

## Sanborn Maps Useful Tool for Researchers

If you are interested in researching how historic communities have developed over time, we recommend reviewing the Sanborn Map collections. The collection for Missouri are accessed through the University of Missouri Library website where they have 6,797 images of communities <http://digital.library.umsystem.edu/cgi/i/image/image-idx?page=index;c=umcscsanic>. For Independence, they have 45 images/maps that date from 1885 to 1916 (image numbers 1555 through 1599). These maps were developed by the Sanborn Company beginning 1867 for the fire insurance industry to determine risks of insuring properties in urban areas. It was fairly common for a single fire on an urban block to take the entire block or even adjacent blocks, and even Cities. Independence actually had several major fires, some during the Border/Civil War years, and city ordinances suggested that no wood structures could be built on the Square. We recently reviewed the maps from 1892 to locate where an abandoned distillery operation was located near the northeast corner of Dodgion (Dodgen) and Truman (that part of Truman Road was called Spring Branch Road). Today, there is a large electrical substation there. The map indicates a large 2-story wood-framed structure with a brick masonry structure on the west side which was likely the boiler for the distilling operations. One of the oral history post-Civil War stories of this distillery is that they used to dump their spent mash into Spring Branch creek (Truman Road East) and the livestock downstream that would drink from the creek would get drunk, and become sickly. The 1892 map indicates that the building was labeled as the "Dilapidated Old Distillery" so it was likely abandoned at the time. The 1898 map only shows that the building was gone leaving three wells that likely supplied water to the distillery. This was close to the spring so the quality of the water they needed for the distillery was likely very good.

There were possibly more distillery operations around this area, including one around East College where the street bends. By 1849, city records indicate that there were many licenses issued for "Dram Shops" (bars/saloons) here in Independence. Westport actually had Independence beat for the number of dram shops. The availability of alcohol did lead to problems. One of the earliest City Ordinances of 1853 reads; "That any person who shall be found drunk on the Street, Alley or in any outhouses shall be liable to be taken up by the City Marshall, and kept until sober, and shall be brought before the Mayor, and shall not be fined less than \$1.00 nor more than \$10.00 for each offence." Many times, if you could not pay your fine, you would be put on hard labor rock duty; cracking rocks for gravel to pave the City Streets.