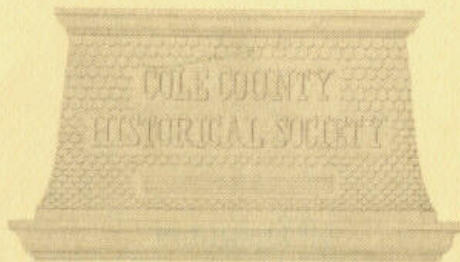


# The Jefferson City Story

By  
Myrene Houchin Hobbs



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### **Thomas Jefferson**

This commanding bronze statue of the third President of the United States, the work of James Earle Frazer, stands thirteen feet in height and is located in the center of the great stairway leading to the principal entrance to the Missouri State Capitol. As a guide in achieving a life-like resemblance to Jefferson, the sculptor studied the full-length portrait of Jefferson by Gilbert Stuart, the portrait head by Charles Wilson Peale, and the life mask by A. D. Brower. The resultant statue is perhaps the finest statue of Thomas Jefferson in existence.

Photo: Walker-Missouri Commerce

Cover: Bronze shield at entrance to Cole  
County Historical Museum, 109 Madison Street



# The Jefferson City Story

The City of Jefferson, which is the official name of the capital of Missouri, has the distinction of being located on land donated by the Federal Government for the establishment of a state capital city.

An Act of Congress gave four grants of land for this purpose and the General Assembly, meeting in St. Louis, promptly named a commission of five members to select a site. The only requirements were described as "being within forty miles from the mouth of the Osage River and located on the Missouri River." Many of the state's leading citizens were involved in the land speculation which followed, and the location selected was a compromise between the backers of Cote San Dessein, a thriving village near the mouth of the Osage, and several other settlements. The Commission chose a site which had been less involved in the speculations than the other locations. The act establishing the city was passed by the Legislature on December 31, 1821, and the rolling hills of virgin timber, with spring-fed streams separating them into distinct sections, became the designated capital of Missouri.

It is said that Thomas Jefferson was highly pleased by the honor bestowed upon him, and many of the new citizens who settled here in the next fifteen years were from Charlottesville, Virginia, and the vicinity of Jefferson's home, Monticello. Many had been associates and friends of this great man.

Three families were living on the site, and Daniel M. Boone, son of the famous pioneer, and Major Elias Bancroft were commissioned to plan and lay out the town. Boone was paid the sum of four dollars for 120 days of work, and a difficult job it was, moving from hill to hill, defining the new streets and lots. The first sale of lots occurred in May, 1823, and the average price paid was \$32.75. Streets were planned on a scale which, if followed in later years, would have gone far to solve the present-day traffic problems. They were described as "not more than 120 feet wide or less than 80 feet." Some of these wide blocks are preserved today in the one hundred block of East McCarty, on Dunklin between Washington and Madison, and on West Main. City parks 400 feet square were to be included in all parts of the new town at regular intervals, a plan lost in the later development.



The first Capitol Building was completed on October 1, 1826, and the Legislature convened in the building on the third Monday in November. This structure faced the river and was located on the site of the present Governor's Mansion. It served as the executive, legislative and judicial headquarters of the state and provided living quarters for the governor on the second floor. The building was destroyed by fire in 1837 and was replaced by a building of beautiful proportions which adorned the site of the present Capitol. This structure, with several additions built after the Civil War, served the State until 1911 when it was destroyed by fire.



#### **Missouri's First Capitol Building in Jefferson City**

This sketch by Marcel Boulicault, architect, was drawn from written descriptions of the building erected in 1825 and located on the site of the present-day Executive Mansion. Dedicated in 1826, This Capitol Building was to provide executive, legislative, and judicial headquarters for the state, with living quarters for the governor provided on the second floor. A fire in 1837 destroyed this building.

Cole County Historical Museum





**Second Capitol Building  
in Jefferson City**

This building was  
completed in 1840, at  
a cost of \$450,000.

Cole County  
Historical Museum

**Second Capitol Building in Jefferson City, with Additions**

Additions in 1888 increased the height of the dome and added  
two wings to the building at a cost of \$220,000. Struck by light-  
ning, this edifice was destroyed by fire in 1911.

Cole County Historical Museum







#### **Dulle-Moerschell Home**

Erected in 1858 and used as headquarters for Union generals Lyons and Fremont during the Civil War, this house is still in excellent condition. The family of the builder still lives in this charming home, representing the longest continuing residence by one family of any house in Jefferson City.

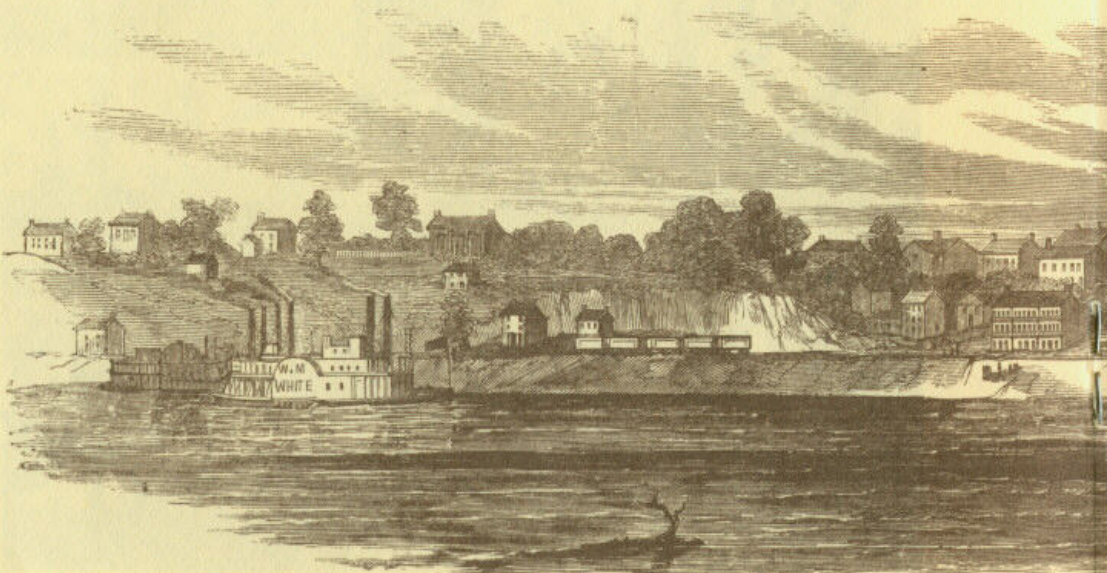
Photo: Wright Studio

In 1825 Calvin Gunn established the first newspaper and became the State Printer. The village was incorporated in 1825, but did not elect a Mayor until 1839 when Thomas Lawson Price, a young Virginian, was the first to hold this office.

Through the efforts of Governor John Miller, the Penitentiary was established here in 1833 and the first building completed two years later.

The early settlers of both town and county were primarily from the states of Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky, but after 1840 the Ger-

**Jefferson City, Missouri, 1861, as Sketched by Orlan**





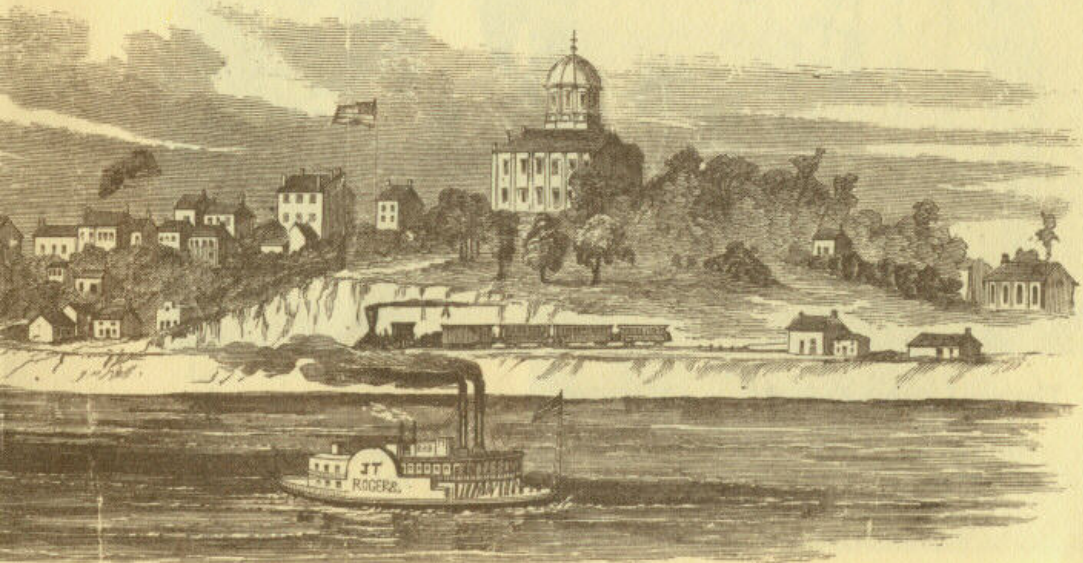
man emigrants came to this section of Missouri in increasing numbers, bringing with them the culture, customs and thrift of their native land. They introduced the architecture of Germany, and the trim brick and stone houses became characteristic of the city. For years the town was known as "the town of brick" and an old ordinance prohibited the building of frame structures.

From the time the city was established, a constant fight was carried on to remove the Capitol. Nearly every community in central Missouri attempted through various means to secure the prize. This lasted for ninety years, ending with the statewide bond issue voted by the people after the fire of 1911, forever establishing this city as the Capitol of the State and providing for the erection of the present building.

The Civil War found the town divided in sympathy, as was all of Missouri. It became the political arena where the intense drama of that era was performed, as the nation watched with concern the events which transpired here. Missouri, a state with overwhelming Southern sympathies, was surrounded on three sides by Northern states: Illinois, Iowa and Kansas. It has been stated by several historians that more skirmishes and battles were fought on Missouri soil during this war than in any other state, with the exception of Virginia. Border warfare was violent, with families divided and embittered; destruction of property was carried on constantly by guerrilla tactics.

Governor Claiborne Jackson, who favored secession, defied the State Convention which had voted to remain in the Union, and issued a call for fifty thousand volunteers to form a State Militia, under the command of General Sterling Price. When Governor Jackson realized

do C. Richardson. From **Harper's Weekly**, July 6, 1861.





that he lacked support to enforce his plans, he personally led this Home Guard to Boonville, where Confederate forces were being formed.

Within two days Federal troops entered the city and encamped on the Capitol grounds. Col. Frank P. Blair took possession of the town and was re-enforced by thousands of troops under the command of General Lyons, who was to give his life in a few weeks at the Battle of Wilson's Creek near Springfield, Missouri.

At a later period of the war, President Lincoln appointed Thomas Lawson Price a Brigadier General in command of the defense of the city. The fact that Missouri remained in the Union as a result of the State Convention was due in a large part to the votes of the conservative Democrats, who far outnumbered the Republicans in the state. Of 99 members of the convention, 82 were of Southern birth. In October, 1961, a marker was placed on the G. H. Dulle home, which was the headquarters of General Lyons and General John C. Fremont during their occupation of this city.

The major military maneuver of this tragic time occurred when General Sterling Price entered the state at the Arkansas border with 10,000 soldiers and heavy artillery, for the purpose of capturing the capital city. Crossing the Osage at Bolton Shoals and later the Moreau River at Berry Springs, he encamped along the ridge, now traversed by Green Berry Road, for three days, while the citizens desperately erected fortifications and prepared for the battle which never occurred.



**Thomas Lawson Price Mansion 1841-1905**

This view of the double parlor is from the home of the first mayor of Jefferson City. Many of the furnishings, which were purchased in France, can be seen today in the Cole County Historical Museum.

Cole County Historical Museum



Calling his staff together, he announced, to their amazement, that he was withdrawing, and gave orders to proceed west. The reason for his decision was never explained in later years, nor did he refer to it in his memoirs, but the belief has existed that he realized the hopelessness of the Southern cause and could not bring himself to destroy the city which had been the scene of his greatest triumphs and honors, and where he had lived for four years as governor. The fact remains that he made a momentous decision in the annals of this city on October 7, 1864. A monument erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, on Moreau Drive, commemorates this event.

Jefferson City was slow in recovering from the Civil War and not until the Constitutional Convention of 1875 was there any feeling of security. However, Governor B. Gratz Brown, who was elected in 1870, contributed greatly to the growth of the city. He started a building boom by erecting on Main Street (now Capitol Avenue) "Brown's Row," a group of two-story flats. Across from the Governor's Mansion three English basement-type residences were built, as well as numerous commercial buildings and individual houses. A man of wealth, Kentuckian by birth, he had married Mary Hanson Gunn, daughter of the above-mentioned printer, and had spent many years in Missouri politics before his election as Chief Executive. Governor Brown deemed the home furnished by the state as inadequate for a Governor of Missouri, and erected the French type, Mansard roof structure which is in use today, and has been described as one of the best examples in the country of this type of architecture. The Mansion was the scene of elaborate social affairs during his regime, one of the most important having been given in honor of Grand Duke Alexis of Russia when he visited the city. Through the years many notables of national and international fame have been guests of the Chief Executives in this historic old house.

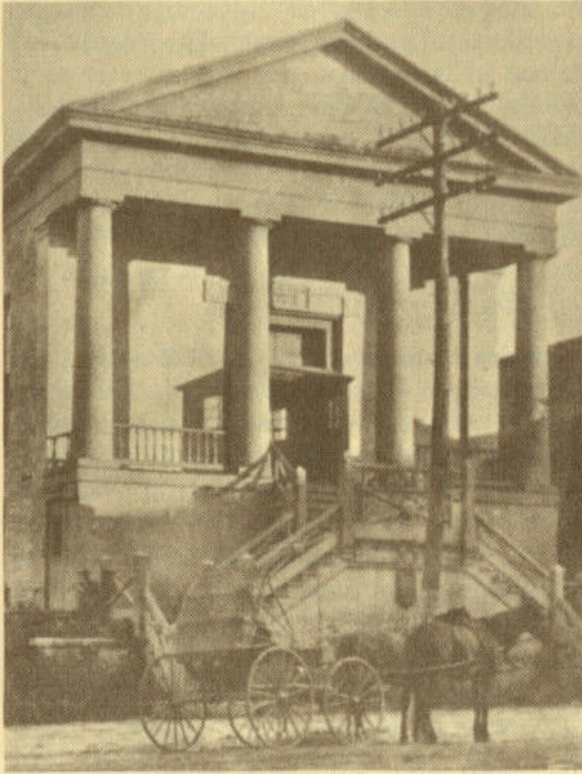
#### **Executive Mansion**

The official residence for Missouri's governors was completed in 1871. This picture was taken before 1935, at about which time the Mansion was painted white, the porte-cochere was removed, and a first-floor kitchen was added.

Cole County  
Historical Museum







### **Grace Episcopal Church**

Erected in 1842, this church, built of stone and with four imposing Doric columns, was in use until 1899. The first church building in Jefferson City, it also served as a hospital in 1849 during a cholera epidemic and again in 1861 during the Civil War. The church housed various private schools on its ground floor during the period 1850-1899. The building is commemorated by a bronze plaque located in the 200-block of Madison Street.

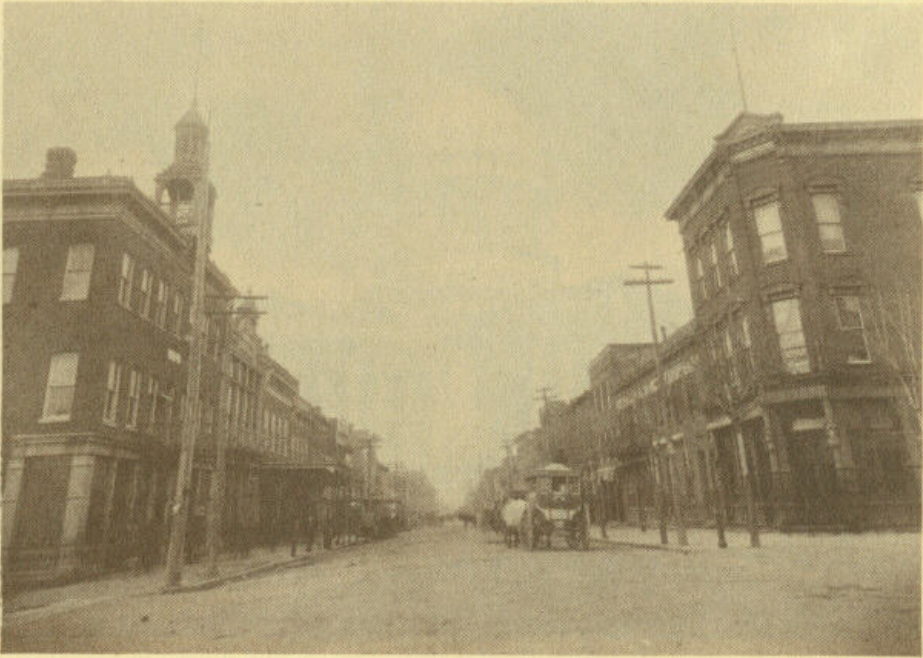
Cole County  
Historical Museum

New industries began to appear in the eighties; electric lights were installed, a waterworks system completed, and in 1896 a bridge was built across the Missouri River. This sturdy old structure was replaced in 1955 by the new bridge now in use.

A man who should not be overlooked in any history of this city was Major Joseph M. Clarke, who bequeathed the City Hall to the town. This structure, formerly Bragg Hall, located at High and Monroe Streets, serves today as a City Hall and Council Chamber. It was accepted by the Council on January 24, 1890.

The first and greatest attraction of this city, historically and culturally, has always been, and will continue to be, the magnificent State Capitol Building and adjacent structures owned by the state. The Capitol Building was constructed at a cost of \$4,500,000 and could not be duplicated today for many times that amount. The dedication occurred in 1924 with a pageant which depicted the state's history from the earliest French and Spanish era. The Brangwyn and Benton murals are the best works of these noted artists and the building houses numerous works of art which place it among the finest public buildings in the nation. The Department of Commerce and Industrial Development maintains a museum on the ground floor, as well as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Museum. The building is visited by thousands of persons annually. The Weiman Fountain on the north facade was one of the first works of this noted sculptor erected in the state.





#### **Street Scene at High and Monroe Streets**

Circa 1900. Please note the stagecoach and the dirt street. The corner building on the right, the Monroe House, still stands. The building to the left, bequeathed to the city by Major Joseph M. Clarke, has served as City Hall and Council Chamber since 1890. An interesting point concerning the holding of public office in the City of Jefferson is the fact that Captain J. T. Rogers (1805-1880) served the city as mayor, beginning in 1840, for an unprecedented ten terms.

Cole County Historical Museum

Many historic spots have been marked by the Cole County Historical Society, several individuals and organizations. Most of these are in the downtown district: The Lewis and Clark Expedition marker at the foot of Madison Street; the site of the First Capitol Building, located on the Executive Mansion grounds; office of Eugene Field, the Children's Poet, 211 Capitol Avenue; site of Grace Episcopal Church, erected 1842, corner of Capitol Avenue and Madison Street; High and Adams Street marker honoring Judge Robert W. Wells, designer of the State Seal; Cole County Court House lawn marker erected by Grand Army of the Republic and a monument to Military Forces of World War I; General Thomas Lawson Price plaque on Supreme Court grounds, site of his historic home; plaque on G. H. Dulle home, built in 1858, headquarters for Camp Lillie during Civil War and occupied by Union Generals Lyons and Fremont. The family of the builder still lives in this charming home, representing the longest continuing residence by one family of any house in Jefferson City. Many markers are to be found in the Capitol Building, including one with the names of 365 Revolutionary War soldiers buried in Missouri.





**Present Capitol Building, Exterior View**

This magnificent structure was built on the site of the capitol destroyed by fire in 1911. Of Classical-Renaissance architecture, it was completed in 1917, at a cost of \$3,500,000.

Photo: Walker-Missouri Commerce

**Present Capitol Building, Interior View**

The Thomas Hart Benton murals, painted on the walls of the House of Representatives' Lounge, attract many visitors. They depict a vivid panorama of Missouri history.

Photo: Walker-Missouri Commerce





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