

Researching Your House's History, Jefferson City MO **for Historic City of Jefferson, April 5, 2016**

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If only learning when a building was constructed was as simple as looking in a book or on a website. Unfortunately, Jefferson City has lost many records that would facilitate documentation of the history, or at least the construction date, of many of our older buildings. And records at the city or county level may not indicate a construction date or be merely wild guesses. With luck, this presentation will point you in the right direction to complete your research in as short a time as possible. Think of research as delving into a great mystery, and always keep your eyes open for more “clues.”

Don't despair if you can't pinpoint the exact year of construction. Just narrow it down as much as possible, and list the date as “circa 1XXX.” Also, let people you meet know you're doing research. Lifelong Jefferson City residents can be valuable contacts, even if they're not known as historians. For example, I learned that Harry Truman once visited the house across from where I lived for 30+ years while in line at a visitation.

Previous studies: If your house has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, then some or all of your research may have been done for you. Nominations to the National Register for Cole County properties are available online at <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/cole.htm> If your property is located in the Downtown area, the nomination was completed so long ago that construction dates are not provided for all buildings, but the nomination remains a good resource. Another option is the survey conducted prior to the nomination, available <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS006-S.pdf> A more recent survey, conducted in 1989, is the State Capitol Historic District: <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS002-S.pdf> (survey forms); <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS002-R.pdf> (report) and <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS002-M.pdf> (map).

Surveys can be an excellent source for information, as research is conducted during a survey to determine an approximate construction date, architectural style, and more. If your property is located on the East Side of Jefferson City, you will want to refer to the architectural survey conducted in 1992: <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS001-S.pdf> (individual survey forms); <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS001-R.pdf> (report); <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS001-M.pdf> (map). Please note that the consultant's recommendations in the report were not completely accepted by State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff at the time, and changes may have occurred since 1992.

There are other surveys available for Jefferson City:

Historic Southside: <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS003-S.pdf> (individual forms);
<http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS003-R.pdf> (report);
<http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/CPAS003-M.pdf> (map).

Forest Drive Post-War: <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS007-S.pdf> (individual forms); <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS007-R.pdf> (report).

Moreau Drive Neighborhood: <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS005-S.pdf> (survey forms with maps); <http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/survey/COAS005-R.pdf> (report).

Abstract: If you are very lucky, you'll have access to an abstract for your property listing all previous owners. If not, you can recreate a list of prior owners using city directories and county records.

City Directories: One of the first references you should check are the local city directories. Not only are they a great research tool, but may allow you to skip 100+ years of research into previous owners. Found in the reference section of the Missouri River Regional Library, most of these are "criss-cross" directories, meaning that they list property owners by name, as a phone directory, and also houses by address. So you can search for your house's address and find the earliest listing, giving you an approximate construction date. The property owner's name will also be provided, giving you a list of prior owners or occupants, as well as their occupations, and possibly the names of children living in the home at the time. (If there is an ® shown by the listing, this means the house was rented, and the occupants' names are listed.) Note the previous owners of the house and the year it first appeared in the directory, as this will be needed for further research. The oldest directories available with a listing by address is 1912-1913. The oldest directory available is 1900, The Illustrated Sketch Book and Directory of Jefferson City and Cole County, which includes biographies of many of the prominent men in the community at the time. So check for the name of the 1912-1913 owner and see if they lived in the same house in 1900, or if there is a biography for them. Next you may want to check for recorded sale transactions for your house.

Recorder of Deeds: When a property is sold, buyers and sellers are recorded in the county records by the Recorder of Deeds. In Cole County, this office is located on the first floor of the Cole County Courthouse Annex on High Street, just inside the main entrance on the right. The staff there are quite helpful, and will also allow you to peruse the records at your leisure during work hours. Once you have the name of the first known owner of your house, check both deed books for that time period (more recent data is on microfiche). One book lists names of sellers alphabetically, and one lists buyers. You can check earlier deed books, alternating searches for buyers and sellers, until you find the deed transferring the lot at the initial government sale. While modern deeds typically list "\$1.00 and other considerations" as the sale price, watch the early deeds for actual sale prices. Often, lots were sold several times before a house was constructed, and an increase in property value over a short period will help narrow the

year of construction. Other documents may have been recorded, such as business incorporations or lawsuit settlements, which will provide interesting historical information.

Sanborn Maps: The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company made maps showing many features of interest for researchers, such as number of stories, type of siding and roofing materials, and may indicate changes in porches, outbuildings and surrounding structures. Check the key to learn the secret to understanding these maps. While black and white versions are available on microfiche at the State Archives, the colors shown on the originals are more helpful, as shown on this website:

http://www.colecohistSOC.org/sanborn_maps_hi.html The maps were updated several times as Jefferson City grew, so if your house is not shown on earlier maps, it may be shown in later versions.

Subdivision Plat Maps: The City of Jefferson used to have subdivision plat maps, including historic subdivisions, on their website. Since their website was updated, these no longer appear, but should be available through city Planning & Protective Services staff. Another option is the County Assessor's Office, although there may be a charge involved.

Local Landmark Designations: The Jefferson City Historic Preservation Commission has designated a number of historic properties as Local Landmarks, as described here: <http://documents.jeffcitymo.org/WebLink8/Browse.aspx?startid=1&dbid=0>

For structures built after 1900, the resources listed above should help you identify, or at least approximate, the year of construction. For those built prior to 1900, or outside of Jefferson City, you may have to check additional resources, such as those listed below. The earlier your house was built, the more difficult precise dating may be. Be sure to ask for help at libraries, as there are more materials available than are listed here, but these are the ones most likely to be helpful.

Pre-1900 City Directories: The State Historical Society of Missouri (SHS) has several city directories published prior to 1900. Ask staff for assistance, and ask them to check for any directories that may need rebinding, as there may be some not on the shelves.

Plat Book of 1900: This book is available in print at the SHS, or online at <http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm/ref/collection/moplatbooks/id/350> For rural properties, using a current legal description, you should be able to research owners shown on this map in the area of your property, and verify which one owned your parcel by checking deed records at the Recorder of Deeds.

Photographs: One of my favorite pictorial records of Jefferson City is the "Bird's Eye View of Jefferson City, the Capitol of Missouri, 1869,"

<https://www.loc.gov/item/73693479/> Using this online view, you can zoom in and study one block at a time. Unfortunately, resources just outside (west of) the downtown area are not included, but it is fascinating to see how many of these historic resources remain today.

These books contain numerous historic photographs of Jefferson City, and can be found in the reference section of the Missouri River Regional Library, at the State Archives (first floor of the Secretary of State's building, W. Main St.), or at local bookstores. (Dottie Dallmeyer may have copies of the out of print books for sale.)

Parks, Arnold G. Postcard History Series: Jefferson City. Arcadia Publishing, 2010.

Summers, Joseph S. and Dottie S. Dallmeyer. Images of America: Jefferson City Missouri. Arcadia Publishing, 2000.

Summers, Joseph S. Pictorial Folk History of Jefferson City, Missouri: 1890 – 1900. Summers Publishing, 1986.

State Archives: The Joseph Summers photograph collection is housed at the State Archives. Let staff know what you're looking for, as these photos are not on the shelves open to the public. You can also check online at <http://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/> but this may not contain the entire collection.

Post Cards: Post cards aren't usually dated, but if they were mailed, the postmark may help in your research. Search eBay (or other online sites) for Jefferson City postcards and photos. Many of our historic buildings (primarily churches, schools, or other community buildings, but occasionally residential homes are pictured) were featured in postcards. If you want to reach out to local postcard collectors, post a notice on the Facebook group You Know You're From Jeff City... and I'll bet you get a reply. Or someone may have a family photo that can help. Over 9,000 members, so it can't hurt.

Cole County Historical Society: The CCHS has posted a number of street view photos to their website: <http://www.colecohistsoc.org/photos.html> They also have in their collection a number of scrapbooks with photos and newspaper articles that may prove helpful. Take your list of previous owners, as information may be filed under their names.

Additional Research: After researching your house's history and establishing an approximate construction date, you may want to learn more about the people and events related to the house. For this, I recommend talking to people who have lived in the neighborhood and these general local history resources:

Ford, James E. A History of Jefferson City: Missouri's State Capital and of Cole County. The New Day Press, 1938.

Goodspeed. Excerpts from History of Cole County; the Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889. Available online: <http://www.colecohistsoc.org/goodspeed.html>

Kremer, Gary R. Exploring Historic Jefferson City. City of Jefferson, 2003.

Kremer, Gary R. Heartland History: Volume One. G. Bradley Publishing, Inc., 2000.

Kremer, Gary R. Heartland History: Volume Two. G. Bradley Publishing, Inc., 2000.

Kremer, Gary R. Heartland History: Volume Three. G. Bradley Publishing, Inc., 2000.

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

Newspaper resources: At the State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia, there is a card catalog where you can search for information on your house's prior owners. This will refer you to microfilm reels where you can view a copy of the newspaper articles. With this information, you can search the microfilm there, or at the Missouri River Regional Library, which has the reels but no index.

Census: Census records can be accessed at the State Archives. Ask staff to assist in selecting the microfilm reels, and have fun searching! While city directories may list children living in the home, census information may also list servants or other relatives living in the home, occupations, birthplace and more. Plus you'll get an idea about neighboring families, and a sense of the surrounding neighborhood. The latest census records available, due to privacy issues, is likely 1930.

While a number of online genealogy resources are available (<https://familysearch.org/> seems to be free), if you have a local library card, you can access Ancestry.com and Heritage Quest on the Missouri River Regional Library's computers.

Court Records: There may be court records related to your property or its owners. Some of these are recorded in the Recorder of Deeds' Office. Others may be found online: <http://s1.sos.mo.gov/records/archives/archivesdb/supremecourt/> During the Civil War, many people wrestled with the military forces, and many of these are recorded in the Provost Marshall's database: <http://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/CivilWar/Resources>

Good luck with your research! Please share your findings with Historic City of Jefferson and others, so we may all benefit from your discoveries.