

Ross House
Corner of West McCarty and Walnut Streets
Jefferson City
Cole County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1258

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Rocky Mountain Region National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Denver, Colorado 80225

ROSS HOUSE

Location: Corner of West McCarty and Walnut Streets,
In lot 440, Jefferson City, Missouri

Present Owner: City of Jefferson, Housing Authority

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of

Significance:

The structure is an example of mid-19th century German Vernacular architecture in Jefferson City. The current Georgian Style appearance is the result of several modifications which mask its German Vernacular origins. The significance of the structure is derived from its placement in the "Millbottom" area, an area which once exhibited several similar types which are no longer extant.

Date of Erection: The Ross House appears to have been constructed between 1863 and 1869. The lot was purchased in 1863 for \$350 and sold in 1866 for \$700. A mortgage of \$1,139 was taken out in 1869 on the property. In addition, the house is shown clearly in the 1869 Ruger map of the area.

Architect: Unknown

Original and Subsequent Owners

The references to the chain of title to the land upon which the structure stands are in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Cole County Courthouse, Jefferson City, Missouri.

- 1863 Deed, July 17, 1863
Chris Kolhmeyer to Adam Opel.
- 1879 Sheriff's Deed, December 17, 1879, recorded Book 6, Page 418.
To Jacob Tanner.
- 1880 Deed, March 26, 1880, recorded Book 8, Page 551.
Jacob Tanner to J. B. Price.
- 1891 Deed, October 1, 1891, recorded Book 16, Page 596.
Price Estate to John N. Ross.
- 1922 Sheriff's Deed
To Charles B. Ross.
- 1978 Deed, November 20, 1978, recorded Book 255, Page 44.
Myrtle Ross to City of Jefferson, Housing Authority.

Historical Narrative

The Ross House is located at the intersection of Walnut and McCarty Streets and has been an obvious structure indicating 19th century architectural features in its highly visible setting. The house was constructed during the 1860's although little was recovered concerning the assumed builder, Adam Opel. The house was purchased by John N. Ross in 1891 and has been in the Ross family since this date until its purchase by the City of Jefferson in 1978. The family moved from the structure in the 1950's and it has been utilized for small service businesses and as apartments until 1980 when it was vacated. The building is currently empty and has been subject to vandalism.

Architectural Information

The stone walls which form the foundation of this two and one-half story house are 21 inches thick. The brick walls of the Ross House are laid in a five to one common bond style. The gable roof runs east-west and chimneys straddle the ridge at either end. Tie rods, which run from the north to the south wall, were used for stabilization. Star shaped tie plates are set between the first and second floors, and diamond tie plates are visible near the roof. Brick dentils, a decoration popular with German bricklayers (Van Ravensway 1977:227), decorate the cornice. Windows are in the six over one style. Cambered arches and lugsills trim the windows. A porch on the rear of the house can be reached through a door from the second floor or by an exterior staircase from the lower level back door.

Numerous modifications have been made to the facade of the building. Early photographs of the structure illustrate the original five bay arrangement (Sturdevant et al. 1982:42-43). Shutters or blinds once protected the windows; however, there was no hood over the entry when the house was first constructed. A pent roofed hood was installed around the turn of the century which was later replaced with a shed roof. There is no hood at present. Originally, the main entry was recessed, an occasional practice of German builders (Van Ravensway 1977:226). The original door is missing, however the square side lights which formed its trim are still present. What is now a window on the lower west side was once another recessed doorway.

The house originally had a central passage plan. This was later altered when part of the hallway space was utilized to install a bathroom. The upstairs rooms have four panel doors. Flooring consists of wide boards. Wide molding and window and door trim are currently visible. In both the first and second floors, corners toward the center of the house have been enclosed to form triangular shaped structures. The explanation for this construction is visible in the attic. The current chimneys stand away from the exterior walls and are visible through the windows which are placed under the gable ends. Along the walls are the original interior chimneys which curve up toward

either side of the roof ridge. Ruger's 1869 map of Jefferson City pictures the house with twin chimneys on the east and west sides. The existing chimneys were installed prior to the turn of the century, as they do not appear in the photographs taken around that time. The construction in the lower levels was made to conceal the connections to the new chimney. Placement of the original chimneys show German influence. "The German builders frequently paired chimneys at the gable ends of the houses" (Van Ravensway 1977: 236).

On the ground level, concrete was placed over the previous dirt floor in the not too distant past. The primary living quarters of the family were, apparently, generally concentrated in the upper levels from the time the building was constructed. Flooding of Wear's Creek may have been the major reason for this. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ross recall that the water frequently reached the fifth or sixth step of the staircase.

PROJECT INFORMATION

The Ross House is scheduled for demolition during the summer of 1983 unless the structure is moved according to instructions set forth in a Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council and HUD. This historical documentation was carried out by Environmental Research Center of Missouri, Inc. and the City of Jefferson Housing Authority and completed in May 1983. The land on which the Ross House is located is part of a parcel which is being transferred to the State of Missouri from the City of Jefferson. The project is part of a larger Urban Renewal project in the City of Jefferson and funded by HUD.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

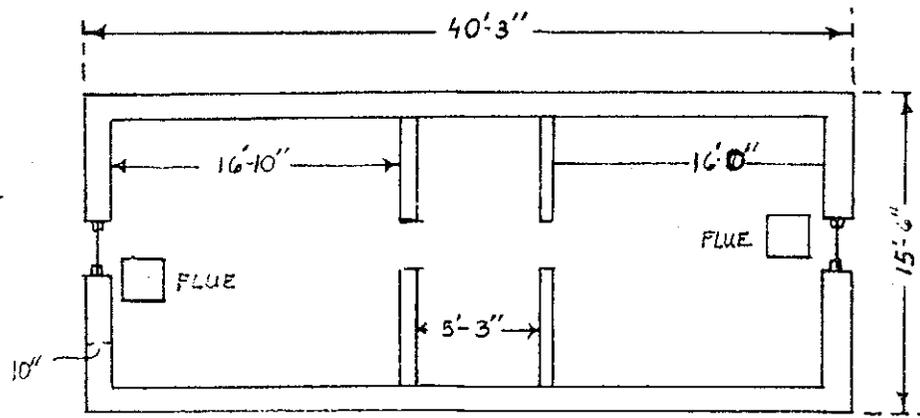
Sturdevant, Craig, Rugh Sturdevant, and Gary Kremer

1982 Cultural Resources Inventory and Evaluation Capitol West: Jefferson City, Missouri. Prepared for HUD and Jefferson City Housing Authority. On file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Program.

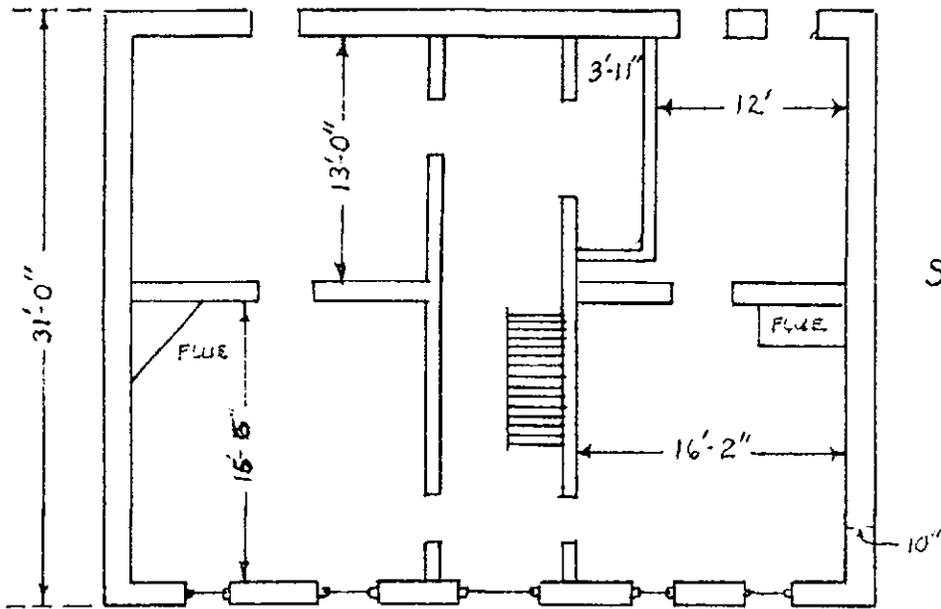
Van Ravensway, Charles

1977 The Arts and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri.
University of Missouri Press, Columbia.

ATTIC DORMER



SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

