



The Ridge at Rock Hill Road

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

FOURTH IN A SERIES

Established by the
Webster Groves Historical Society and the
City of Webster Groves, Missouri

The Webster Groves Historical Society gratefully acknowledges Webster University whose support helped to make this Webster Walk a reality for Webster Groves citizens and visitors, both today and for many years to come:

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Before You Begin Your Walk

Long before it was parceled into grand estates and later into subdivisions, the American Indians called the high land rising up above Shady Grove Creek "Dry Ridge." The ridge ran north and south across the land that John and James Marshall purchased in 1832 and across part of the Sarpy Tract that Pierre Chouteau Jr. subdivided in 1845. Bare and exposed in the hot sun, the land provided beautiful vistas.

In 1829, the State of Missouri constructed the Jefferson Barracks Military Road along Dry Ridge, running from Manchester Road to Jefferson Barracks. When Artemus Bullard came to preach the first sermon at the new Presbyterian church in 1845, he was so taken with the countryside he decided that along the ridge he would build a prep school and college to rival Princeton. Bullard suggested that the area be called "Rock Hill" and the church be called "Rock Hill Presbyterian Church."

It is no wonder then that some of the first St. Louis businessmen to build homes in the area chose to build along Dry Ridge, now called Rock Hill Road. The Missouri Pacific Railroad opened the area to commuters in 1853, and Bullard's Webster College for Boys opened that same year. In 1857, John Philip Helfenstein, a partner in the wholesale grocery business of Helfenstein & Gore, built a summer cottage on Rock Hill Road. Three years later, he built a brick Italianate mansion on the same 60 acres, establishing a grand estate and family connections that would fuel much of the early development of the new community of Webster Groves.

During the Civil War, Helfenstein did not want Union soldiers marching past his house when they traveled down Rock Hill Road, also known as Rock Hill Military Road, to Jefferson Barracks, so he fenced in his entire 60 acres. This forced soldiers on Rock Hill Road to cut over at Lockwood Avenue and march up Jefferson Barracks Road (today's Jefferson Road) to Jackson Avenue and then cut back over to Rock Hill Road to get to the barracks. Local children nicknamed the property "Hell Fenced In."

In 1865, after the war, Robert Studley, owner of the R.P. Studley Printing Company, built a frame Italianate mansion on a large tract of land on Rock Hill Road. The next year, his friend, Edward Rice, secretary and treasurer of the R. P. Studley Printing Company, built a large Federal Style house at Jefferson Road and Jackson Avenue. These and a few other large estates with Italianate mansions were all that stood along Dry Ridge during the recession of the 1870s.

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In the late 1880s, retired businessmen living in Webster Groves began to subdivide their estates and build large, frame Queen Anne houses for their children or as speculative ventures to attract other successful businessmen to Webster Groves. Webster Groves was becoming a suburb. Commuter trains made it possible to work in St. Louis, yet escape the dust, smoke and cholera epidemics that plagued the city each summer.

In the 1890s, other St. Louis businessmen bought lots in Webster Groves subdivisions and hired Webster Groves carpenters like John Prehn and John Berg to build Queen Anne and American Foursquare houses for them so they could raise their children in the country. A few of the avant garde built Shingle Style or Colonial Revival houses with classical details. From the turn of the century to the 1920s, Webster Groves builders such as the Horspool Brothers and Robert Mackey filled in the vacant lots between the older homes with Craftsman houses and bungalows, taking their designs from *The Craftsman* magazine or assembling them from home kits purchased from Sears Roebuck.

In the 1920s, real estate developer Wilford P. Joy built revival style houses of stucco on Jefferson Road, Blackmer Place, Planthurst and Gray avenues. His grandfather, Edward, and his father, Justin, had developed Old Orchard and built many of the houses there, and now Wilford was continuing the family's building tradition. As each house was completed and for sale, Wilford Joy held an open house on a Sunday afternoon, wearing a tuxedo and a tall silk hat.

Sites on the Historic Webster Walks have been selected for their architectural or historical value, and they are identified in this book by the names of the people or businesses that originally occupied them. Distinguished sites have been awarded bronze medallions which are embedded in the sidewalks in front of those sites. Your guidebook notes the sites as follows:

- Ⓜ Medallion, distinguished site
- Ⓐ Architectural significance
- Ⓜ Historical significance

Key Architectural Styles along The Ridge



Queen Anne



American Foursquare



Italianate



Dutch Colonial Revival



Colonial Revival



Bungalow



Spanish Colonial Revival



Craftsman



Georgian



Federal



Greek Revival



Shingle Style



Victorian Vernacular



Tudor Revival

The Ridge at Rock Hill Road Walk

This Historic Webster Walk will lead you through a wonderfully diverse collection of 19th and 20th century architecture, one of the trademarks of this community.

The entire 2.2-mile walk is paved and covers flat to gently sloping terrain. Portions of this walk are also covered by the Heart of Webster Historic Walking Tour No. 1.

Begin your walk on West Lockwood Avenue in downtown Webster Groves, at the driveway into the Old Webster Public Parking lot. For over 100 years, Lockwood Avenue has carried residents to and from the bustling businesses, churches and schools of Webster Groves. Look across the street and to your right, toward the southwest corner of Lockwood and Gray avenues. Here you will see the Craftsman-style Webster Company Building, capped by a classic green-tiled roof.

M 200-202 West Lockwood Ave.

The Webster Company Building (1923, Craftsman)
The Webster Real Estate Company, owned by Marshall W. Warren, built this building in 1923, the year the first zoning ordinance was passed. The zoning ordinance restricted the building of commercial property to those areas already developed commercially. Thus, Lockwood Avenue was zoned commercial from Plant Avenue west to Rock Hill Road.

Brennan's Grocerteria, a self-service grocery store, occupied the corner store until 1938. The corner store was vacant for two years during the Depression until Hans Lemcke, a popular band instructor from the high school, opened an appliance store here in 1940. The Thistle Tea Room, known for its fireplace and a cozy atmosphere, occupied the two storefronts on the south end in the 1920s and 30s.

Turn to your right and begin walking west down Lockwood Avenue.

M 211 West Lockwood Ave.

Straub's Grocery Store (1956, Modern Vernacular)
William Straub was born in Kirkwood, the oldest of seven children. His father died when William was 14, and Straub dropped out of school to support his family. He founded the Wm. A. Straub Grocery Company in 1910 in the Bristol Building at the corner of Gore and Lockwood avenues. As the business grew, Straub expanded to 40 West Lockwood Ave. in 1926. In 1956, his son constructed this building which was extensively remodeled in 2002.

M 231 West Lockwood Ave.

Reliable Life Insurance Company (1969, Colonial Revival)
Bernal Tatman, August Jekel and Dr. Charles Mattes founded the Reliable Life Insurance Company in 1912 in downtown St. Louis to provide accident and health insurance to African Americans, whom other insurance companies refused to cover. The company moved to Webster Groves in 1947. This building was constructed in 1966 and is a copy of the governor's mansion in Williamsburg, Va.

As you approach the intersection of Lockwood Avenue and Rock Hill Road, you'll see a tiny white building ahead of you at the northwest corner.

H Northwest Corner of Lockwood Avenue and Rock Hill Road St. Louis Public Service Company Shelter (ca. 1940, Vernacular)

This building was constructed just before World War II by the St. Louis Public Service Company, the conglomerate that owned all of the old streetcar lines, to serve as a rest stop for conductors of the St. Louis and Meramec Highlands Electric Car Line. The Meramec Highlands Line (called the Manchester Line if you were going east) was constructed in 1896 and ran out Manchester Avenue through Maplewood, down Summit Avenue, and west on Lockwood to Kirkwood. The streetcars could turn around at Rock Hill Road or they could continue to the terminus at the Meramec Highlands Amusement Park.

The present westbound lane of Lockwood Avenue, west of Rock Hill Road, was devoted to a two-track streetcar right-of-way. The little shelter is owned by the Bi-State Development Agency, and bus drivers may still stop there. Recently history buffs restored the yellow-and-black logo of the St. Louis Public Service Company on the side of the little shelter.

Now look across Lockwood Avenue to the imposing Rockwood Court Apartments at the southeast corner of Rock Hill Road and Lockwood Avenue.

A 330 West Lockwood Ave.

Rockwood Court Apartments (1928, Tudor Revival)
This brick-and-stucco apartment building was built for the Lavmer Realty Company by Widmer Engineering for an estimated cost of \$100,000. It was the second apartment building in Webster Groves. Cyrus Peterson built the first apartment building in 1917 around an old farmhouse just north of here, at the corner of Rock Hill Road and North Gore Avenue. This is a strong example of Tudor Revival architecture, a romantic imitation of the English houses built of plaster and timbers during the reign of the Tudors in the Middle Ages. The most distinguishing characteristic of Tudor Revival is the rough timbering exposed in the triangle of the gable. The projecting bay above the main door and the tapered lancet windows are also key Tudor elements.

Cross Lockwood Avenue and begin walking along "Dry Ridge" as you head south on Rock Hill Road.

A 31 South Rock Hill Road

Charles S. Blood (1908, *Craftsman*)

The architectural firm of Mariner & LaBeaume designed this home for Charles Blood, who served on the Webster Groves City Council and as superintendent of the Webster Groves Presbyterian Church Sunday School. Architect Louis LaBeaume later designed the Kiel Opera House.

A 35 South Rock Hill Road

Robert H. Gross House (1907, *Modified Foursquare*)

Robert Gross was a salesman with the Carlton Dry Goods Company. He and his wife, Adelaide, lived here until 1913. This eclectic house features elements borrowed from a variety of styles, including an Arts and Crafts arch, a classical front porch, dentil molding, a bracketed gable and a central bay window topped with a balustrade. The newer garage behind the house repeats the arch element.

M 45 South Rock Hill Road

James L. Sloss House (1909, *Craftsman*)

Built in 1909 for James L. Sloss by Horspool Brothers, this home is a blend of the Craftsman and Prairie styles with a heavily pierced front porch, wide eaves, irregular massing and a low-sloped roof. This style was made popular by Gustav Stickley's magazine, *The Craftsman*, in the early 20th century. James Sloss was a clerk at the National Bank of Commerce, and the home remained in the Sloss family until 1996.

M 47 South Rock Hill Road

Carrie Helfenstein Simmons House (1910, *Queen Anne*)

The classic Queen Anne house at the northwest corner of Rock Hill Road and Helfenstein Avenue was built in 1910 for Carrie and Havelock Simmons. This is somewhat of a surprise because the elegant Queen Anne style of architecture with its towers, turrets, bay windows, porches and elaborate, carved decoration was waning in popularity by 1910. The rock foundation also suggests that the house was built before the turn of the century. These are just a few of the intriguing contradictions surrounding the history of this home.

Carrie's father was John Philip Helfenstein, the Webster Groves pioneer who built a mansion south of here at 135 South Rock Hill Road in 1860. He and his wife, Mary Ann, had five daughters and a son. In 1886, the Helfensteins gave their oldest daughter, Alice, two acres on the west side of Jefferson Road, between Lockwood and Helfenstein avenues. Three years later, they gave their daughter, Kate, two acres on Jefferson Road at Swon Avenue and their daughter, Carrie, two acres on Jefferson Road, north of Helfenstein Avenue. Carrie married Havelock Simmons whose family lived at 133 Gray Ave. Simmons became a director of the Ely, Walker Dry Goods Company, and he and Carrie built a house on their two-acre lot east of here in 1891.

The 60-plus-acre Helfenstein property was formally subdivided three times, first in 1888, again in 1904 and yet again in 1908. With each subdivision, many of the block and lot numbers changed, making it difficult to trace deeds and property tax records. However, these records show that in 1909, Carrie and Havelock purchased this lot at 47 Rock Hill Road and built their Queen Anne home here. This was their address when Havelock Simmons died in 1912. There is a rumor that this is actually the house that Carrie and Havelock Simmons built on Jefferson Road in 1891 and that it was placed on logs and rolled to this location in 1910.

A 108 South Rock Hill Road

Frank Q. Bayless House (1909, *Craftsman*)

Frank Q. Bayless was a manufacturer, the president of the St. Louis Silver Company, located at 118 Chestnut St. in St. Louis. Before building this house, Bayless and his wife, Edith Stanley Bayless, lived at 163 South Elm Ave. The Craftsman detailing on this house includes triangular knee-braced brackets and decorated rafter ends. Note the geometric patterns formed by the half-timbering, a building technique in which exposed framework is filled with plaster.

M 135 South Rock Hill Road

John Philip Helfenstein House (1860, *Italianate*)

John Philip Helfenstein was born in Frederick, Md., in 1816 and came to St. Louis in 1838. He got a job as a clerk in the store of Robert Campbell and rented a room at 8th and Olive streets where he met Stephen Gore and his family, recently from Boston. Helfenstein married Gore's daughter, Mary Ann, and went into business with Gore's son, Stephen, Jr., operating Helfenstein & Gore & Company, Wholesale Groceries, on the levee. Stephen, Jr. married Helfenstein's sister, Anna. In the late 1850s, Stephen Gore's brother, William, moved to Webster Groves, and Stephen Gore and John Helfenstein soon followed.

Helfenstein bought 60 acres on Rock Hill Road in 1857 and built a board-and-batten summer cottage at the top of the hill. To construct his large, brick Italianate mansion, he built a railroad spur to move the materials up the hill to the house site. It is rumored that he contracted to use slave labor to build the house, but it is also rumored that he was an abolitionist and helped runaway slaves.

Helfenstein retired in 1860 and moved to his mansion in Webster Groves in 1861. He sold the board-and-batten cottage to Edward Avery, a teacher at the Webster College for Boys and the Wyman School in St. Louis. Avery moved the cottage to the corner of Cedar and Gray, where Bristol Primary School now stands.

A close friend of Ulysses S. Grant, Helfenstein served on the board of directors of two small railroad companies and was appointed by the Missouri Legislature to be a director of the Bank of the State of Missouri. With Robert Studley and William Plant, Helfenstein founded Chapel Grove Seminary, a private school for their children, and after the Civil War the three helped to establish the Congregational Church of Webster Groves.

Helfenstein's six children all lived in Webster Groves as adults. Alice married John W. Slaughter, the son of Helfenstein's former business partner, Thomas J. Slaughter. John Slaughter was a Confederate veteran and the auditor for the Simmons Hardware Company. Helfenstein gave the couple two acres on the west side of Jefferson Road, in the middle of the block between Helfenstein and Lockwood avenues. The young Slaughters got a mortgage from the Webster Groves Building and Loan Association in 1887, but their house may have burned because they lived for most of their married lives in Alice's father's house.

Mary wed William Bell. Kate married N.D. Thompson, owner of the largest publishing house west of New York, and they built a frame mansion on her father's property at the corner of Swon Avenue and Jefferson Road. That house is gone, but the stone wall that surrounded it remains. Carrie married Havelock Simmons and they, too, built a house on her father's property. Louise Marie, nicknamed Lulu, never married, nor did Philip, a stylish eccentric. They both lived in the Helfenstein mansion with their parents and the Slaughters. Both John and Mary Ann Helfenstein died in 1890; their descendants owned the house until 1944.

Continue on Rock Hill Road until you reach West Swon Avenue. Turn left.

M 315 West Swon Ave.

Alexander Pierce House (1909, Tudor Revival)

Alexander Pierce was associated with the plumbing supply business in St. Louis for more than fifty years. He was an executive of the N.O. Nelson Manufacturing Company and twice served as the president of the Central Supply Association, a nationwide plumbing supply association. His brother, Lawrence, built the Pierce Building which is now part of the Adams Mark Hotel in downtown St. Louis.

James P. Jamieson, a partner in the renowned architectural firm of Cope and Stewardson, designed this classic Tudor Revival house for Pierce in 1909. Jamieson also designed the original campus of Washington University and the Frank Thompson House on Big Bend Blvd., which now houses the music school of Webster University. This home is a textbook example of Tudor Revival architecture with its half-timbering-over-shingle construction and a heavy pendant that extends down from the peak of the gable. The various window styles are also typically Tudor, some with diamond panes and some multi-paned casements, plus a projecting oriel window.

When you reach Blackmer Place, turn right and walk down this secluded, tree-lined street, named for the Blackmer family. Lucien Blackmer owned the Blackmer & Post Pipe Company, makers of vitrified clay sewer pipes, in downtown St. Louis. He helped to establish the Webster Groves Building and Loan Association in 1884 when he and his wife, Caroline, lived on Marshall Place. The family moved here in 1891.

M 205 Blackmer Place

Albert Blackmer House (1927, Colonial Revival)

Albert E. Blackmer was the son of Lucien R. Blackmer and grew up next door in the house at 225 Blackmer Place. In 1926, the elder Blackmers moved their home on logs to make room for Albert to build this house next to theirs. Albert contracted with Wilford P. Joy to build this classic Colonial Revival house in 1927. Albert became the vice president and sales manager of his father's company.

M 225 Blackmer Place

Robert P. Studley House (1865, Italianate)

Robert Page Studley of New Hampshire and his wife, Mary Hutchings of Massachusetts, came to St. Louis in 1853. Studley founded the R. P. Studley Printing Company, one of the first printing companies in St. Louis. The family moved to Webster Groves after the Civil War and lived in a two-story log cabin near the present site of Nerinx Hall while this house was being built. They moved in on New Year's Day in 1866. Studley helped to found Chapel Grove Seminary, a private school located on Lockwood Avenue at Jefferson Road, in 1865 and the Congregational Church of Webster Groves in 1866.

The Studleys had four daughters. Studley's son-in-law Edward S. Hart was an executive with the R. P. Studley Printing Company and built a large house at 131 South Maple Ave. Hart served as the third mayor of Webster Groves and founded the Webster Groves Boy Scouts. Studley sold his Italianate mansion to Lucien R. Blackmer in 1891. It included the surrounding 10 acres and a long, curved drive that led up to the house from large stone pillars at Jefferson and Swon. The home's ornate details include heavy window pediments supported by curving console brackets; hooded windows on the side elevations and third floor dormers; and a bracketed cornice.

As you continue down Blackmer Place, you'll see many houses built by Wilford P. Joy, like the one at 205 Blackmer Place. Joy was the grandson of Edward Joy who brought his family and his lumber business to St. Louis from Burlington, Iowa, in 1875. Edward and his sons, Justin and James, established Joy Brothers & Company, selling wholesale lumber which they shipped down the Mississippi River from Wisconsin on steamboats and rafts. For 20 years beginning in 1887, Edward and Justin Joy developed much of Old Orchard to the east, laying out Old Orchard Park and five other subdivisions and building unique Queen Anne houses.

Beginning in 1909, Justin's son, Wilford, continued the tradition by building Craftsman style houses in the Old Orchard area and then all over Webster Groves in the revival styles that were popular in the 1920s: Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and Dutch Colonial Revival. He also built bungalows. Wilford's houses were almost always stucco.

In 1924, the Blackmer Place subdivision was laid out, and Joy built the Tudor Revival houses at 240 and 265 Blackmer Place in 1925. He built the Spanish Colonial Revival houses at 260 and 275 Blackmer Place in 1926. Of particular note is 265 Blackmer Place:

H 265 Blackmer Place

Wilford P. Joy House (1925, Tudor Revival)

In the 1940s, Carlotta Raverino, the widow of John Raverino, lived here with her sons, Albert, Francis and Mario. The Raverinos were partners in the R&F Spaghetti Company. Joseph A. Freschi, another partner, lived a block away, at 214 Jefferson Road.

Return to West Swon Avenue. Turn right and follow the stone wall to the massive stone pillars at the corner.

M Northwest Corner, Swon Avenue and Jefferson Road **N.D. Thompson's Stone Wall**

Nathan D. Thompson owned the largest publishing house west of New York City. N.D. Thompson & Co. published history, travel, adventure, agriculture, horticulture and livestock books, plus a book on Stanley and Livingston's adventures in Africa. Profuse illustrations were a specialty. Thompson also published Bibles illustrated with photographs, guide books for the 1904 World's Fair and the *Journal of Agriculture*, a weekly magazine.

Thompson married Kate Helfenstein, the daughter of John Philip Helfenstein. Helfenstein gave the newlyweds a large lot on which they built a huge, frame Queen Anne mansion around 1892. Thompson helped to incorporate the City of Webster Groves in 1896, and he served on the city council and the Webster Groves School Board. The Thompsons built homes throughout Webster Groves to help attract other families to the area. N.D. Thompson died in 1917.

The stone wall runs along all four sides of the old Thompson property. A stonemason who owed a debt to either Thompson or a later owner of the house built the wall to pay off his debt. The Thompson house was torn down in the late 1950s to make way for the two modern houses on the south half of the property. The second house from the corner (151 Jefferson Road) incorporates the front steps of the old Thompson house.

Turn left on Jefferson Road and look at the third house from the corner.

A 141 Jefferson Road

George H. Bowles House (1911, Bungalow)

George Bowles was a lawyer. When he and his wife Margaret moved to Eagle Lake, Tex., they sold their house to Ernest and Loretto Koken who lived here from 1915 to 1936. Ernest Koken was the secretary and treasurer for the Banner Iron Works, originally called the Koken Iron Works and founded by Ernest's father, William T. Koken. The slate roof, copper ridge cap and roof extension that forms a colonnaded front porch suggest the Norman Cottage Style.

A 135 Jefferson Road

Fred R. Mott House (1912, Shingle Style)

This rustic Shingle Style house with a red tile roof was designed by architect W. A. Caldwell for Fred R. Mott, the general superintendent of the Bell Telephone Company.

Cross Jefferson Avenue and walk back toward Swon Avenue, past the Frederick S. Plant Wildlife Sanctuary.

M Northeast Corner, Jefferson Road and Swon Avenue **Frederick S. Plant Wildlife Sanctuary (1939)**

Frederick Plant was the son of Alfred Plant, an early resident of Webster Groves and owner of 40 acres bounded by Jefferson, Jackson, Gray, and Swon avenues, plus 3-1/2 acres on this corner where his house stood. Alfred and his brothers, William, George and Samuel, owned the Plant Seed Company, founded by their father in 1845. Alfred and William moved to Webster Groves before the Civil War and were founders of the Congregational Church in 1866.

Alfred's son, Frederick, worked at the seed company and married Nellie Vail, but they had no children. Frederick and Nellie adopted an orphan named Anne Tandrup from the St. Louis Protestant Orphans Home. Anne lived with the Plants and took care of their home even after she married Thomas Pickens. Pickens must have died young, for Frederick Plant's will of 1929 gave Anne's son, Howard Pickens, enough money to attend college and support him until age 30.

When Nellie Plant died in 1939, her will left her home at Swon and Jefferson to the City of Webster Groves to be used as the Frederick S. Plant Wildlife Sanctuary. The will stipulated that Anne Pickens could live for the rest of her life in a small house that Nellie had built for her on the north side of the property. The rest of the property was to be maintained as "a haven for squirrels, dogs and birds and shall be open to the public." The city tore down the Plant house at 243 West Swon Ave. and built a brick pergola on the site, as Mrs. Plant had requested. When Anne Pickens died in 1964, the city tore down her small house at 142 Jefferson Ave. The Plant Wildlife Sanctuary is the second oldest park in Webster Groves, after Larson Park, and it is maintained by neighborhood trustees.

Continue south on Jefferson Road across West Swan Avenue. As you make your way to 365 Jefferson Road, you'll be walking through three subdivisions formed from large estates in the early 1900s. The east side of Jefferson Road is in the F.S. Plant Subdivision, laid out by Frederick Plant in 1909. Bristol Road was created at that time as the subdivision's southern border. The west side of Jefferson Road is split between the Blackmer Place Subdivision, laid out by Caroline Blackmer in 1924, and the Nellie Vail Plant Subdivision, laid out by Frederick Plant in 1929.

These blocks of Jefferson Road are lined with homes built from a wide range of materials (frame, brick, stucco) and in a wide range of architectural styles (Tudor Revival, Bungalow, Federal and Dutch Colonial). Many of the stucco homes were built by Wilford P. Joy. In particular, note the false thatched roof with its rounded edges on the Tudor Revival home at 214 Jefferson Road; the brick work and red tile roof at 235 Jefferson Road, reminiscent of the Mediterranean style; the former home of artist and publisher Mary Engelbreit at 300 Jefferson Road and the medieval-inspired cantilevered story on the house at 344 Jefferson Road.

M 364 Jefferson Road

Edward P. Rice House (1866, Federal Revival)

Edward P. Rice served as the secretary and treasurer of the R. P. Studley Printing Company. When he built this Federal Revival home just after the Civil War, it faced Gray Avenue to the east and had a long winding drive coming up from Gray Avenue and a stable to the north. At that time, Jefferson Barracks Road was only a cart path behind the house.

In 1879, Rice sold the house to Archibald and Anna Robinson. Archibald was the brother of Angelica Robinson Lockwood and George Robinson, a founder of Ralston Purina, both of whom lived in Old Orchard. Archibald Robinson commuted in to St. Louis where he worked for the Liverpool, London and Globe Fire Insurance Company. The Robinsons had five children. In 1890, Robinson built a Shingle Style cottage on the Gray Avenue side of his property for his son, Alexander.

Turn left at West Jackson Avenue and left again at Gray Avenue. Imagine the expanse of land on which the Rice house was originally situated, before other homes were built and roads crisscrossed the area.

M 364 Gray Ave.

Warren H. Simmons House (1893, Colonial Revival)

Warren Simmons was a son of Charles Simmons, the secretary of the St. Louis Cotton Exchange. Warren grew up at 133 Gray Avenue and later worked for the Bemis Bag Company. He married Jessie McComb, the daughter of the minister at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church. The Simmons house was designed by Cass Miller, the architect who designed the St. Louis Public Library. The house has a circular atrium in the center, allowing sunlight to shine down from a skylight above the third floor.

M 351 Gray Ave.

Alexander P. Robinson House (1890, Shingle Style)

Alexander Robinson was the son of Archibald Robinson who lived in the mansion behind this house, at the top of the hill. Alexander was the superintendent of the Waters Pierce Oil Company, a secret subsidiary of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. The eyebrow dormer on the north elevation, heavy asymmetrical massing and, of course, the shingle-covered exterior are indicative of the Shingle Style that emerged at the end of the 19th century and was most popular in coastal New England.

H 345 Gray Ave.

Edwin Gloor House (1903, American Foursquare)

Edwin Gloor worked for the Commonwealth Feed Company. In 1915, George E. Francisco owned the house. He was a paymaster for the Wabash Railroad. Leo McCarthy bought the house from Francisco in 1929, and it has been in the McCarthy family ever since. In 1930, the McCarthys changed the orientation of the house when they closed off the original front entrance and moved the front door and the porch to the side of the house. They also combined the two small parlors in the front of the house to make one large living room.

A 326 Gray Ave.

J. E. Holland House (1926, Missouri Vernacular)

This eclectic house was built of rare Missouri red granite for J. E. Holland, a real estate broker. It is a true hybrid with the frame of a Craftsman Style house, some Bungalow elements and a green glazed-tile roof. The stone pattern with its contrasting mortar is referred to as an Ozark Giraffe; this distinctive style is popular in rural southern Missouri and usually features fieldstone which contrasts even more dramatically with the dark mortar.

M 337 Gray Ave.

William L. Wright House (1901, Colonial Revival)

This Neoclassical Colonial Revival house is one of the largest houses in Webster Groves. It was built in 1901 for William L. Wright. Wright was born in St. Louis County in 1849 and married Olive Shirland in 1873. He worked for Col. James Andrews, the contractor for the stone work on the Eads Bridge. Wright became friends with James B. Eads, builder of the bridge, and after Eads died in 1887, Wright made a profession of serving as the executor of the Eads estate.

The Wrights had two daughters: Pearl Ella who married John H. Clarkson of Chicago, and Elva Talcott who married Walter T. Booth. Wright died in 1914, and his daughters sold the house to Edward A. Fritz, a cleaner and dyer. Fritz and his wife, Sadie, owned the house for 36 years, through the 20s, 30s and 40s. William M. Ward, a lawyer with the law firm of Schneider, Ward & Kolbasa, and his wife, Anne, purchased the house in 1950. It remained in the Ward family 52 years.

This home is distinguished by its classical embellishments: dentil moldings just under the roofline; triglyphs and bullseyes on the fascia boards under the eaves; Adamesque Style ornamentation in the pediment over the front door and a heavily constructed porte cochere.

A 312 and 228 Gray Ave.

Richard Ghiselin Houses (1889, Queen Anne)

Richard Ghiselin was the secretary of the Wood-Maude Milling Company. In 1889, he built these two similar Queen Anne houses and a third Queen Anne house in between at 300 Gray Ave. as investments. The Queen Anne house in the middle was torn down and replaced with a modern ranch house in the 1950s. At 228 Gray Ave., note the front elevation's Stick Style gable and the distinctive jerkinhead gable to the south. 312 Gray Ave. features delicate, turned Queen Anne columns on the side porch.

M 231 Gray Ave.

Gertrude, Blanche, Hattie and Eugenie Brooks House (1901, Colonial Revival)

This perfectly symmetrical Colonial Revival house was built for sisters Gertrude, Blanche, Hattie and Eugenie Brooks in 1901. Their family had moved to Webster Groves to a home on Big Bend Boulevard near Selma Avenue in the 1880s. After their father died, they sold his 22 acres on the south side of Big Bend to create the Pasadena Webster subdivision in 1923.

The home features smaller, Adamesque proportions on the porch columns with a dominant Palladian window, two bow windows and intricate detailing in the twin dormers that project from the roof.

H 224 Gray Ave.

Robert Thompson House (1887, Queen Anne)

Thompson was the son of A.B.M. Thompson and grew up on Thompson Place to the north along Dry Ridge. A.B.M. Thompson was the secretary of the Collier Lead and Oil Company and one of Webster's first commuters. Robert Thompson was the bookkeeper for J.A. Holmes & Co., a lumber business with offices at 401 South 11th St. in downtown St. Louis. Louis T. Maull owned this house from 1955 until 1971. He served as vice president and president of the Louis C. Maull Co., the barbeque sauce company founded by his grandfather.

Pause at the corner of Gray and West Swon avenues and look across Swon at the house at the northeast corner.

M 156 Gray Ave.

Frederick H. Gore House (1891, Queen Anne)

This home was a wedding present to Frederick and Jennie Gore from Frederick's mother, Catherine (Katy) Gore, the sister of early Webster Groves businessmen, Stephen and William Gore. (Her home is featured later on this walk.) Frederick Gore was a traveling salesman. He married Jeanette Simmons whose large family lived at 133 Gray Avenue. Frederick and Jennie had three daughters and a son. When Frederick and Jennie grew old, they built and moved into the 1-1/2 story house next door and gave this house to their daughter and son-in-law.

Turn right and walk east on West Swon Avenue.

H 140, 130, 120 and 104 West Swon Ave.

Kate G. Thompson Houses (1897, Queen Anne)

These four houses were constructed for Kate G. Thompson as investments. She was the daughter of John Philip Helfenstein and the wife of N.D. Thompson. The Thompsons built these homes and others in Webster Groves to attract successful businessmen and their families to Webster Groves.

A 125 West Swon Ave.

Ben R. Foster House (1909, Shingle Style)

This Shingle Style house is distinguished by its dormer windows, cedar shingles and gambrel roof. Ben Foster worked for the St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Turn left on South Gore Avenue and you'll notice a number of Dutch Colonial Style homes along this block, including 135, 138, 139, 140 and 146 South Gore Ave. This style was popular in every suburb from 1910 to 1970. It features two striking characteristics copied from homes built by colonists of New Amsterdam in the 1700s: a gambrel roof, also common on barns, and a Dutch door, divided so that the upper half could open while the lower half remained closed to keep the barnyard animals out of the house.

M 131 South Gore Ave.

Henry H. Culver House (1896, Queen Anne)

This house was built for H. H. and W. W. Culver, who founded the Wrought Iron Range Company in 1881 with their brother L. L. Culver. Henry H. Culver developed the land around Lake Maxinkuckee in Indiana and founded the Culver Military Institute there. Culver, Ind., was named for him. W. W. Culver became a millionaire as president of the W. W. Culver Real Estate and Investment Company. The Culvers sold the house in 1899 to Charles Clear. Clear was a department manager of the Wrought Iron Range Company.

A 123 South Gore Ave.

William A. Logan House (1914, Shirtwaist Craftsman)

This house is classified as a Shirtwaist Craftsman because of the clapboard first story and the shingled second story. It has Tudor Revival half-timbers in the gables. It was built as an investment for William A. Logan, who lived next door at 119 South Gore Ave. Logan also built two Craftsman houses around the corner on Cedar Avenue in 1907.

M 119 South Gore Ave.

George A. Holloway House (1869, Italianate)

George A. Holloway was a special agent for the Aetna Insurance Company and served on the National Board of Fire Insurance Underwriters. He and his wife, Olive, were both born in Michigan in 1839. They had two sons, George, Jr., and Frank. During the Civil War, Holloway served as an assistant adjutant general in the Union Army in southeast Missouri. Cedar Avenue was originally named Holloway Avenue in the block between Gore and Gray avenues. During the 1890s, the house was owned by Lucius L. Purington who was a buyer for the Wrought Iron Range Company, and later it was owned by William A. Logan.

M Tichnorville

The corner of Gore and Cedar avenues was called "Tichnorville" because Edwin Tichnor built four Victorian Vernacular houses on South Gore Avenue (numbers 100, 112, 118 and 128) and three Victorian Vernacular houses on West Cedar Avenue (numbers 22, 109, 115 and 119) between 1878 and 1888. Tichnor lived on South Gore Avenue where the Algonquin Apartments are today. He was a familiar sight walking through Webster Groves with his Van Dyke beard, flowing cape and cane. Tichnor raced to fires to salvage doors, mantles and newel posts for his new houses. On one occasion, the burning house was saved and Tichnor had to replace the doors.

Turn left on West Cedar Avenue.

H 110 and 118 West Cedar Ave.

William A. Logan Houses (1907, Craftsman)

In addition to the home at 123 South Gore Ave., William A. Logan built these two Craftsman houses as investments. Logan lived around the corner at 119 South Gore Ave.

M 123 West Cedar Ave.

Catherine Gore House (1891, American Foursquare)

Catherine (Katy) Gore was born in Boston in 1834 and came to St. Louis with her parents, Stephen and Mary Gore, in 1838. Her oldest brother, Stephen, Jr., went into the wholesale grocery business with John Philip Helfenstein.

After her father died, Catherine moved to Webster Groves with another brother, William, and her mother. In 1857, William and his mother purchased forty acres bounded by Lockwood, Gray, Swon, and Elm avenues, where they farmed and had an orchard. Stephen Gore and John Helfenstein both moved to Webster Groves during the Civil War, and Stephen built a store on Lockwood at the head of what is now Gore Avenue. During the Civil War, one of the Gore brothers fought in the Confederate Army, and another brother, Obijah, fought in the Union Army with General Sherman.

Catherine's marriage ended in divorce, and she took back her maiden name for herself and her son, Frederick Gore. During the Civil War, Aunt Katy, as she was called by all the Helfensteins and Gores and most of the residents of Webster Groves, worked diligently for the Western Sanitary Commission, the forerunner of the Red Cross. She attended the wounded soldiers in the Sanitary Commission hospitals in St. Louis, and she made bandages and planned fund-raising entertainment at the old Webster College for Boys. After the war she continued to plan entertainment for the Women's Association of the Congregational Church with her friend, Mrs. William M. Plant. She worked tirelessly for the Women's Temperance Union, and she served on the board of the St. Louis Protestant Orphans Home with Mrs. Edward Avery and Mrs. Alfred Lee.

Catherine built this house for herself the same year she built a house at 156 Gray Ave. for her son, Frederick, and his wife, Jennie Simmons. In 1907, Catherine slipped on the polished floor at the Orphans Home and broke her hip. She remained an invalid for the rest of her life, living with her son and daughter-in-law.

A Robert L. Mackey Houses

As you continue down West Cedar Avenue, you'll see four homes built by Robert L. Mackey in the early 1900s. Most of the houses he built were modest Craftsman houses or Bungalows and were covered with dark brown shingles. Mackey followed patterns from *The Craftsman* magazine, and he may have used mail-order kits from Sears, Roebuck & Co. because his houses are all similar. Mackey's houses on Cedar Avenue and at the intersection of Elm Avenue and Jackson Road were affordable enough to allow young men who worked in the city to move their families to the suburbs where the summers were cooler and they could enjoy the new suburban lifestyle.

Mackey built the Shirtwaist Craftsman house at 124 West Cedar Ave. in 1908; the Shingle Craftsman house at 125 West Cedar Ave. in 1909; the Shingle Style house at 138 West Cedar Ave. in 1911; and the Craftsman house at 142 West Cedar Ave. in 1913.

When you reach Gray Avenue, turn right to look at the schools that have long anchored this neighborhood.

222 West Cedar Ave.

Bristol Primary School (1955, Modern)

This school, which faces Cedar Avenue, was one of the first projects for the fledgling architectural firm of Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, now known the world over as HOK. The design received much attention as an exciting early example of modern school architecture and introduced the idea of a modern corporate campus as a neighborhood school.

20 Gray Ave.

Bristol Elementary School (1920, Craftsman)

The Webster Groves School District was organized in 1868, and its first elementary classes were held at Chapel Grove Seminary, the private school built by John Philip Helfenstein, Robert Studley and William Plant just northwest of here on Lockwood Avenue. The seminary was also used by the Congregational Church and Webster Groves Presbyterian Church for services before these churches built their own sanctuaries. In 1869, a two-story, white frame Webster School was built at this address. In 1916, the name was changed to Bristol School, after Dr. Bennett J. Bristol. The present building, built in 1920, was designed by William B. Ittner, a St. Louis architect nationally famous for designing beautiful schools.

Continue on Gray Avenue until you reach West Lockwood Avenue where your walking tour began.



Thank you for taking a walk through Webster Groves history.

The Historic Webster Walk Series has been created to provide residents and visitors with a look inside the unique character of Webster Groves, Mo. The walks and guidebooks are designed so that individuals, schools, scouts and other groups can tailor the walks to their own pace and particular interests.

Additional Webster Walks are available, each one focusing on a specific neighborhood. If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support this important project, please make your check payable to the Webster Groves Historical Society and mail it to 1155 S. Rock Hill Road, Webster Groves, Mo. 63119.

For further information or if you would like to become a member of the Webster Groves Historical Society, please write us at the above address, call 314.968.1776 or visit us at www.historicwebster.org

