

**GREATER JEFFERSONTOWN**  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

December 2017

Vol. 15 Number 5

**December Luncheon – Café at Main Street**

As we have been doing the last few years, in place of a regular meeting, we will celebrate the holidays and the Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society by getting together for lunch on **Tuesday, December 5**, at Café at Main Street, 10317 Watterson Trail at **1:00 P.M.** The food is good and the seeing one another is great! Guests are welcome.

Reservations are needed. Please let me know if you are coming by **Saturday, December 2. Call me at 491-6463.**

**Glad Tidings**

We want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Prosperous 2018!

**Jeffersontown Historical Museum Exhibit**

If you haven't seen the photographic exhibit at the Jeffersontown Historical Museum and you are interested in photography, you have until June, 2018. It is part of the Louisville Photo Biennial 2017, Louisville's premier photographic festival that was celebrated at over fifty locations in the region. You can find all the venues and times at [www.louisvillephotobeinnal.com](http://www.louisvillephotobeinnal.com). At our museum Beth is featuring older photographic equipment.

**Jeffersontown Magazine**

The city has contracted with the Towne Post Network to produce a new *Jeffersontown Magazine*, a monthly publication featuring people, places, businesses, happenings, and history of Jeffersontown. Beth Wilder is providing one or two great articles on Jeffersontown history each month. The free magazine is sent to J'Town residents and can be found at many businesses around town and at the library.

I will include as many of the articles as I can in the newsletter for our non-resident members. The following piece is what Beth submitted for the September 2017 issue.

**Jeffersontown's Earliest Subdivisions**

Jeffersontown was founded in the late 1700s as a crossroads where travelers could rest and regroup before making their way to the port city that would eventually become known as Louisville. Many of those people, once they arrived at their destination, realized that the land and water they left behind in Jeffersontown were far superior to that they encountered on the banks of the Ohio River – so they decided to return and settle there instead.

Farming was the lifeblood of people at the time; even if a man operated a separate business, owning some acreage to grow his own food and hunt was practically a necessity. Early on, the population of Jeffersontown was sparse, with a merely a handful of individuals in possession of vast tracts of land obtained from Revolutionary War pensions, but as time wore on and people realized the potential in the

countryside around Jeffersontown, landowners began selling off chunks of their property to interested buyers.

Still, by the early 1900s, Jeffersontown had only around 600 inhabitants. The town square had grown quite a bit, and the city had its own bank, newspaper, flour mill, creamery, and several different kinds of stores, just to name a few of the many businesses that had formed over the years. For one enterprising resident, however, that simply was not enough – Jeffersontown needed more people.

E.R. Sprowl was an entrepreneur who was devoted to Jeffersontown. He had begun his career selling insurance door to door, so he grew to know the area like the back of his hand. He also grew to know the people, and what they wanted and needed in a town. Sprowl eventually became a real estate agent and auctioneer, and in 1908, he published a booklet about Jeffersontown, “the coming suburb,” in the hopes of getting others to invest in property around the place he proudly called home.

In his advertising booklet, Sprowl pointed out that the area around Jeffersontown was “high and dry,” the quality of the land was excellent, work of all kinds was plentiful, and that even if one met with misfortune, he would still be among friends. Sprowl also noted that Jeffersontown had eight churches, excellent business opportunities, and low taxes.

Sprowl encouraged people to take advantage of the opportunity to buy land in Jeffersontown, imploring them to “get rid of the dirt and confusion of the City, in exchange for the healthfulness and quietude of the country,” where they could “live much better for less than one-half.” He also noted that no one ever “need suffer for water in this Section, if they will bore from thirty to sixty feet” – yes, owning a home in the early 1900s meant not only having it constructed yourself, but making sure you supplied your own water as well. Fortunately, Jeffersontown was known for its fresh, clean, ample water, but it would be 1937 before a water tower would be erected in the town, thus enabling most of Jeffersontown’s residents to have running water for the first time.

Sprowl also noted that because Louisville was expanding its boundaries, land for agricultural purposes was too valuable to ignore. Jeffersontown had some of the best soil in the county, and at the time, it was known for strawberry and onion cultivation (potatoes grew rather well, too, but not quite as good as they did in the Shelbyville Road area). The Southern Railroad and Interurban car line provided excellent means of distributing this bounty, so local farmers had ready access to transportation of their goods. Orchards were another means of providing a livelihood, or at least an added sum of money to individuals fortunate enough to have fruit trees on their property – not to mention having fresh fruit on hand for themselves.

In his earliest bid to draw people into Jeffersontown on a permanent basis, Sprowl created “Gregg’s First Addition to Jeffersontown” in 1903. This subdivision was not only Jeffersontown’s first, but one of the first in Jefferson County. Sprowl bought up land and auctioned off lots which lined the west side of Watterson Trail south of Maple Road. In June 1908, Sprowl opened up Gregg’s Second Addition and sold the 46 lots in less than two hours’ time.

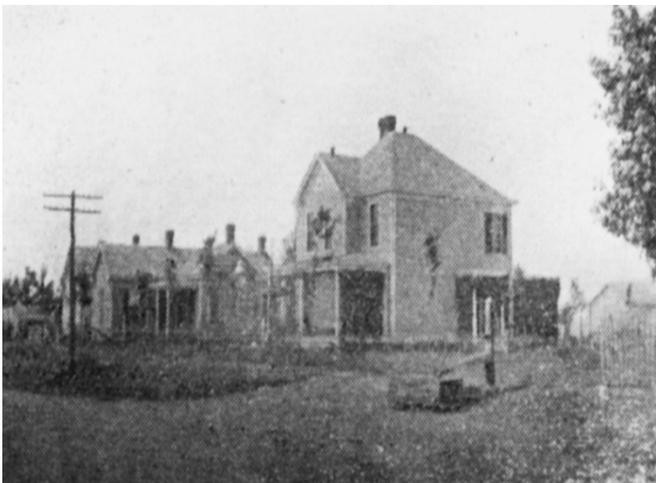
The next subdivision to be created by Sprowl was Livingston Heights, which was in the area of Grand, Snively, and Livingston Avenues off Taylorsville Road. As was the case with Gregg’s Addition, people bought lots and then paid to have their own houses constructed. Many of these old homes still exist and add a great deal of character to streets that now tend to sport rather uniform houses of a more modern style.

The crown jewel of Sprowl's labors to encourage suburban growth in Jeffersontown was the creation of Jefferson Heights subdivision, which encompassed 32 acres of land off Taylorsville Road in the vicinity of what is now Tully Elementary School. His vision for this area was to not only provide land for homes that allowed easy access to the Interurban Railroad, which ran along Taylorville Road, but to include a brand new, up-to-date graded school for the local children.

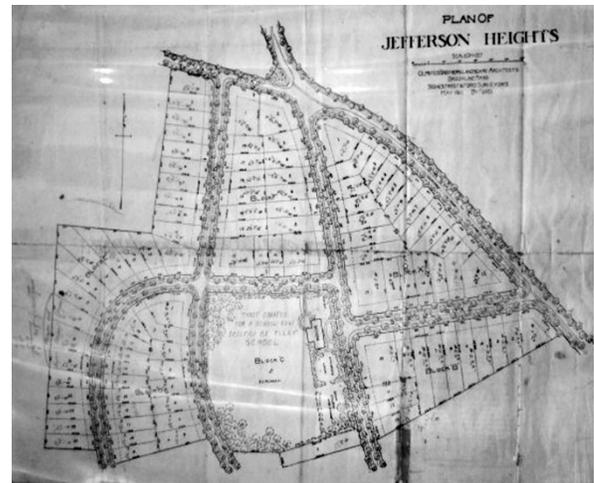
Sprowl was part of the Jefferson Heights Land Company, which intended to totally transform Jeffersontown into a more modern and self-sufficient city. Beginning in 1910, the Company urged local residents to take part in the growth of their town, most especially by supporting and helping to fund the model school they intended to build. The Jefferson Heights Land Company was so firm in its belief regarding the importance of an improved school, that they donated five acres of land expressly for the purpose of creating a school. Their efforts came to fruition when the new Jeffersontown Graded School opened in 1914.

Surprisingly, in 1916, the City of Jeffersontown was still discussing the feasibility of annexing Jefferson Heights and Livingston Heights. In the early 1900s, when someone referred to "Jeffersontown," he actually meant what we now consider to be the town square. Anything even one step beyond the original 1794 surveyed boundaries of the town was considered as being "near Jeffersontown." In order to officially have their homes known as part of "Jeffersontown," these residents had to agree to becoming part of the City of Jeffersontown, while the City itself had to agree to take on the responsibility of providing services to these same people.

Many years, and many subdivisions later, Jeffersontown has grown to an amazing degree. Its earliest subdivisions provided a quiet, comfortable place for numerous people who commuted to work in Louisville to settle. Later subdivisions were added in response to the vast amount of jobs provided by the Bluegrass Research and Industrial Park, allowing thousands of people the opportunity to both live and work in Jeffersontown. If a town is its people, then we can thank subdivisions for giving them a place to call home.



Greggs Addition



Jefferson Heights Map



Livingston Heights – McCann Home



Livingston Heights – Windsor Home

**Contact Us**

The telephone contact is your newsletter editor, John Ulmer, 491-6463. Our e-mail address is [\*\*jtownhistsociety@aol.com\*\*](mailto:jtownhistsociety@aol.com).



