

Mill & Spring St

In 1825, many of the young folks who were children of mixed (white/European & Native American) were awarded an individual plot of land by the government to become farmers. This was to promote white civilization/religion. By the 1830 "The Indian Removal Act" would remove most of the large Native American tribes in this area to Native American Territories to the future states of Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and further west and north. Part of many original Treaty agreements the government would provide a gunsmith, blacksmith, mill, and annuities to encourage success in staying in one location. Records indicate there was a mill near what we call presently Mill and Spring Streets and possibly there was a brewery/distillery in the vicinity also (which also require good quality spring water). Now this mill could have been corn or wheat grinding, cider, cotton-spinning, wood/saw, oil, or possibly fulling (beating and cleaning of cloth/hemp for canvas). Because of the limited information about this mill, it could be this mill was powered by water or treadmill by using animals when water levels were low. Much later dates indicate many other mills in the area were possibly steam powered utilized with engines from steamboats that were sometimes repurposed. Another creek draining into this area ran near the present Spring and Truman Road. City records also indicated in 1859, the present Spring Street was actually given its name and was widened to 25 feet to make it passable (Spring Street was Mill Street before this date). Water problems persisted on this street with regular maintenance and repairs. There was a problematic bridge listed on Osage that crossed over Farmer Street (possible the NS alley today from the Lewis-Webb House on Mill) between present Osage & Spring Street. A note of interest from the 1868 Bird's Eye View of City of Independence (which can be purchased through the Jackson County Historical Society) shows the deep and steep hills between Spring & Osage Street and the spring area and known 25 foot waterfall, where Heritage House sits on, and the McCoy Park area. At the north end of Spring Street (1868 Spring Street does not run all the way to where 24 Hwy is now) was Thomas [Guthrie's?] slaughter house which also would have required lots of water for making of leather goods, butchering, and watering of animals. Records indicate that, in that same time period, the city needed to build two suitable culverts to handle the water on Spring Street which could have been one of the first storm water projects for the City of Independence. There is strong suggestion that McCoy Park springs (headwater for Mill Creek) could have provided the ability to float canoes or rafts, similar to the ones in the Ozarks that people use today for recreation. There is indication that through the years, ponds were created in this area, only to continuity wash out due to the size of the stream. Remember the topography in McCoy Park & Slover Park was much different after bulldozing The Neck and making this area a landfill. Forest and Martha Ingram, who saved the Owens-McCoy House from Urban Renewal, would end up saving Watkins Mill (now a State Park), and were a part of the planning and assembly of historic structures that is now Missouri Town. Please take the time to step back in time and visit these sites to image what McCoy Park would have been like during the mid-19th century. Unfortunately, we have to use our imagination with a landscape of ugly parking lots, more barren ugly parking lots planned, high-voltage transmission lines, and an architecturally displeasing inappropriate designed 11-story high-rise. Appropriate city planning with a preservation component would have been helpful back then in the 1960's and 1970's. Actually we don't have areas such as this protected through city planning even today.