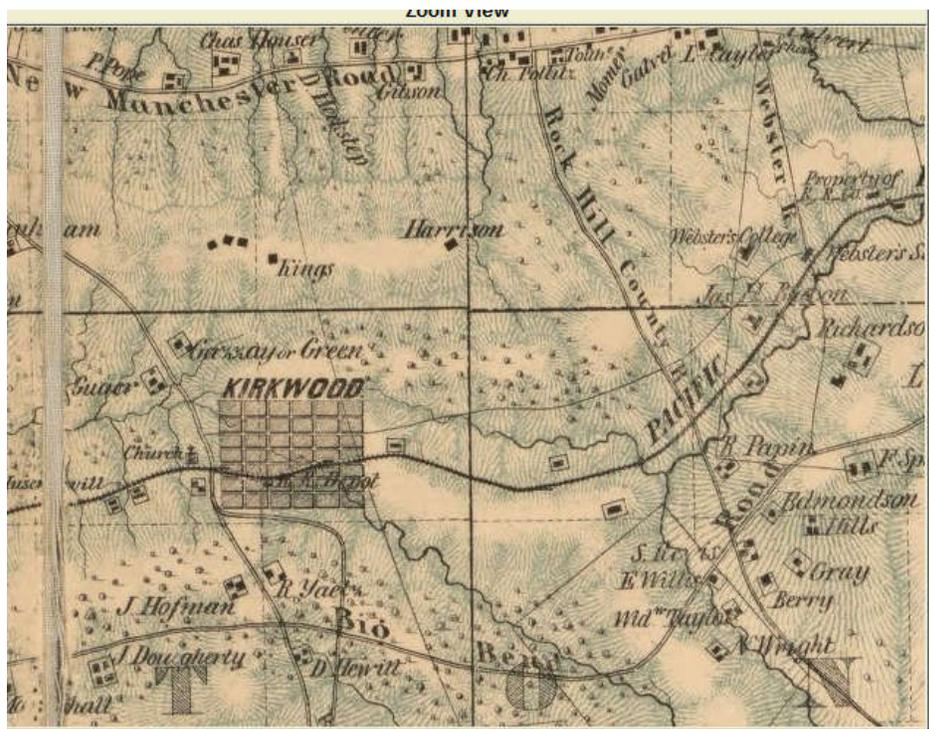


THE HISTORY OF

KIRKWOOD, MISSOURI

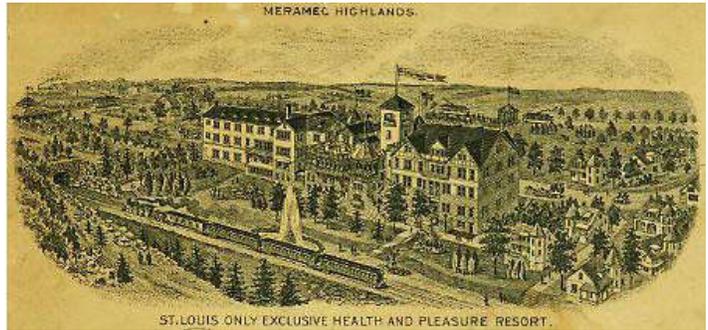
Known as the “Queen of the St. Louis Suburbs”, Kirkwood owes its existence to the twin tragedies of a cholera epidemic and a major fire that struck St. Louis in 1849, and to the development of the Pacific railroad route. Two real estate developers, Hiram Leffingwell and Richard Elliot, promoted the idea of a suburb, a community environment removed from the city. They pitched the new community's fresh air and open spaces. Many early Kirkwood residents were wealthy businessmen eager to safeguard their families from the dangers of life in the city by moving them from the crowded urban area to the new suburb. Some kept town homes in the city where they stayed during the workweek returning to their homes in suburbia on the weekends. Others commuted daily to the city via train and commuter trains brought workers to their jobs downtown until they were discontinued in the 1960s.

The city was formally established in 1853 and was named for James Pugh Kirkwood, the engineer who platted the city and surveyed the Pacific railroad route which passed through the area. When trains first rolled into Kirkwood in 1853, they stopped at a building at the site of the present station. A stagecoach would then take passengers from the train station to Manchester, Missouri. A larger station replaced the original station 10 years later, and the current station, an outstanding example of Richardsonian architecture, was built in 1893 and is now on the National Register of Historic Places.



The streets of the original town were platted into a rectangular grid with blocks divided into quarter sections of more than one acre each. Families could purchase an entire block creating a five-acre estate. Deed restrictions limited commercial endeavors in Kirkwood keeping the city free of things such as slaughterhouses, soap factories or dram shops.

A section of Kirkwood became a resort area catering to wealthy St. Louisans when the Meramec Highlands opened in 1895. Located on the Meramec Bluffs with a nearby spring gushing 60,000 gallons of water a day, the resort offered a large, luxury 125-room hotel and 15 rental cottages. Its rustic beauty and location made it a popular excursion point. Vacationers could dance in the large dance pavilion, bowl in the bowling alley, play billiards in the billiard hall or take a boat onto the river. During the 1904 World's Fair, visitors could travel from downtown to the Highlands by streetcar for a nickel, but by 1905 the popularity of the Highlands waned, and it closed in 1911. The hotel burned down around 1927 but 13 of the cottages remain today. Most are private residences. Today the area is known as the Greenbriar District and much of the old resort is the site of a 400-acre subdivision.¹



2

Kirkwood city limits were extended north to include several subdivisions in the 1860s. Hiram Leffingwell's 2nd addition was platted in 1866 and included land in the vicinity of North Denny (now Kirkwood), North Taylor, Woods Ave, and Essex. William Swan, one of the early landowners of the subdivision, deeded part of his property to create Swan Avenue in 1867.³

J. F. Senour and his wife Fannie sold the land on the south-east corner of Denny and Swan on June 19, 1876 to Charles Kosminsky for the cost of \$4700.⁴ James Frazier Senour was listed in the 1871 city directory as a traveling salesman for the St. Louis Lead & Oil Company and as residing in Kirkwood. He was previously from Louisville, Kentucky, where he had a business in pharmaceuticals and chemicals.

J. F. SENOUR J. W. SMITH

J. F. SENOUR & CO.,
WHOLESALE DEALERS IN
Drugs, Medicines, Chemicals, Paints, Oils, Varnishes,
Dye-Stuffs, Window-Glass and Glassware,
SOUTHEAST CORNER OF MAIN AND SEVENTH STREETS,
Louisville, Ky.

jan5 d0m

Figure 1 Louisville Daily Courier, 31 Aug 1856

James F. Senour was listed in the real estate business under the firm Senour, Cayton & Shaw in the 1874 city directory; by 1875, he was listed under his own real estate firm, residing in Kirkwood.⁵ Upon selling the property on the south-east corner of Denny and Swan to Charles Kosminsky in 1876, he left Kirkwood for Chicago, Illinois, where his sons Phillip and William Senour founded the Martin-Senour Paint Company, which was bought out by Sherwin-Williams in 1917.⁶⁷

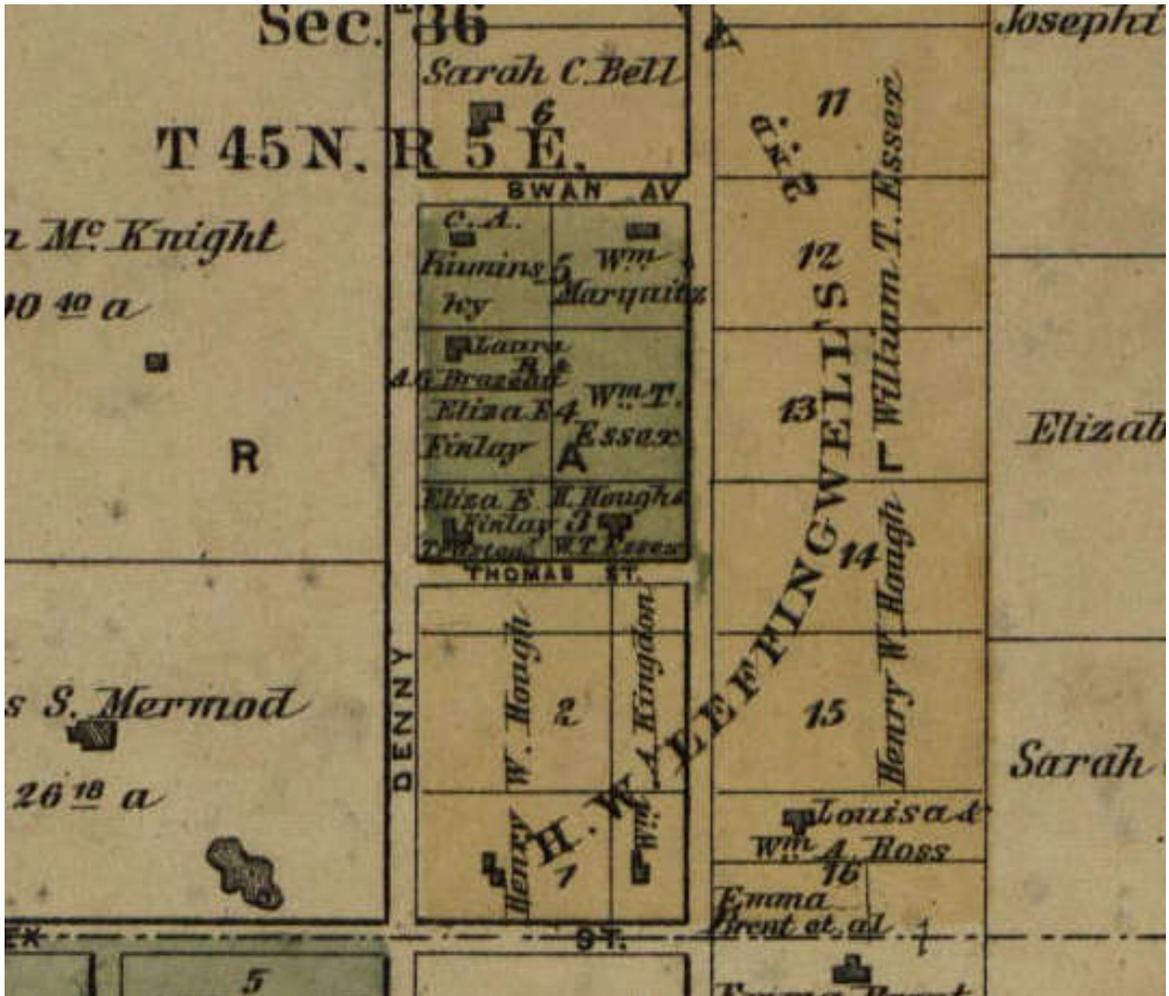


Figure 2 Pitzman's New Atlas of the City and County of Saint Louis, Missouri 1878

Charles Kosminsky (shown on the above 1878 map as C.A. Kuminsky) was probably the source name of the plaque in possession of the current owners that reads, "The Kumins Place, 1850".⁸ He was a German-born cabinet maker and furniture dealer who resided at 1320 Benton in the city and probably used the property in Kirkwood as a suburban retreat for his family.⁹

Charles Augustus Kosminsky immigrated from Germany and was naturalized in St. Louis on 22 March 1858.¹⁰ Charles and his wife Caroline were the parents of three children –Augustus, born in 1838, Hermoine, born in 1844, and Dorothea, born in 1848.

Charles Kosminsky was in the furniture business, partnering with George Schermann in the 1860s, and working at Scarritt & Co. furniture factory in the 1870s.¹¹

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT. 95

GEORGE SCHERMANN. CHARLES KOSMINSKY.

GEORGE SCHERMANN & CO.,
NEW
FURNITURE STORE,

No. 44 Olive Street,
Opposite the Monroe House,
SAINTE LOUIS, MO.

***Best City Made and Imported Furniture
at Lowest Cash Prices.***

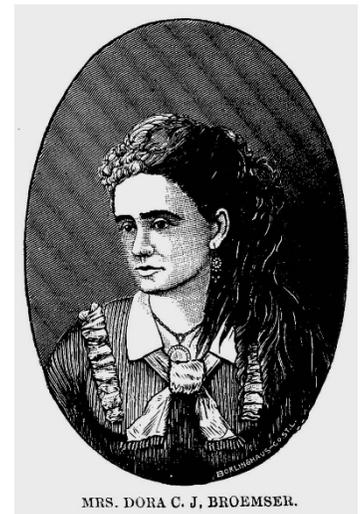
Daughter Hermoine married August Weber, a wholesale druggist, on October 30 1863. Her sister Dorothea (Dora) married John Jacob Broemser, a Civil War veteran, on 5 December 1865. (portrait at right) After the death of his first wife Caroline in April of 1866, Charles married Julia Kroll, 20 years his junior, on Dec 2 1866.¹²¹³

Dora Kosminsky Broemser was involved in a passionate tragedy in 1875, one which took her life. As reported in the St. Louis Post Dispatch, 6 Jan 1875:

A Jealous Lunatic Shoots Another Man's Wife and Runs Away

– Shortly after 8 o'clock last evening an unfortunate occurrence took place on Mullanphy between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets, in which Mrs. Dora C.J. Broemser, residing at 1606 North Fifteenth street, was fatally shot in two places by Charles L. Kring. Mrs. Broemser is a married lady, her husband being at present absent from the city. Mr. Kring is also married, his wife residing at present in Breese, Illinois. From his own statement it appears that from the time he became acquainted with Mrs. Broemser, the relations between him and his wife began to grow unpleasant, until at last a separation ensued.

The particulars of the affair last evening are briefly as follows: About half-past seven o'clock Kring went to the house of Miss Amanda Broemser sister-in-law of the injured woman and took her out in a carriage. At his urgent request she went to the house of her sister-in-law and after



MRS. DORA C. J. BROEMSER.

repeated refusal on the part of that lady to join them in the ride, at last prevailed upon her to come out and speak to Mr. Kring, who was in waiting a short distance from the house. Both walked out and met Mr. Kring at the alley, on Mullanphy between Fifteenth and Sixteenth streets. Here a short conversation ensued, when Kring, very much agitated said that he wanted the question settled at once – whether she would become his wife or not. Mrs. Broemser replied, that being a married woman she could not have become the wife another and have both husbands living. On hearing this Kring drew a revolver from his pocket and saying, “then let us both die” discharged it at Mrs. Broemser, the ball entering the left side. She fell on receiving the shot, and while prostrate was again shot in the thigh. When he had fired two shots, Kring placed the revolver to his own breast and snapped it twice ineffectually. He dropped the weapon and ran through the alley and in an hour afterwards gave himself up at the police station. Here he acknowledged that he had shot Mrs. Broemser, and said that he would not be sorry to think that the wound would not prove fatal. Mrs. Broemser was removed to her home and two physicians summoned, who pronounced her condition hopeless. The affair created intense excitement in the neighborhood.

Dora Kosminsky Broemser was pregnant at the time and gave birth to a stillborn daughter after the incident. She died shortly thereafter at the age of 26.¹⁴ Her surviving children were taken in by her sister’s family.¹⁵ After being tried seven times and sentenced to death three times in Missouri, the U. S. Supreme Court reversed the sentence of Charles Kling in April 1883. He died from poor health due to long-term incarceration later that year.¹⁶

We can perhaps see why Charles Kosminsky purchased the country land in Kirkwood in 1865 –as a quiet enclave in which to escape the pressures of the trial and media coverage of his daughter’s murder. Perhaps a place where his grandchildren could temporarily forget their mother’s absence and grieve privately.

Charles Kosminsky died of pneumonia at his house in North St. Louis in 1885. His wife Julia remained in St. Louis, until her death from uremia in 1898.¹⁷ It is unknown how long the Kosminsky family owned the land at [REDACTED], but since there was a notice in the Post-Dispatch from 1890 advertising its sale, there had been a few owners after them.

AVENUE, BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND WYOMING AVENUES, to Henry Obenhouse, for \$8 per foot.
Lot 330x630 feet, with a two-story seven-room frame dwelling, on the southeast corner of Denny road and Swan Avenue, from J. J. Ring to H. W. Meyer, sold for \$3,800.
Lot 169x300 feet, with a two-story nine-room frame dwelling, on the corner of Taylor ave-

The house shown was probably rented out for a time as Bridget Foley still owned the property as noted on this 1914 Post-Dispatch article:

RESERVOIR CAUSES SUIT	for \$2000 damages. She alleges the company maintains a 350,000 gallon reservoir basin adjoining her property on Swan avenue and that the basin, which is filled three times a week, frequently	overflows, making her premises damp and unhealthy and damaging trees and other vegetation. In addition to asking for damages she wants the water company enjoined from so filling the basin that it will overflow.
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In 1920, Ervin and Stella Pilkington owned and lived at [redacted] (formerly Webster, formerly Denny). Ervin was a retired grain dealer and Stella was a former insurance agent with the Charles L. Crane agency, St. Louis' oldest independent insurance agency, founded in 1885.^{23,24} The Pilkingtons moved to Los Angeles where Ervin died in 1929.²⁵

In the mid 1920s, there was a spate of new construction along Kirkwood Avenue. The old 7 room frame house was either demolished or perished in a fire as the house known as [redacted] [redacted] was built around 1925 for William Keil. The two-story Craftsman influenced residence was constructed and modified around the existing barn/stable at the rear of the property, thus the modern address of [redacted]^{26, 27}

William Keil was the credit manager for the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company, based out of Kansas City and makers of 'Sunshine Biscuits'.²⁸ He had sold his house at 3728 Bamburger in April 1922, so we can assume that is when he moved to Kirkwood.²⁹ In 1930, he was listed as owning [redacted] [redacted] at a value of \$10,000. His wife Adele and teenaged children William Jr., and Mary resided at the house as well.³⁰



Figure 5 - Bill Keil, top row, 4th from left, Kirkwood High School, 1932³¹

Perhaps due to the declining health of Adele Keil, who had sclerosis, the family moved from [redacted] [redacted] prior to her death in 1938.³²

In 1940, Tom O'Donnell and his wife Elizabeth, both Irish immigrants, owned and lived at [redacted] [redacted] Tom was a traffic manager for a chemical company.³³

As real estate development blossomed in Kirkwood and the surrounding land became further subdivided in the 1950s and 1960s, [redacted] remained an anchor on the corner of [redacted] We can assume that the property changed hands and residents several times over the next years.



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- 2 "City of Kirkwood : Historic Preservation." *City of Kirkwood : Home*. Web.
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- 4 Archives Department. St. Louis City Recorder of Deeds.
- 5 *Edward's City Directory*. Various years. St. Louis Missouri.
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- 7 "Martin-Senour Company - Wikia." MyCompanies Wiki. Web.
- 8 Personal communication. Carol Layton.
- 9 Ancestry.com. *Missouri, Death Records, 1834-1910*.
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