalled how much the governor enjoyed the club: "Mr. Gardner found the Country Club a haven of refuge and nothing pleased us more than to go there for a bright soiree with our friends." The former first lady of Missouri added, "Surely nothing was impossible to the folks who gathered there—gay and impudent, brave and reckless, impulsive and generous."

Prohibition dominated the decade of the twenties, although the Volstead Act was often ignored in the capital city. Newspapers from the era are filled with accounts of raids upon illegal

distilleries in and around Jefferson City. Illicit alcohol was available even in the Capitol. One former legislator recalled in a 1996 memoir that when he arrived in the capital city in 1935, there was still talk about "a custom during the dry years of prohibition [that] members [of the legislature] would bring [to the Capitol] a little home brew, white lightening, and sometimes a little chicken hooch, often called that because it was so strong that if you took a good swallow it would make you lay."

The decade of the 1920s had a dark side as well. For many, the decade was a time of fear, as nativism, racism and religious bigotry permeated the land. One of the most controversial and disturbing gatherings in Jefferson City during the 1920s occurred in the Missouri State Capitol in February 1924 when a Ku Klux Klan meeting was held in the Hall of Representatives.

The Klan was a powerful force in American politics during the decade, when it promoted itself as a patriotic organization committed to "100% Americanism." Unlike its counterpart of the post-Civil War period, the 1920s Klan was not only anti-African American, but also opposed to immigrants, Jews, and Catholics.

According to a statement by Heber Nations, editor of the Jefferson City *Daily Post*, he was contacted by Klan members who asked for his

help in gaining permission to use the Capitol for a Klan meeting. Local newspaper stories of the time claim that the capital city had a Klan membership of more than eleven hundred, with one Klan gathering at the Merchants Bank Hall attracting a gathering of 850 Klansmen.

Nations took the Klan's request to Harry Woodruff, Commissioner of the Permanent Seat of Government, who, in turn, granted the request. Later asked to explain his actions, Nations said, "I thought local people would be interested in the attitude of the Klan as expressed by an official representative." Nations added "that surmise proved correct when the largest audience ever assembled in the legislative hall greeted the [Klan] speaker Sunday afternoon."

Both Nations and Woodruff defended the decision to allow the Klan to meet in the Capitol, with Nations calling the gathering "entirely patriotic and scholarly." The unrepentant Nations stated that if given the opportunity, he would do the same thing over again, adding that "If the great membership of the Klan throughout the country is composed of citizens of the same high grade who shape its policies here, it is the greatest patriotic organization in the world."

Not all agreed with Nations, of course. In fact, many people of both major political parties complained bitterly of the decision to allow the Klan to meet in the Capitol. Indeed, the Klan became an important issue in the 1924 gubernatorial election, with the Republicans and their gubernatorial candidate, Sam A. Baker, being widely regarded as more anti-Klan than the Democrats. Baker was elected governor. In Jefferson City,

anti-Klan forces united to re-elect Mayor Cecil W. Thomas, who established himself as an opponent of the Klan during his first term in office.

The New Capitol Dedication

"It was a real big doins"

The formal, belated, dedication of the new Capitol came on October 6, 1924, in what one contemporary newspaper referred to as "unquestionably the greatest celebration ever held in the Capital City." People from all over the state began arriving in Jefferson City days in advance of the celebration. The Missouri Pacific Railroad ran special trains at reduced rates to accommodate travelers and a housing committee of local women coordinated an effort to find rooms for them. Existing hotels could not begin to provide enough rooms for all of the visitors. Churches and civic organizations organized to serve meals, with former prison warden, D.C. McClung, heading a committee to regulate food prices "to guard against profiteering." Two days before the event, a local newspaper sent out "An urgent appeal to all housewives of Jefferson City to order enough groceries today [Saturday] to last over Sunday and Monday." All owners of cars were urged to leave their vehicles at home.

The dedication ceremony began on the morning of October 6 as so many gatherings in the capital city have always begun: with a parade. A crowd estimated as high as 25,000 watched as Grand Marshall Colonel Paul Hunt of Jefferson City, a World War I veteran, led a two-



Capitol Dedication, St. Louis ballet dancers, 1924

Missouri State Archives



Highway Department Building, 1931

Missouri State Archives

mile-long parade from the Capitol, east on Capitol Avenue to Cherry Street, south to High, and then west, back to the Capitol. The parade included fifty floats, bands from all over the state, airplanes and a U. S. Army dirigible, along with 114 county queens, one from each county in the state. Ku Klux Klan members were among the groups serving lunch along the parade route. Their lunch stand was on Capitol Avenue, in front of a sign that read “KKK, 100 percent.”

At 2:00 p.m. the throng of people assembled on the south lawn of the Capitol for several hours of speeches by dignitaries, including Gov. Arthur M. Hyde and four past governors: Alexander Dockery, Herbert Hadley, Elliott Major, and Frederick Gardner. David M. Francis was the only living ex-governor unable to attend the ceremony. Among the speakers, also, was octogenarian Mrs. Theodosia Thornton Lawson, a daughter of Colonel John Thornton of Clay County who more than a century before had chaired the commission to select a site for a permanent seat of government.

At 7:00 p.m. an elaborate historical pageant, written and directed by Mrs. Frank Leach of Sedalia, was presented on the south steps of the Capitol. The pageant required 2,325 characters to depict the history of the state, back to the days of French and Spanish colonial rule. Unfortunately, the pageant was cut short near its end by a thunderstorm, which also caused the planned fireworks display to be cancelled. The rain notwithstanding, the day’s activities were quite memorable. One newspaper summed up the event with this headline: “It Was a Real Big Doins.”

Expansion of State Government and Its Impact on the Capital City

The splendor and beauty of the new Capitol made many Missourians want to show off the building. For years, for example, the Missouri Pacific Railroad ran special excursion trains at reduced rates to Jefferson City so that residents of the state could view the Capitol. That desire to put the Capitol on display, combined with the dramatic growth of state government during the 1920s and 1930s, had consequences that would reverberate throughout the capital city into the twenty-first century.

A hint of what was to come was contained in the capital architects’ expression of regret that because of the city’s topography and built environment, the Capitol would be barely visible from southern and eastern approaches to the city. The architects’ suggestion was that a number of buildings on West High Street, south of the Capitol, be torn down and that the street be lowered by several feet. This would, of course, have necessitated the destruction of a number of homes and businesses belonging to capital city residents, as well as the United States Post Office and the state Supreme Court building, the latter of which was erected in 1906.

While the idea of lowering West High Street was not implemented, a great many homes and businesses were destroyed by the rapidly expanding state government during the 1920s and 1930s. The expansion of the Capitol grounds, as noted earlier, led to the destruction of a number of private residences south of the Capitol. In addition, in the late 1920s, the State

of Missouri acquired land east of the Capitol to accommodate the building of a structure that housed one of the state's fastest growing bureaucracies: the Missouri Highway Department. This, too, resulted in the destruction of a number of private residences. According to Missouri State Archivist Kenneth H. Winn, the number of state employees grew by more than 180% during the decade of the 1920s.

In 1929, after several years of discussion by civic and political leaders, the City of Jefferson hired the distinguished St. Louis planning firm of Harland Bartholomew to assist in its effort to confront what, arguably, has been the city's major problem since solidifying its status as the seat of government during the early twentieth century: how to accommodate the expanding needs of an ever-growing government without unduly infringing on the lives and property of local residents.

Asserting that "The Beautiful Capitol will form the nucleus of future public building development," the planners proposed that the state acquire all of the land east of the Capitol to the Governor's Mansion, including the land occupied by Tweedie Footwear Corporation, a shoe factory that was the largest non-governmental employer in the city, and the Ott Lumber Yard, owned by prominent Jefferson City businessman Louis Ott. In addition, the planners proposed that the state should acquire also land to the west of the Capitol, at least as far west as Walnut Street, an area that planners also thought to be blighted by commercial and industrial development. Acquisition of these properties would allow the razing of a number of buildings, thereby "eliminat[ing] a large amount of the undesirable development which now seriously detracts from the site and would also provide a large amount of open space"

South of the Capitol, planners proposed the creation of a memorial mall and boulevard approach to the state house, which, again, would require the destruction of a number of buildings, including the red brick Missouri Supreme Court building, then only about twenty-five years old. The planners resurrected the Capitol architects' proposal that "The grade on High Street between Jefferson and Broadway should be reduced . . . so as not to interfere with the view toward the Capitol." Indeed, the planners went so far as to assert that "It would be desirable if eventually both the Highway and [St. Peter Catholic] church buildings could be removed." The Highway Department building at this time was less than a decade old and St. Peter Church was the spiritual home of literally thousands of capital city Catholics. City and state governmental officials would revisit this early plan time and again over the decades to come as they wrestled with the problem of regulating and shaping the growth of the capital city.

Missouri state government expanded at only a slightly slower rate during the Depression years of the 1930s than it had during the previous decade. Among the large, new state bureaucracies created during the 1930s was the State Social Security Commission and the Unemployment Compensation Commission, both created in 1937. Even entry-level state government jobs, some with a six day work week, were thought to be highly desirable during the difficult Depression years. In a 1998 interview, Bernard Poiry recalled that sixty years earlier, he considered himself to be extremely fortunate when his father's political connections landed him a job as a prison guard. He gladly moved from his Newton County farm to Jefferson City, where he earned \$135 per month at the prison.

In the mid-1930s, with the number of state employees continuing to grow, and most of the state's business still being conducted out of the Capitol, the state house's resources were over-taxed. Bill Barton, who came to Jefferson City in 1935 as a Republican legislator, recalled that the Capitol building was so crowded with government workers that many state employees moved to temporary office space in the basement so that legislators could occupy their offices.

A new government office building, known initially as the "State Office Building" (later named the Broadway State Office Building) was erected during the late 1930s with the help of the federal government under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. Groundbreaking for the 96,000 square foot building occurred on March 1, 1938, and the first department was moved into it on November 18, 1938. Many of the state offices housed in the Capitol, including the Missouri State Highway Patrol, created in 1931, moved across West High Street to the new State Office Building.

The capital city's population grew by 67% between 1920 and 1940, from 14,490 to 24,268, more than it has grown in any other twenty-year period in its history since 1850. With a great many of the immigrants to the city coming to take jobs in state government, a need arose for affordable housing within walking distance of the government buildings. Among the buildings erected in the downtown area was the Bella Vista Apartment building just four blocks east of the Capitol. Another popular apartment building of the era erected to accommodate the large influx of state workers was the Wymore Apartment complex in the 300-block of Washington Street, just two blocks from the Capitol and one block from the State Office Building, and the Tergin Apartment Building in the 300-block of West McCarty Street.

Background and Building of the Hotel Governor

Housing of legislators and the people who came to Jefferson City to do business with governmental officials became a serious concern of the city's Chamber of Commerce during the 1920s. One suspects, in fact, that the need for such facilities was driven home by the presence of such a large group of people at the 1924 Capitol dedication.

The dominant hotel in the city that catered to politicians during the early 1920s was the Madison Hotel, located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Capitol Avenue and Madison Street, just across from the Governor's Mansion. Among other uses, this hotel frequently served as a state convention site for both of the state's major political parties. Unfortunately, this hotel was severely damaged by fire in February 1931, the consequence of a traveling salesman, J.M. Schlitz, smoking in bed. Schlitz died in the blaze. More fortunate was Missouri state representative William Hicks, who occupied a room adjacent to that of Schlitz. Newspaper accounts of the fire indicate that the state representative "barely escaped with his life." Hicks was rescued by firemen who raised a ladder to the window of his room.

According to local news reports, "Most of the guests of the hotel were members of the legislature." In addition, a number of lobbyists were

registered at the hotel, including Michael Mulvoy, a St. Louis fireman, who was in Jefferson City with Captain Egan of Kansas City, promoting the interests of "the firemen's pension bill." Mulvoy directed the activities of the Jefferson City fire department in its efforts to save the building. Approximately \$50,000 worth of damage was done to the structure. Unfortunately, another fire eight years later (on May 3, 1939) totally destroyed the Madison Hotel.

A push for a new hotel to replace the Madison, even in the face of the Great Depression economy, was led by Chamber of Commerce president Hugh Stephens. Stephens, who was also Chairman of the Board of the Exchange National Bank, had as one of his strongest supporters Howard Cook, president of the rival Central Trust Bank. Stephens, Cook, and their allies, understood that many Missourians representing a variety of special interests wanted to gather in the capital city because it was the seat of governmental power.

On November 9, 1940, Cook wrote to a potential developer of his belief that "because of state conventions and for dozens of other excellent reasons Jefferson City hotel facilities are not nearly ample at the present time." Cook believed that "many other gatherings, large and small, would naturally come here if comfortable hotel accommodations could be obtained."

Ten days later, the developer, Bill Berberich, wrote to Hugh Stephens, offering to "build and operate a hotel of not less than 145 rooms" whose minimum rates would be \$2.00 a night. Berberich also promised a "banquet room seating at tables not less than 400 persons."

The deal was predicated upon the ability of a committee headed by Stephens to acquire the proposed site "free and clear of all encumbrances." Berberich wanted the group to donate the land to him and to contribute a large amount of cash (\$90,000) toward the building project. Stephens organized the campaign to raise the money, but he cautioned Berberich that it was probably best not to let people know that the total project might cost as much as \$500,000. Thus, Stephens revealed his awareness of the fact that many Jefferson Citizens saw the hotel as a benefit more to state government than to the average City of Jefferson resident. Even many local merchants and retail salesmen doubted Stephens' claims about the positive effect the hotel would have upon their businesses.

Eventually, the money was raised and the hotel was built. Among its most popular features was a basement bar known as the "Rathskeller." Legislators and lobbyists flocked to the Rathskeller, dubbed by many as the "Third Chamber" (in addition to the House and Senate). Much legislative business was transacted at the Rathskeller and even in the lobby of the Hotel Governor.



Walthall M. Moore, St. Louis Representative, 3rd District, 1924

Missouri State Archives

Indeed, long-time hotel employee Bill Kromer recalled in a 2000 interview that “many pieces of legislation were written and passed right there in the lobby.” Live music and dancing opportunities attracted many area women to the Rathskeller. As a consequence, the Rathskeller also became a favorite place for romantic rendezvous, earning it a second nickname—the “Passion Pit.”

One group that was not welcome at the newly built Hotel Governor, or any other place of public accommodation in the capital city, was the state’s African American population, including blacks who happened to be state legislators. The first African American General Assembly member was Walthall Moore, elected as a Republican from St. Louis City in 1920. From the time that Moore began his term of office in 1921, until the City of Jefferson passed a public accommodations law in the late 1960s, African American legislators were forced to stay either in private homes or in a dormitory on the Lincoln University campus. Long-time Lincoln University employees remembered that legislators would stay in a men’s dorm (Allen Hall) and would take their meals with the school’s faculty in the lower level of Schweich Hall. Dr. Thomas D. Pawley III, Emeritus Professor at the university, recalled in 2001 that in the 1940s, Representative James McKinley Neal, a Democrat from Kansas City, roomed with Professor James Freeman in the latter’s home on Lafayette Street. Pawley remembered, also, that Neal would join the faculty in Schweich Hall at lunchtime because he could not obtain lunch in or near the Capitol building because of his race.

World War II

World War II witnessed action in the capital city on behalf of the war effort, led by Mrs. Phil Donnelly, wife of Missouri’s governor. Mrs. Donnelly launched a chapter of the Red Cross “Gray Ladies” who organized a “Motor Corps” that traveled to Fort Leonard Wood once a week. While at the fort, the Gray Ladies helped soldiers with letter writing, provided them with cookies and other treats, and simply visited them. A number of the Gray Ladies were spouses of state officials and government employees. In addition, by 1943, nearly 700 Cole County women were regularly providing services to the local Red Cross in the form of production of surgical dressings.

G.I.s at the recently completed Ft. Leonard Wood, in return, often traveled to Jefferson City to dance and drink at the Rathskeller, or at Veit’s Restaurant and Motel on the western edge of the capital city. Soldiers came by the busload on a Friday night, after being paid, and stayed throughout the weekend. Two soldiers could share a motel room at Veit’s for six dollars a night



James McKinley Neal, Representative, Jackson Co., 4th District, 1951

Missouri State Archives

and a chicken dinner cost sixty-five cents. Beer flowed freely in the bar and lots of local girls showed up to dance with the G.I.’s to music from the jukebox in the barroom corner.

Veit’s Restaurant, established as a roadhouse along U. S. Highway 50 in 1941, was discovered by politicians soon after it opened. For years, legislators gathered to eat and drink at Veit’s and hammer out the details of legislation. In a 2001 interview, Bernadine Veit, who lived in an apartment above the restaurant for more than 60 years, recalled that often during the restaurant’s early years, waitresses who were serving lawmakers would come into the kitchen where she was preparing food and announce, “Well, I know what bills are going to be passed tomorrow.” More often than not, they were right. Legislators were not the only politicians who found Veit’s to their liking; governors also dined there frequently, especially Gov. Warren E. Hearnes, who served as governor of the state from 1965–1973.

The Post-World War II Years

State government continued to grow during the post-World War II years. In March of 1952, the City of Jefferson entered into an agreement with Harland Bartholomew and Associates to



Construction of the Jefferson State Office Building, January, 1952

Missouri State Archives

revise and update the City Plan of 1930. Although the city grew modestly (an increase of only 1,278 persons) between 1940 and 1950, government continued to grow greatly. According to the report, 27.7% of the city's labor force worked for state government.

According to the Harland Bartholomew report, a 1950 survey showed state government occupying 453,000 square feet of office floor space, 117,000 of which was in rented quarters and 33,000 of which was "in corridors and converted quarters and other space not adapted for office use." According to the survey, 694,000 square feet of office space was needed, more than twice the space owned by the state in Jefferson City.

One attempt to respond to the need for new office space was the erection of a 14-story building east of the Capitol and southwest of the Governor's Mansion. A contract for construction of the building was let on August 28, 1950. When completed in December 1952, this building (the Jefferson State Office Building) added 160,000 feet of floor space available to state office workers. The building cost \$5,500,000.

A smaller, less expensive structure was built at about the same time to house the Missouri Division of Employment Security. Located a

number of blocks southeast of the Capitol complex, the Employment Security building, which cost \$500,000, was the first state office building erected in the City of Jefferson away from the downtown/Capitol area. Indeed, in its 1954 report to the city, Harland Bartholomew cited the building of the Employment Security Building away from the downtown area as a model for future development: "Future state office buildings should be located beyond the central area on sites such as that chosen for the new Employment Security Building." Harland Bartholomew, in fact, called for a 10 % reduction in the number of state employees in the downtown area over the next two decades in an effort to reduce the parking problem and the general overcrowding in the vicinity of the Capitol.

Emergence of the Capital City's Favorite Son

The 1950s also witnessed the rise to the pinnacle of state political power of a man whose entire life had been shaped by happenings in the capital city. James T. Blair Jr., was elected governor of the state of Missouri in 1956. Although born in Maysville, Missouri, in 1902, Blair moved to Jefferson City as a child, after his father, a former legislator, was chosen to serve on the Missouri Supreme Court.

Blair attended the public schools of Jefferson City, lived in the shadow of the State Capitol, and played in the Governor's Mansion with the sons of Gov. Herbert Hadley. Apparently his desire to become Missouri's governor emerged while he was still a child and was nurtured by his politician/jurist father.

After earning a law degree from Tennessee's Cumberland University in 1924, Blair returned to Jefferson City to practice law. He entered politics in 1925 as a Democratic candidate for city attorney. His victory in that contest laid the groundwork for his election to the Missouri House of Representatives in 1928 and 1930. In 1931, Blair was chosen as majority floor leader.

Blair returned to his law practice in 1932, although he remained active in politics at the local, state, and even national levels. Blair was elected mayor of Jefferson City in 1947, resigning the next year to run for the office of lieutenant governor of Missouri. He served in that position for eight years prior to his election as Missouri's forty-fourth governor.

As governor, James T. Blair championed a number of causes, including extending government aid to disabled persons, improving the efficiency of the state's welfare system, and championing the needs of the elderly. Arguably, the crowning achievement of his years as governor

was the creation of the Missouri Commission on Human Rights, an organization whose aim was to end racial discrimination and segregation in the state. In lobbying for the creation of the commission before the General Assembly, Blair proclaimed that he would “Always and everywhere” identify himself “with any victim of oppression or discrimination.” For a time, it appeared to many that Blair might rise to national political office during the 1960 election. Instead, Blair retired to his home in the capital city. Sadly, Blair and his wife died of carbon monoxide poisoning in their home in July 1962. Among the Missourians who attended Blair’s funeral was former President Harry S Truman, Gov. John M. Dalton, and U.S. Senator Stuart Symington.

Urban Renewal

The 1960s witnessed an intense battle between residents of the capital city who wanted to save the city’s historic structures and state governmental officials who wanted to raze buildings to provide more parking spaces for state government workers. Harland Bartholomew had concluded in the early 1950s that there were less than three hundred parking spaces in the Capitol area and that all of those were needed for legislators and visitors. The planning firm concluded then that an additional eleven hundred parking spaces were needed for government workers in the down-

town area. State planners, drawing upon the vision of long-range planners from the early 1930s, moved to acquire land and buildings owned by the Tweedie Footwear Corporation, raze the buildings, and replace them with parking lots.

Three of the buildings, however, were early-to-mid-nineteenth century structures that dated back to the days of the capital city’s importance as a steamboat port. Led by Mrs. Elizabeth Rozier, a Jefferson City preservationist, the daughter of a former state senator, and the wife of a former state legislator, a group of Jefferson Citizens began to protest the planned destruction of the buildings at what came to be called the Lohman Landing Site.

The fight was long and oftentimes acrimonious. Sen. John E. Downs, D-St. Louis, called Lohman’s Landing “a stupid old unimportant piece of masonry,” and Sen. A. Clifford Jones, R-Ladue, argued that the site “has no historical significance.” Jones added that there were only two historical sites worth saving in Jefferson City: the Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion. Eventually, however, the preservationists won, with the fight in the Senate championed by Sen. Omer Avery, D-Troy, and the fight in the House by Rep. Thomas D. Graham, D-Jefferson City. Instead of being replaced by parking lots, the three buildings were saved and restored in time for the Bicentennial Celebration of the Declaration of Independence in July 1976.



Lohman’s Landing, c1955

Missouri State Archives



Fireworks display at the Missouri State Capitol

Missouri State Archives

Preservationists were less successful in their efforts to save historically significant buildings west of the Capitol, in an area that had long been known as “The Millbottom” because of the presence there of multiple gristmills. To be sure, the area, which had once been a respectable working-class German immigrant neighborhood, had become blighted by the mid-1960s.

Many state and city officials were eager to clean up the area because of the negative image they thought it projected to Capitol visitors. Their effort, they claimed, was aimed at retaining Jefferson City as “the showcase of a proud Missouri.” The Urban Renewal movement of the 1960s promised a solution to the problem. By the early 1970s, federal, state, and city officials combined to formulate a plan aimed at relocating two hundred residents and some sixty businesses in a roughly one hundred acre area of the Millbottom. All of the buildings would be razed and replaced with a “Capitol West” development that would include a vibrant mix of state office buildings, high-rise luxury apartments, new privately operated businesses, and a convention center. Ultimately, it became clear that the planners’ vision exceeded their resources and their capacity to execute their plan. Two new state office buildings and one hotel were built in the area, dramatically increasing the demand for parking. The vast majority of the acreage cleared

by the Capitol West Urban Renewal Project was paved over for parking for state employees.

The Capital City in the Twenty-First Century

To many residents of the capital city, the Capitol West development seemed a fitting reminder that their city was, in fact, both a beneficiary and a victim of its destiny: a community that existed as a consequence of its status as the state capital, but a community whose growth and development were dictated by forces over which it had little or no control.

In a very real sense, residents of the City of Jefferson had spent the bulk of the nineteenth century trying to make certain that their town would remain the capital city. They spent much of the twentieth century trying to reconcile themselves to the results of their victory.

As the twenty-first century dawned, new opportunities appeared. The Missouri General Assembly authorized the movement of the century-and-a-half old penitentiary from the heart of the city to an area just east of the city limits. This action created the exciting possibility of state, county, and city officials working with private business interests to redevelop the old prison site, a riverfront tract of more than one hundred acres.

A second opportunity centered on the outcome of a fifty-year-old debate about whether a convention center should be built in the capital city and, if so, where it should be built and who should pay for its erection. But with both of these possibilities, a nagging question remained: how many of the capital city's historic nineteenth and early twentieth-century structures would have to be sacrificed to achieve the dreams of the twenty-first century visionaries? The challenge for the present and future remained, then, much as it had been for the past: how to accommodate and nurture the growth of state government while honoring the rich traditions, culture, and integrity of the capital city and its residents.

That challenge notwithstanding, the capital city remained in the twenty-first century what it had always been: a place where Missourians came to transact business and to celebrate the virtues and values of their state and nation. By the year 2001, gatherings such as the annual 4th of July celebration on the Capitol grounds routinely attracted a crowd in excess of the city's entire population and Missourians who visited the capital city boasted of the beauty of their state house. The old image of the City of Jefferson as a "somewhat fatiguing" place that would likely not amount to much was gone, replaced by a collective memory of 175 years of pride in growth and achievement.

Gary R. Kremer, *Professor of History, William Woods University and former Missouri State Archivist.*

For Further Reading

This essay draws heavily upon my reading of newspapers that are housed at The State Historical Society of Missouri, especially those papers that were published in the City of Jefferson during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, I have made use extensively of government records compiled by the State of Missouri and the City of Jefferson, housed at the Missouri State Archives. I have used, also, the interviews with former legislators that are a part of the "Politics in Missouri" project housed in The State Historical Society of Missouri's Western Historical Manuscript Collection.

Readers who wish to pursue the topic of the history of the City of Jefferson as the capital of the State of Missouri will find the following publications useful:

Barton, William. *Some Stories and Incidents Under the Capitol Dome During the Last Sixty Years.* Jefferson City. Self-published. 1996.

Brugioni, Dino. *The Civil War in Missouri As Seen From the Capital City.* Jefferson City: Summers Publishing, 1987.

Carnahan, Jean. *If Walls Could Talk: The Story of Missouri's First Families.* Jefferson City: MMPI, L.L.C., 1998.

Ford, James E. *A History of Jefferson City.* Jefferson City: New Day Press, 1938.

Giffen, Jerena East. *First Ladies of Missouri: Their Homes and Their Families.* Rev. Ed. Jefferson City: Giffen Enterprises, 1996.

_____. "Jefferson City: A Community Diminished by its Destiny." *Pioneer Times.* Part 1, 7 (April 1983): 134-144; Part 2, 7 (July 1983): 262-272.

_____. *History of Cole, Moniteau, Morgan, Benton, Miller, Maries and Osage Counties, Missouri.* Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889.

Kremer, Gary R. *Heartland History: Essays on the Cultural Heritage of the Central Missouri Region.* St. Louis: G. Bradley Publishing, Vol. 1, 2000; Vol. 2, 2001.

_____. "Politics, Punishment, and Profit: Convict Labor in the Missouri State Penitentiary, 1875-1900," *Gateway Heritage.* 11 (Spring 1991): 66-75.

_____. "Jefferson City." Marian M. Ohman. Ed. *Twenty Towns: Their Histories, Town Plans, and Architecture.* Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1985.

_____. and Thomas E. Gage. "The Prison Against the Town: Jefferson City and the Penitentiary in the 19th Century." *Missouri Historical Review.* 75 (July 1980): 414-432.

Ohman, Marian M. *The History of Missouri Capitols.* Columbia: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1982.

Rader, Perry S. "The Location of the Permanent Seat of Government." *Missouri Historical Review.* 21 (October 1926): 9-18.

Schroeder, Adolf E. and Carla Schulz-Geisberg. Eds. *Hold Dear, as Always: Jette, A German Immigrant Life in Letters.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988.

Stout, Laurie A. *Somewhere in Time: A 160 Year History of Missouri Corrections.* Rev. ed. Jefferson City: Missouri Department of Corrections, 1991.

Winn, Kenneth H. "It All Adds Up: Reform and the Erosion of Representative Government in Missouri, 1900-2000." Julius Johnson. Ed. *Official Manual: State of Missouri, 1999-2000.* Jefferson City: Office of the Secretary of State, 1999.

Young, Dr. R.E. *Pioneers of High, Water and Main; Reflections of Jefferson City.* Jefferson City: Twelfth State, 1997.