

RESEARCHED BY JUSTIN WATKINS

206-214 South Main Street

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206-214

The First State Capitol of Missouri

Edna McElhiney Olson, *Historical Saint Charles, Missouri* (St. Charles, MO: Olson, 1967), 33-34

One of the most outstanding historic buildings in Saint Charles is the First State Capitol of Missouri. These structures were erected by two brothers, Ruluff and Charles Peck. They were early prominent and influential merchants and the building was used as their residence and store building. It was known as "Peck's Row." It was actually three buildings under one saddleback roof. To the south was an arched driveway which led to the ferry and the river. The second floor housed the first Masonic Lodge organized in 1818. The third building was built Chancey Shepard and rooms on the second floor were used as the governor's office and committee rooms.

The bitterly fought slavery question was settled in the "Missouri Compromise" of 1820. The combined efforts of Col. Benjamin Emmons, Hiram Baber [not "Babler" as Olson spells it], and Daniel Morgan Boone at the 1820 Constitutional Convention at St. Louis led to the convention's approval to house the First State Capitol in Saint Charles. The city fathers established a "Town Board of Trustees" and guaranteed that the State would be furnished a seat of government "free of expenses to the State." The guarantors were to pay to Ruluff Peck the sum of \$100/yr for the use of the second floor. The arches in the walls of the second floor were opened to form the "Great Assembly Hall."

The Legislators attended the sessions coming on horseback, and wearing fur coats, coonskin caps and leather moccasins. The most outstanding member was Governor Alexander McNair, who was attired in a beaver hat and frock coat. Local residents and tavern keepers offered to house and board the members at a rate of \$2.50/wk. Many members were too poor to pay even this modest fee at a time when eggs sold at 5¢ per dozen, whiskey at 12 ¢ per quart, and pork at 1 ¢ per pound. The legislators were possessed among other things with very good appetites and local civic minded citizens suffered losses in supplying board and room.

The County Court ordered the Sheriff to transport all equipment and appurtenances of the County Court to the two rooms occupied by the Masonic Lodge in Peck's Row in May 1821, thereby including the State Capitol and the Court House under one roof.

Many historic events took place during the time the First Missouri State Capitol was located in Saint Charles from 1821 to 1826. The famous Solemn Public Act was passed on which depended Missouri's admission to the Union. During the session of 6 November 1821, Governor McNair officially informed the legislature that Missouri had finally been admitted to the Union. Another important law passed was the State Banking

Law of Missouri. The General Assembly entered into a very bitter debate over the removal of the Capitol to Jefferson City. On 21 January 1826, the doors of the first legislature closed.

The guarantors of the nominal yearly rental defaulted and a record in the Circuit Clerk's office that a judgment was awarded the Peck brothers against guarantors in 1824. In June 1829, after the removal of the State Capitol to Jefferson City, the State Auditor's office issued payment to Ruluff Peck the amount of \$247.50 for "the use of his house for the General Assembly" for ninety days at the rate of \$2.50/day.

The First State Capitol buildings were purchased in January 1961 for the State by the late Governor James T. Blair, Jr. The Missouri Park Board is now restoring the buildings. These buildings are a monument to the hardy pioneers of a new frontier. The old hand-made bricks are an ever present reminder of the trials and tribulations encountered in the establishment of the State of Missouri. Every public spirited citizen should look upon this building as a shrine, the foundation and heritage of the early pioneers of a new frontier.

Malcolm Drummond, *Historic Sites in Saint Charles County, Missouri* (St. Louis: Harland Bartholomew and Associates, 1976), 22

These three buildings are well known as "Peck's Row." Ruluff and Charles Peck, early merchants of St. Charles, built the two buildings on the left for their residence and store. The Masonic Lodge, organized in 1848, used the upper floor. The third building was built by Chauncey Shepard. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 established Missouri as a state and St. Charles became the first state capital. The second floor of the Peck Building was used as the assembly hall and the Shepard House was used as the governor's office and committee rooms. The capital was located in St. Charles between 1821 and 1826.

Edna McElhiney Olson, "Early German Art," *St. Charles Journal*, Thursday, 27 May 1965

Today I want to honor **Jacob Buehrle**, who was a tinner. He made lovely things of tin, table, lamps, dishes and many other things. His work was selected by the researchers of the Ford Foundation for his unusual grave markers made of tin. (The picture used with this story is of one of the Buehrle tin burial markers.) It was made for Jacob Buehrle's father-in-law Fred Gebhard who died on Jan. 9, 1881. Jacob Buehrle, a trained tinner, came to Missouri in 1853. He came from Alsace-Lorraine and settled in O'Fallon, MO, where he opened his Buehrle Tin Shop. He also opened a branch shop in St. Charles at 214 South Main Street (which is the center building of those used for the First State Capitol). ... It seems that twice the Buehrle Tin Shop was located in the old Capitol building. The picture of the exterior of the Buehrle Tin Shop—with a magnifying glass you can read the prices of some of the tin ware that is hanging in the window. Coffee pot 50¢, dipper 25¢, skinner 35¢, funnel 50¢, turners 10¢, tin dinner plates 25¢. Jacob Buehrle died in 1886. ... The Buehrle Tin Shop was on the main floor of the Capitol building, while the family lived upstairs.

Robert Buehrle made cornice gutterings, spouting, roofing and all kinds of sheet metal job work.¹

GENE BUEHRLE: PICTORIAL HISTORY

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - April 18, 1994

Author: Story by Esther Talbot Fenning ; St. Charles Post Special Correspondent
Photographer Gene Buehrle started taking pictures with a box camera when he was 13 years old. That was in 1940 when he lived with his parents, Caroline and Robert Buehrle, and his 12 brothers and sisters in what is now the **First State Capitol building** on South Main Street in St. Charles.

Buehrle recalled that the subjects of those childhood photographs were trains delivering coal, overflowing riverbanks and the activity around a blacksmith shop in what is now Frontier Park.

"Every now and then a mule would get a nail in his foot and would kick. The blacksmith would go flying, then get up, brush himself off and think nothing of it," Buehrle recalled. "That was our entertainment in those days. It made great picture taking for a kid."

For 15 years, Buehrle was a free-lance photographer for the Globe-Democrat's Old Newsboys benefit in St. Charles County. His photographs appeared regularly in the old St. Charles Banner News and other area newspapers and magazines.

Buehrle was the official photographer of Melborne Construction Co., which hired him to document the progress of the second span of the Blanchette Bridge carrying Interstate 70 across the Missouri River. Buehrle also took pictures of the construction of the first span in the mid-1950s. The photographs were shot from a riverbank using a pin-hole camera with no lens.

"I had to guess the time and what hole to use. Back in the early '40s when you shot a picture under those conditions, you were a pioneer of the zone system. But when you got a perfect black and white photograph there was nothing like it," Buehrle said.

Buehrle organized the St. Charles County Photo Club and is a member of the Knights of Columbus. He worked as a volunteer for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and is an active member of the German American Heritage Club.

He stays close to his German roots. His grandfather, Jacob Buehrle, was a trained tinner who came to O'Fallon from Alsace-Lorraine in 1853. Jacob Buehrle opened the Buehrle Tin Shop in O'Fallon and a branch in St. Charles on the site of the First State Capitol.

¹ Note: The Buehrle family continues to live in the St. Charles area. Further research needs to be done to see if Mark Buehrle of the Chicago White Sox, who is from St. Charles, is related to this family.

When Gene Buehrle was stationed in Austria with the occupation forces in 1945, he picked up a photography course from a German teacher. "I learned a lot from him, including the language," Buehrle said.

Buehrle and his wife, Mary, live on Mayer Drive in St. Charles. They have two children and six grandchildren.

Buehrle is retiring this year after 20 years as a free-lance photographer and 23 years as a pipefitter for General Motors. Photography for him will shift from the category of work to fun. And the numerous scenes and sunsets he has long wanted to capture on film await.

"Now, I have the time, the equipment, the education and the experience. I'm going to really enjoy myself."

Caption: PHOTO

Color Photo By L.T. Spence/St. Charles Post - of Gene Buehrle

Edition: FIVE STAR

Section: ST. CHARLES

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Column: NEIGHBORS

Index Terms: SKETCH ; BACKGROUND ; PROFILE ; PHOTOGRAPHER ; PROFILE ; Gene Buehrle

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Week Of Sept. 5, 1978

Edward Daniel was named St. Charles police chief by Mayor Frank Brockgreitens and the City Council.

American Legion members Jim Hercules and George Hackmann donated their services to barbecue for the Parkside Meadows retirement residents.

Lee Tuveson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Will Schenebeck, took first place in the St. Charles Bridge Club competition.

The **St. Charles Visitor Information Center** moved from its South Main street location to the Katy depot.

The Jaycee Wives Club took first place in the Aid to Jaycee category at the summer board meeting in Columbia, Mo.

The following were winners in the Junior Olympics sponsored by the Duchesne Key Club: Matt Dollard, Trisha Roeder, Monique Bifignani, Lincoln Boschert and Tracey Kelley.

Edition: ST. CHARLES

Section: NEWS

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Index Terms: NAMING APPOINTMENT STUDENT DISTRIBUTION F SENTENCE STREET INJURY ; HISTORY BACKGROUND THE WAY IT WAS 1948 1968 1978 WINNER SPONSOR ; MISSOURI

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CIRCA 1804 RENDEZVOUS GATHERING THIS YEAR EXPECTS VISIT BY 'THOMAS JEFFERSON'

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) - May 19, 1988

History will be both repeated and made this year at the Lewis and Clark Rendezvous celebration at Frontier Park in St. Charles.

Keyed to be as authentic as possible, the celebration Saturday and Sunday heralds the 184th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

And this year, Thomas Jefferson will attend - well almost. The fifth great-grandson of Jefferson, Roberts Coles III, will be guest speaker at a special dinner Saturday evening.

Coles, who has made a career imitating his ancestor, is said to also resemble Jefferson, from the lanky figure to the red hair and broad brow. In fact, Coles began his acting career as Jefferson before telling anyone he was actually related.

Coles will speak at the Duquette Dinner and Dance, a re-staging of the final dinner before the expedition into the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase on May 21, 1804. The dinner will be held in the park.

"Jefferson set up this expedition in secret," said John Dengler, who helped organize the Rendezvous. "After the Louisiana Purchase was formalized, they met here."

In reality, the rendezvous of Lewis and Clark lasted five days. In re-staging the event, activities will be condensed into a weekend. But as much as possible, the event will follow what was chronicled in the journals kept by William Clark. A black powder shoot and encampment, games, fiddlers - even a court-martial - are part of the activities.

"We stipulate that crafts must be circa 1804," said Judy Taschler, receptionist at the St. Charles Tourism Bureau. "Nothing in the park is made or has anything to do with any other time period."

Lemonade, root beer, tea and coffee will be standard drinks. All foods will be homemade, such as sandwiches, funnel cakes and other desserts. And many vendors will be dressed in period costumes, Taschler said. Other items will include buffalo stew and catfish.

Frontier Park will appear to be transformed into 1804, Dengler said.

"It is different from your usual fair," he said. "It takes quite a long time to put this thing together. A lot of (vendors) are turned down because they don't fit in the time period."

A parade will be held at noon Saturday, two hours after the reveille and flag ceremony opens the event. No motorized vehicles are allowed, but bands, carriages and covered wagons make the parade exciting, Dengler said. The parade starts at Eighth Street and First Capitol Drive and concludes at Frontier Park. Don Miller and Kathy Hartley of radio station KMOX are grand marshals.

A key to the parade this year is a section "Salute to the Armed Forces." Included in the section will be the Girl Scout Mounted Troop 1184, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2866, members of the U.S. Navy and the Missouri National Guard.

Following the parade will be an enactment of a court-martial where three men were tried for deserting their posts to have a night on the town and for getting too wild.

Other highlights will be a fife and drum corps march and drill, a tour of historic areas in St. Charles, an ecumenical church service at 9 a.m. Sunday and a fiddle competition in Kister Park.

A quilt demonstration that extends beyond the early 1800 period will be held at Riverside Mall. Quilt buffs may also enter a drawing for a Lewis and Clark quilted wall hanging.

Vendors from across the United States will have crafts for sale during the two days and many will demonstrate their work, Dengler said.

The Postal Service will set up a special booth with a commemorative stamp and envelopes.

This weekend marks the 11th year the rendezvous celebration has been held in St. Charles. Dengler, who helped initiate the first event, said the purpose is to acknowledge the role St. Charles played in the historic expedition.

"It's one of the most authentic events," he said. "That's what we pride ourselves on. Everybody has a good time."

For more information or for a program of events, call the **St. Charles Department of Tourism**, 946-7776.

Caption: Photo

PHOTOS by Sam Leone/St. Charles Post ... ABOVE: Judy Taschler, a receptionist at the St. Charles Tourism Bureau, displaying some of the artifacts that will be at the 11th Lewis and Clark Rendezvous Saturday and Sunday in Frontier Park in St. Charles. PHOTO ... RIGHT: Taschler showing two axes produced around the time explorers William Clark and Meriwether Lewis started their expedition in 1804. ST. CHARLES

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Section: NEWS

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Index Terms: PHLEONE PXTASCHLER DISPLAY ARTIFACT FORMAL JOURNAL
ACTIVITY ; VEHICLE CARRIAGE

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Down Memory Lane - Christmas Tour Of 6 Restored Homes Is Set Dec. 3 By Midtown Association

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - October 19, 1989

Author: By Ann Oberle-DeGroot ; St. Charles Post Special Correspondent

Six restored homes, each with a story that reflects St. Charles' past, will be included in the biennial Christmas House Tour sponsored by the Midtown Community Association of St. Charles.

Tickets for the tour are on sale at the St. Charles Convention and Visitor's Bureau, First Capitol Drive and Main Street. The tour, which costs \$6, is scheduled for 1 to 5 p.m. Dec. 3.

The restored homes in the historic Midtown neighborhood offer a variety of architectural styles from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

"They have interesting stories behind them," said Christine Carr, a Midtown Community Association board member and one of the tour's organizers. "They have character . . . they each have their own idiosyncrasies."

Built in the Federal style in the mid- to late 1800s, one home was first owned by a freed slave and is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of the most distinctive houses on the tour - easily recognized by local residents by its "onion dome" - is the Meyer-Kurtz home. Built in 1892 by a jeweler, it was the first St. Charles house to have electricity. The home remained in the Meyer family until 1986, when it was sold to the Kurtz family.

The Barklage home was recently restored and now houses a St. Charles law firm. Carr said the main staircase inside is a special feature of the structure.

All of the houses on the tour will be decorated for Christmas. Hot cider and home-baked cookies will be served at two of the residences.

Brochures will give a description, history and features of the houses.

The **St. Charles Department of Tourism** has volunteered its trolley to transport those on the tour, and it will run continuously between the houses. A map of the tour is printed on

the back of each ticket.

All proceeds of the event will go to the Midtown Community Association to cover expenses and for future activities sponsored by the group.

In the past, the association has made a donation to Benton School and has sponsored social activities in the Midtown area.

Midtown is about six blocks long by seven blocks wide. It is bounded by Third Street and Kingshighway and by Clark Street and First Capitol Drive. There are 800 households in the Midtown area, 150 of which are paid members of the association.

The association, Carr said, is dedicated to maintaining the residential character of the area and is vocal regarding new zoning proposals.

Carr says the Midtown area has experienced new life in recent years with younger families buying and restoring the homes.

For more information about the tour, call the visitor's bureau at 946-7776.

Edition: SC

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Column: ST. CHARLES

Index Terms: restoration schedule nan sponsor home history house telephone

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