

Rotary Centennial Park



To protect and ensure the city's prosperity, in 1893 a special committee of the local Commercial Club organized to raise money to build a bridge. Businessmen and property owners formed a corporation and raised the entire \$225,000 to finance the venture. This site, the north end of Bolivar Street, was selected for the bridge.

Construction began in 1895 and the bridge opened February 17, 1896, funneling travelers into the Bolivar Street neighborhood in unprecedented numbers. It was operated as a toll bridge through three successive owners: Jefferson City Bridge & Transfer Company (1910), McKinley Power & Light of Illinois (1916), and the Capital City Highway Bridge Company (1928). The latter retired the bond and turned the bridge over to the state in 1932. There was a huge dedication ceremony to celebrate the state's ownership and the newly "free" bridge. In 1934, for \$7,000, the state installed the art deco pillars.

The rotating bridge served the community until 1955 when the new, current bridge was opened. When the new bridge opened it averaged 9,200 vehicles per day. A second bridge was added and dedicated in 1991. Currently, both bridges combined average 50,000 vehicles per day.

A natural observation spot, Jefferson Citians and visitors have been watching traffic--boats, horseback riders, buggies, trains, cars and planes--from this spot for well over a century. It is a fitting tribute for the Rotarians, today's business leaders, to pay tribute to their predecessors' vision on Rotary Club International's 100th Anniversary. This significant site is a reminder of the humble beginnings of the city and the progressive vision that has guided its growth.

St. Mary's Hospital



Today's St. Mary's Health Center is Jefferson City's oldest hospital. At the turn of the 20th century, the residents of our growing city were forced to travel long distances for hospital care. The Rev. Otto Hoog, then pastor of St. Peter's Catholic Church, sent a request to the Sisters of St. Mary of the Third Order of St. Francis, an order of nuns trained as nurses whose motherhouse was located in St. Louis, requesting that they establish a hospital in Jefferson City. The cornerstone for the hospital was laid in May 1904, on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Jacob F. Moerschel.

The original stone hospital building was constructed by Henry J. Wallau, a German immigrant who built several important buildings in Jefferson City, including the Cole County Courthouse, the Missouri Pacific Depot, the Grace Episcopal Church, International Shoe Company and Villa Panorama. The stone used to build St. Mary's came from the City's quarry nearby at the south end of Harrison Street. Expanded numerous times over the years to meet the needs of the community, the original stone building stands as an enduring landmark of the history of the City of Jefferson.

Sources: Heartland History, Vol. 1
Gary R. Kremer

Exploring Historic Jefferson City
Gary R. Kremer

Prison Wall - Missouri State Penitentiary



For nearly 170 years, the Missouri State Penitentiary was a mostly unseen omnipresence in the heart of Jefferson City. Tales of escapes and riots are interwoven with the city's history, and the often-controversial use of its free labor force through those many decades has helped shape our city's economy. For the average citizen, the high stone wall stretching from Lafayette Street down Capitol Avenue (called East Main in bygone days) and beyond was a line of demarcation between everyday life and an ominous, invisible presence on the other side. The constancy of the guards in the stone guard towers, and the wall itself were the only concrete evidence of that other world, as daily life went on as usual on "our side" of the walls.

Built by the inmates themselves before even the Civil War, the oldest section of the wall is the section from Lafayette Street to Capitol Avenue. The lower wall, along Capitol Avenue and Chestnut Street to the Missouri River was constructed in 1905, also by prison labor. In earlier years, loose rocks were kept stacked on top of the walls as a deterrent to potential escapees. One ill-fated escape attempt targeted Guard Tower No. 2 at the corner of Capitol and Lafayette. A Molotov cocktail was thrown at the tower in an attempt to kill or disable the guard, but fortunately, the explosive went in one window and out the other.

Now that the prison is vacated and its scenic bluff-top acres are being included in the mainstream of city life, we feel it fitting to bestow Landmark status on the old walls -- no longer keeping us apart, but now letting us in; reminding us of our unique history, a vital part of the many events, institutions and people that shaped the City of Jefferson.

Etta & Joseph Miller Performing Arts Center



The original Jefferson City Senior High School and Junior College building in the 200 block of Miller Street was funded by a bond issue May 13, 1924. The property was bought from the Dr. G. B. Winston family for \$35,000. The land had first been purchased from the State in 1830 for \$91.50. The Historic Winston home was sold for removal in January of 1925 for \$250.00. The cornerstone for the current building was laid on June 24, 1925. The three story high school was the largest construction ever undertaken for that time in the history of the City School System. Plans called for the first indoor swimming pool in the School System to be located under the main floor auditorium. In July 1925, the Board of Education adopted a resolution approving a junior college. On March 23, 1926 the building was complete. The final cost was nearly \$3,000,000. The May 1926 Class of 84 seniors were the first graduates to receive their diplomas in the new high school auditorium. Most of the college classes were held on the third floor of the building and the high school occupied the first and second floors. The junior college's final year was 1957-1958. There were 36 students in the last graduating class. It had served over 3000 students. The all time high for a year was 232 in 1947 - 48. The school continued to serve as a high school until 1963. Since that time the school has been used many different ways - for 7th grade, as an instructional Resource Center, for ABLE, for preschool, and for enrichment classes for bright students. Next year there are plans to put an alternative high school on the third floor. The Miller Performing Arts Center now occupies the second floor and an addition to the West side of the building. After several years of hard work getting funding, making plans and redoing the space, the public schools had a grand opening of the Etta and Joseph Miller Performing Arts Center October 9, 2005.

Tergin Apartments



The Tergin Apartment building is located at 201 West McCarty Street. It was designed in 1938 by the Jefferson City architectural firm of Besecke and Swanson for George K. Tergin and was constructed in 1938 – 1939 by the Schell Construction Company. The building is a two story brick walk-up apartment building with a full basement. It has a symmetrical façade, a single front door centered on the main floor, and steel casement windows. Originally, the Tergin Apartment Building was designed to accommodate five one-bedroom apartments. The configuration of some of the apartments has been changed over the years and additional apartments have been added. The building was completely rehabilitated beginning in the Spring of 1998. It now has six apartments. The Tergin Apartment Building is the only Art Deco/Art Moderne apartment building in town. It is an excellent example of the combination of the two modernistic styles, Art Deco and Art Moderne. This is seen in the simple cubic form of the building, the use of concrete, brick, glass block and metal as building materials, the casement and corner windows, and the low relief geometric ornamentation identify it as an Art Deco/Art Moderne building. The building is also an example of one of the earliest uses of steel casement windows in Jefferson City.

The Tergin Apartment Building was built for George Tergin, a Jefferson City business man who was born in Greece in 1902 and came to the United States in 1916, first settling in Kankakee, Illinois. By age 17 George had moved to Jefferson City and had bought a shoeshine business in the Central Trust Building. Later he added clothes, hat cleaning and shoe repair to his business. In its hey day, the business cleaned 50 to 100 hats a day.

(Tergin Apartments cont.)

In 1937 George went back to Greece for a trip where he met and married Ourania Roussopoulos. After the apartment building was built, George and Ourania lived in and reared their two children, Helen and Jim, in the apartment.

In 1969 George sold his space in the Central Trust Building and bought a structure on High Street where he moved his cleaning business. He decided after 48 years to no longer have the shoeshine business. In 1977 at age 75, George retired giving the business to his son, Jim, who opened Carrie's Hallmark Card and Gift Shop. Today, the Tergin family is still in business uptown. The third generation, Carrie and George, Jr. with their parents, Jim and Irene, own the Apartment building and uptown Jefferson City businesses.

The apartment building has been home at one time or another to now four generations of Tergins. Today, it continues to be a well loved and cared for building unique in the residential building stock` of our central city.