

The Residence on Francis Quadrangle



As the oldest building on the oldest public university campus west of the Mississippi River, the Residence on Francis Quadrangle reflects the rich history of the University of Missouri-Columbia.

It is the corner-stone of the 18 red-brick buildings that comprise the Quadrangle's nationally recognized historic district.

The Residence has played host to many national and international figures. In 1902, Mark Twain dined in there while on campus to receive an honorary degree. President Harry S Truman stayed in the Residence during a visit in 1950, and Eleanor Roosevelt rested and changed for dinner in an upstairs bedroom in 1959.

The residence is built on the site of an earlier house completed in 1843. During the Civil War, 300 Union soldiers occupied the campus. Their commanding officer, Col. Merrill, resided in the Residence, but not for long. On Nov. 28, 1865, the Residence was destroyed by fire.

Following the fire, the Missouri legislature appropriated \$10,000 for a new residence and other improvements on campus, marking the first state appropriation to the University. In 1867, the \$8,000 home was completed, and President Daniel Read and his family took up residence. Since then, it has served as home to MU presidents and chancellors and has witnessed a birth, a death and three weddings. Bredelle Jesse, born in 1894, literally grew up on the Quadrangle and then taught French for 43 years at the University.

In May 1874, President Read's wife, Alice, died in the Residence. Her death, coupled with a report in an April 1890 edition of the *Columbia Missouri Herald* that "ghostly apparitions" were seen dancing in the windows of the upstairs bedrooms, fueled rumors that the house is haunted. Reports of ghosts still circulate today.

On the night of Jan. 9, 1892, Addie Jesse, wife of President Richard Henry Jesse, and their six young children watched in horror from the Residence as Academic Hall was destroyed by fire. By morning's light, all that remained of the historic building were six ionic columns rising above the smoldering ruins.

Today, the Residence still overlooks the historic Columns and the original grave marker of Thomas Jefferson, donated to the University by Jefferson's family in 1885. From its vantage point on the east side of Francis Quadrangle, the Residence has witnessed celebrations and ceremonies, pranks and pageantry for more than 130 years. Hundreds of thousands of students, faculty, staff and visitors have passed the stately home, described as the second most-recognized public residence in the state after the Missouri Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City.



The house was designed originally in the Italianate Villa style by architect Brightberry McAlester (whose son later founded the School of Medicine). The three-story, L-shaped brick structure features bay windows and large, heavy brackets supporting the wide overhang of the roof. Classic details include windows grouped in twos and threes, lintels over some with others arched, and a heart shaped stoned, bearing the simple inscription "1867" as part of the elaborate entry portico.

While those original features remain, a face-lift in 1923 and 1924 changed the exterior significantly. A new wing added three rooms to the rear of the home, and the front porch was rebuilt and enlarged. Two wooded Corinthian columns were placed at the doorway, and the garden on the house's east side was enclosed with a brick wall. The Residence's interior did not go unaltered, either. The main staircase was reconfigured and the kitchen updated.



Scholars and special guests from around the world have been entertained in the spacious dining room.

A renovation in 1966 replaced the carpeting and the wallpaper throughout the house, and a 1978 redecoration brought a new look to the upstairs bedrooms. In 1983 and 1984, new ceilings, wallpaper and drapes were added to the first floor, and white marble tiles were laid in the foyer.

The Ruth Ellis Rose Garden, located on the west side of the house overlooking Francis Quadrangle is named for the wife of former President Elmer Ellis who resided in the home from 1954 to 1966.

In 1999, The West Parlor, the East Parlor and the Dining Room were restored using period-appropriate window treatments and wall and floor coverings. To continue the restoration work, Patricia Wallace, wife of Chancellor Richard L. Wallace, spearheaded a drive to create the Chancellor's Residence Preservation Society. Its ongoing mission is to support the restoration, maintenance and preservation of the Residence.

Office of the Chancellor, 105 Jesse Hall, Columbia, MO 65211

Phone: 573-882-3387 | **Fax:** 573-882-9907 | **E-mail:** chancellor_office@missouri.edu

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Last updated: Oct 16, 2006