

Kelley House—Knox County's Museum

In 1882 John and Catherine Kelley commissioned local carpenter Jake Bishoff to construct their home at 408 E. Lafayette Street in Edina. John Kelley was born in 1846 in Ireland. He first settled in Ohio where he met his wife, Catherine Golden, and the couple moved to Edina in 1871. In 2015 their descendants, John B. and Erlene Kelley, willed the home to the Knox County Historical Society. The home and many of its contents have remained intact for roughly 140 years.



Edina Double Square Historic District

The Edina Double Square Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, and in 2002, the district's boundary was increased. It encompasses the town's two public squares and the buildings along East Lafayette and Main Streets. The district includes the town's courthouse square and the Knox County Courthouse, which was designed by St. Louis Public Schools architect William B. Ittner in 1935 for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The second historic square includes the former public school, pavilion, bandstand, and water tower. The buildings in the historic district date from 1865-1945 and represent the history of commerce for the area, which served as a center of commerce for the agricultural community of Knox County.



The History of Knox County, Missouri

The area now known as Knox County, situated in northeast Missouri, was originally settled by the Iowa, Sac and Fox Indians. In 1824 the Native Americans ceded their territory to the State of Missouri, which had just joined the Union in 1821. Settlers of European descent arrived in the 1830s, including James Fresh, who owned a sizable amount of land and a grist mill operation. In 1839 the town of Edina was platted and named after Edinburgh, Scotland. During this time, Edina and the surrounding area were part of Scotland County, until Knox County was officially established in 1845. The county is named in honor of Henry Knox, George Washington's chief of artillery in the Revolutionary War, who went on to become the first U.S. Secretary of War.

These early settlers established the first farms with corn as the principal crop. Flax, cultivated for the bark to make linen, was also among the first crops. Knox County's soil consists of a rich black loam, a type of topsoil made of sand, clay, and silt, and to this day continues to be very productive. The Fabius River, a tributary of the Mississippi River named after an early French trapper, also continues to flow diagonally across the county and affords ample drainage to the fertile upland. The woods are full of wild game,

and the country continues to be a paradise for hunters and fishermen.

Many of the settlers during this time were Irish or Irish Americans, coming from states to the east such as Illinois and Ohio. In early 1841, Peter Early, an Irishman from County Tyrone, traveled from Ohio and saw Knox County's beautiful outlying prairies and timber lands being settled. He thought it was extremely important to have Roman Catholics occupy the land and enlisted the help of a young lawyer named Clancy in publicizing the benefits of living in Knox County. Mr. Clancy wrote several letters to the *Boston Pilot*, *Irish World*, *Irish American*, and other eastern publications. He also sent letters to a German Lutheran named Bloomer to translate the missives into German for specific Catholic newspapers. Their efforts attracted many Irish and German Catholics to the area.



During the 1840s, after Edina became the county seat, a small building boom occurred in what is now considered downtown Edina. Following the Civil War, construction accelerated, with some notable examples being the Stablein Building (c. 1870), located at 122 South Main Street, and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, which was completed in 1875. Edina's prosperity continued to grow in the 1880s with the addition of the Roller Mill Company of Edina and the Edina Creamery Company.

In April 1872, the Quincy, Missouri & Pacific Railroad arrived in Edina. The railroad contributed to the creation of the towns of Knox City and Hurdland, and the county benefited immensely. In the early spring of 1887, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company began the construction of its road through Knox County. The town of Baring was laid out along the Santa Fe Railroad tracks in 1888 shortly after the railroad arrived in Knox County. The Santa Fe Town and Land Company named the town for the Baring brothers who loaned the railroad \$70 million to construct this line.



Sever Lakes

Three of the lakes found in Knox County are known as the Sever Lakes. Henry E. Sever grew up near Hurdland in Knox County. After his death in 1941, he left a trust fund to provide for the

preservation of the natural flora and fauna of his home county. The 158-acre Henry Sever Lake was built in 1960. The area provides diverse habitat for fish and wildlife through sound management practices and offers the public outdoor recreational opportunities, including fishing docks, a boat ramp, boat rentals, camping sites, and more. The lake is stocked with catfish, and it is home to one of only two muskellunge populations in northeast Missouri. The Hurdland Sever Lake is a small reservoir comprised of 13 acres, and the Sever Lake North is 158 acres in size.



The Knox County Historical Society

The Knox County Historical Society, Inc., a private not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to the preservation of Knox County's history. Organized March 22, 1966, the Society exists to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving, and sharing history. Photographs explore the heritage and pioneering spirit of Knox County and its impact on the lives of the people it represents. History is important because it connects us to specific times, places, and events that were significant milestones in our collective past. Society meetings are open, and the public is invited to attend. There are no membership fees.

We welcome your donations to help the Knox County Historical Society continue its mission and bring added value to our community. Charitable contributions support our exhibits and operational expenses. Your contribution is tax deductible.

Knox County Historical Society and Museum

Edina, Missouri



Photo courtesy of *The Edina Sentinel*/Echo Menges.

The museum is open to the public at no charge from May to September, and scheduled groups are welcome at any time. Donations are always appreciated. Contact the historical society by sending an e-mail to kchsedina@gmail.com.

***Dedicated to the Preservation of
Knox County History***

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Historical Society and Museum

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