



GAZETTE

The St. Joseph Historical Society

September 2019

Robidoux Row Museum

219 East Poulin Street
St. Joseph, Missouri 64501
816-232-5861

Memberships:

Individual	\$20
Family	\$35
Contributor	\$50
Patron	\$100
Benefactor	\$500
Life	\$750

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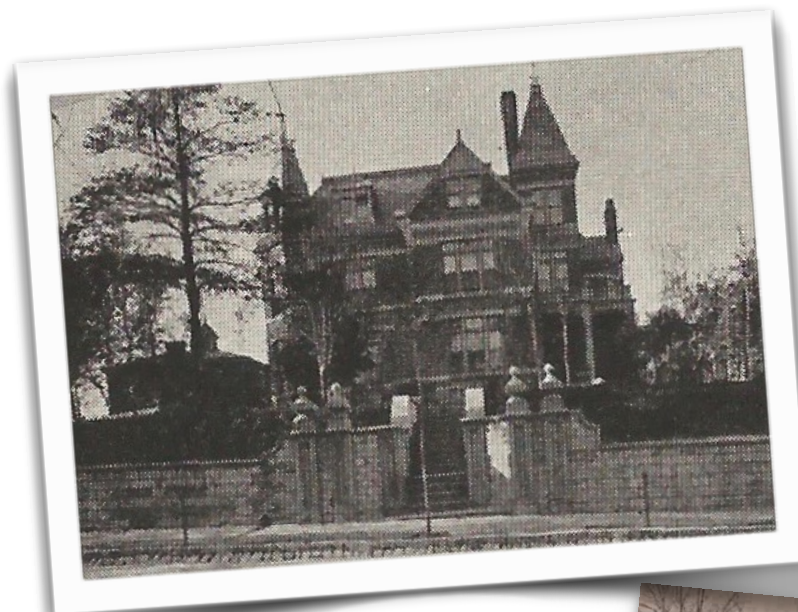
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SJHS Gazette
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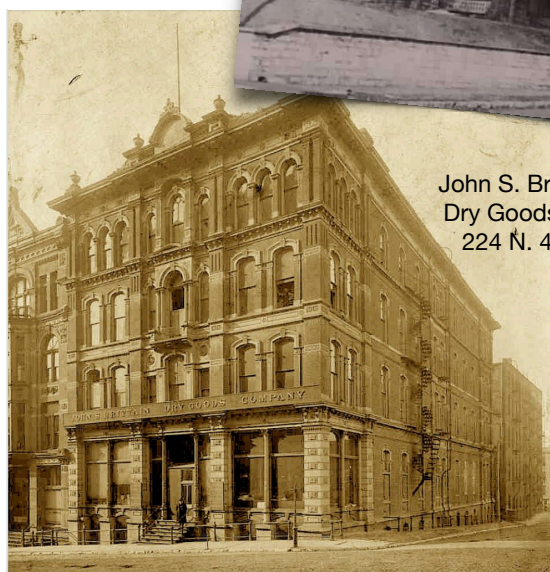
John S. Brittain

Dry
Goods
Merchant



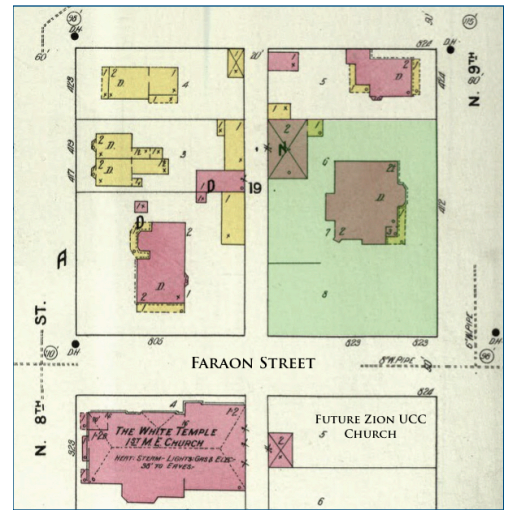
In the last issue of the Gazette, the above house was pictured and readers were asked if they could identify the now gone mansion. While there were a few guesses, only one person, Max Guenther, knew whose home it had been and where it was once located.

John S. Brittain built this grand home located at 824 Faraon Street (NW corner of 9th & Faraon). Mr. Brittain was in the wholesale dry goods business with its final location at 224 North Fourth Street (Boudreaux's Restaurant today), which was built in about 1882.



John S. Brittain.
Dry Goods Co.,
224 N. 4th St.

John Sherrard Brittain was born November 30, 1841 in Belvidere, New Jersey and arrived in Forest City, Missouri in about 1858. He founded the Brittain-Ovelman & Company



wholesale dry goods in St. Joseph in 1874. By 1882, the name of the business was Brittain-Richardson & Co. Mr. Richardson left the business in 1889 and the name was changed to Brittain-Smith Co. It was upon Mr. Smith's departure in 1892 that the name was once again changed to the now more familiar John S. Brittain Dry Goods Company. Mrs. Brittain (formerly Susan Mary Turner) was the niece of R. E. Turner who was the senior partner of the Turner-Frazer Mercantile Company, which was another large scale business in town.

Mr. Brittain stepped down as president of his company in 1916 and became the chairman of the board while R. W. Powell rose to head the business. John S. Brittain, Jr. came into the business in 1896 after completing college. After a prolonged illness, the senior Brittain passed away in December of 1917. Upon the death of Mr. Powell in 1920, John S. Brittain, Jr. became president. The junior Brittain was a bachelor at the time of his father's passing and it was probably at this time that the home was sold. He resided in the Benton Club which was just a couple of blocks away. As often happened with many large scale houses after the founding generation moved on, the grand home became a place of business. The circa 1920s postcard illustrated above shows the west side of the house when it was the Mercy Hospital and Sanatorium. In the 1940s, a large addition was added to the front of the house on the vast lawn (see the photo & postcard illustrated at the bottom of the next page).



The images pictured here showing the interior of the house give just a peek at its grandeur. The main entrance was off to the southeastern corner of house and a large hall bisected the principle rooms of the first floor. The grand staircase was not on an outside wall and therefore did not feature a stained glass window. Instead, a large triptych stained glass window with smaller transom windows above was at the east end of the main hall greeting all who entered. A library, or family parlor, was at the opposite end of this hall on the west side of the house.

Only one other house faced Faraon Street in the 800 block alongside the Brittain home, which speaks to their scale (see the Sanborn fire map shown at the top right of this page). The





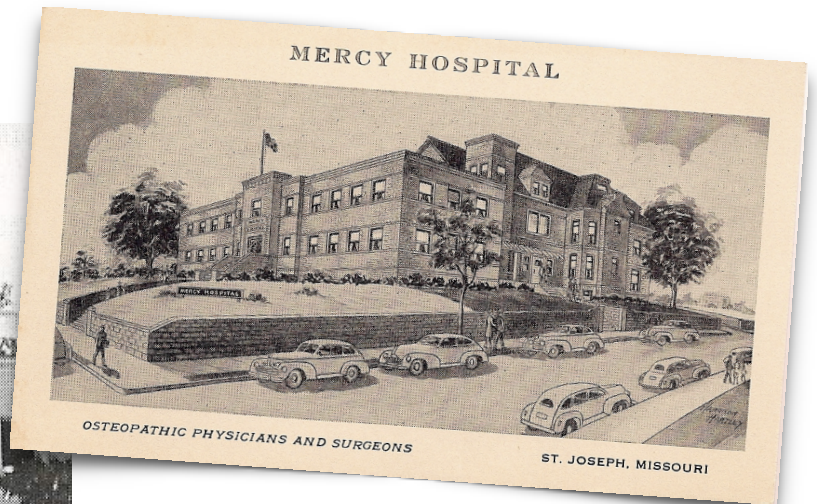
Left: The main hallway with its beautiful stained glass windows. The front door would have been at the far right and the dining room was through the doorway in the middle. **Below:** The second floor landing of the main staircase. **Bottom:** A postcard & photo showing the commercial structure that was added to the front of the house. Note the missing tower roof peak on the postcard.



house on the west end of the block would be replaced with the Methodist Hospital in 1924. As the Methodist Hospital grew from the 1950s through the 1970s, several square blocks of grand homes succumbed to the wrecking ball to make way for the expanding hospital campus. The grand mansions that still stand on Hall Street to the north paled in comparison to some of the houses destroyed during these years to make way for expansion, or parking lots.

Today, even the hospital campus has been relegated to the landfill. Gone are the huge buildings that had replaced some of St. Joseph's grandest homes. A vast empty space scars the area that still awaits redevelopment which to this point consists of just two small infill houses. The scar runs even deeper when one is aware of what stood in this area before the hospital was ever a thought.

* Special thanks to Artcrafts Engraving for their use of the interior views & the Sanborn map images.



Joe's Birthday Party

Celebrating 236 Years

On August 17th, the St. Joseph Historical Society celebrated the 236th birthday of St. Joseph founder, Joseph Robidoux. The event also provided the opportunity to thank the membership for their continued support by providing them with a free hotdog cookout.

Our cutout of Joseph Robidoux can be seen at the left posing with his birthday cake at the party. While his expression never varied, it was noticed that he seemed eager to partake in the cake as is evidenced by the fork spotted in his right hand (see lower left picture).



New Pump Organ Donated

A beautiful, and fully functioning, pump organ is now on display at The Row. It replaces the previous organ which did not work and was missing its decorative top. This one even came with a stool and some music. Special thanks to Lee and Polly Strang of Platte Woods, Missouri for their generous donation. Members Randy and Donna Klein sold the old organ in one of their recent estate sales where the new owner hauled it away literally strapped to the top of a Volvo sedan.



Collector's Exhibit Unveiled

While museums have amazing collections of artifacts, it is often private individuals who have even better ones. The collector usually has a narrower focus than a museum and therefore amasses a more in-depth collection of a specific topic. This is certainly true of St. Joseph collectibles.

The Robidoux Row Museum is proud to announce the first in a series of exhibits that will feature private collections. On display right now is selected portions of Randy and Donna Klein's collection of St. Joseph souvenir china. Images of such local landmarks as City Hall, the Hotel Robidoux, schools and Krug Park and more are represented on plates, tea cups, pitchers, pin trays, ashtrays and other various china pieces.

In the early 20th Century, these inexpensive transfer ware pieces were a common keepsake available to travelers. They served as a memento for visitors or as a gift for those still at home. Sometimes they were used as promotional give-away items by businesses. Regardless of their original intended purpose, today they serve as a decorative historical artifact illustrating portions of our local sights that have either changed with time, or no longer exist.

These special collector exhibits will hopefully bring visitors back to The Row for something new to see, and perhaps intrigue people to visit for the first time. Come and see this wonderful collection and help spread the word to others who will enjoy this display of a unique collection.



Left: The crowd gathers at the unveiling of the display of souvenir china from the collection of Randy and Donna Klein during Joseph Robidoux's birthday celebration.

Above: Just a sampling of the various shapes and images produced as souvenirs in the early years of the 20th Century.

Membership Renewals

It's that time of the year when annual membership dues are to be paid. Renewal notices were recently mailed and the following list shows those members who have already remitted theirs. If you don't see your name on this list then, please, send in your membership as soon as possible. This issue of the Gazette has been mailed to the entire membership list including those as yet not current. However, the next issue will only be mailed out to current members.

A. M. Susie Evans
Albert Robidoux
Alene Tourbier
Ann Roades
Anne & Nigh Johnson
Annette Clayton
August & Lela Bachman
Barbara & Steve Parker
Barbara Kelly
Barbara Maxwell
Bette Tolbert
Bill & Rose Mytton
Bill Pierson
Bob Fitzpatrick
Boudreaux's Seafood
Calvin & Sandra Smith
Carla Savarino
Carlos & Carol Moya
Carol & Russell Matt
Carol Inman
Cecil Myers
Charlene & Bob Slater
Chelsea Teater
Christine & Daniel Jurenka
CJ & Suz Vetter
Clyde Weeks
Cole & Ingrid Woodbury
Connie Dixon
Dan & Jerre Moore
Dan & Judy Hausmann
Daniel & Anna Johnson
Daniel D Moser
Dave & Bernie Stevenson
Dave & Suzy Bradley
David L Shepard
Debbie Gentry
Deborah Bryan
Denise Hoskins
Dolores Kline
Donna Boyers
Donna Roberdeaux
Donnie Miller
Dorothy Frogge
Douglas & Dan Diedrick
Dr. & Mrs. Wallace McDonald
Dwayne Foster
Edward & Rose Mary Hughes
Eileen Dyer
Emily & Gary Baumann
Francis Smith

Frank Robidoux
George & Carol Almanza
Harrison & Lisa Hartley
Harvey Robideau
Henry Robidoux
Hillyard Industries - Jim Carolus
Jack Pirozzi
James & Elaine Spafford
Jerome Goolsby
Jerry & Jackie Lewin
Jessica Pierce
Jim Lehr
Jim Root
Jo Thompson
Joan Byrne Sandkamp
Joan McPolin
Joanna Shaw
JoAnne Grey
Jockey Smock
John & Denise Tapia
John & Herbie Wood
John & Karen Foley
John Witt
John Wolfe
Joshua & Caroline Castor
Joy Baker
Judy Dye
Julia Chambers
Katherine Stevenson
Kelly & Ivana Calhoun
Kim Gorman
Leonard & Mary Smith
Linda Rabideau
Lisa Rock
LouAnn Rizer
Lynda Franken
Madeleine Saunders
Margaret Sparrow
Margo Prentiss
Marilyn Drannan
Mark Robidoux Culhane
Marshall & Melanie White
Michael DePriest
Michael O'Connor
Michael Rabideau
Nodaway Valley Bank
Pam & Gordan Spiekerman
Pat & DeeDee Squires
Patricia Greenwich
Randy & Donna Klein

Rebecca Rotterman
Rebecca Thacker
Reid & Virginia Woodbury
Richard Deshon
Richard Landon
Ron Taylor
Rosan Bowers
Rupp Funeral Home
St. Joseph Public Library
Sandra Hamilton
Sarah Dougherty
Scott Grier
Sharon Eggleston
Sharon Kosek
Sharon Laing
Sonya Nelson
Stanley Hall
Steven & Jeannie Pittluck
Susan Wagner
Tammy & Dave Bennett
Tim Riley
Tim Stites
Virginia Hoffarth
Virginia Wickham
Wickie Utley
William & Connie Leppert

