

THE NEW WEBSTER TIMES!



MADE BY: Nicholas D. Phillips, Senior at Webster Groves High School – Frick Center

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What's this newspaper about?

Executive Summary

When people think of Webster, they often picture the familiar — quiet streets, neighborhood schools, local shops, and friendly faces. But beneath the everyday routine lies a side of Webster that many residents pass by without ever truly noticing. From forgotten landmarks to rare historical treasures, Webster holds stories, secrets, and surprises that deserve to be uncovered.

This newspaper dives deep into the fascinating facts, unusual discoveries, and hidden places in Webster that you may have driven past a hundred times — without ever realizing their significance.

Main Objectives

To inform and enlighten the people of Webster and beyond with facts that are both familiar and newly discovered.

Fun Fact: Did you know that Douglass Manor Apartments was once Douglass Elementary School? Douglass was one of the first African American schools in STL county.

House Analysis 1

856 Marshall Avenue: A House With a Century of History — and a Tragic Chapter

Standing along Marshall Avenue in the Tuxedo Park subdivision, **856 Marshall Avenue** was a quiet residential home, blending into the historic charm of Webster Groves. Built in the early years of the 20th century, the property reflected the growth of Webster during its transition into a thriving suburban community. Yet within its long history lay a deeply tragic event that once captured local headlines. In early 2026 the house was demolished and new home is being built, where new stories will arise.

Early Development

Research: Research into Webster Groves Property Tax records confirms the home was constructed between 1907 and early 1908.

June 1, 1907 tax records list Margaretha Grote as owner of Lot 15, Block 16, though no house had yet been assessed.

By February 1908, a notice in the St. Louis County Watchman-Advocate reported that Grote sold Lots 14 and 15 to **William W. Randall**.

June 1, 1908 tax assessment records show a structure valued at \$400 on Lot 15. Research into Webster Groves records confirms the home was constructed between 1907 and early 1908.

Throughout the early decades, the house functioned as a rental property before being purchased in January 1927 by **Walter and Emilie Rene**, who would own it for more than fifty years. The property was later transferred in 1979 to Steven Wildman, with subsequent ownership changes leading to the present.

However, one of the earliest recorded events in the home's history would prove its most somber.

A Domestic Tragedy on Marshall Avenue

In 1926, **856 Marshall Avenue** became the site of a fatal domestic shooting.

A contemporary newspaper article reported that **Mrs. Evelyn Kohring, 38, was shot and killed inside the residence during a dispute with her husband, John Kohring, 41. The couple's 11-year-old son, John Jr.,** was present in the home at the time and later gave an account of the events. (St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Jan 13, 1926)

According to the published report:

An argument began after **Mrs. Kohring** returned home.

The dispute escalated inside the house.

A pistol was retrieved from a bedroom.

A struggle followed.

Three shots were fired.

❖ **Historical Fact for Context**

Mrs. Kohring staggered into the front room and collapsed. The article recounts that the husband claimed the shooting was accidental, while the son's version suggested the argument had intensified before the gun was discharged. (Newspapers of **the early 1900s** often described events in vivid detail, and this account was no exception. The emotional tone of the reporting reflects the journalistic style of the era.)

Domestic violence cases in the early 20th century were handled differently than they are today, both legally and socially. Newspaper coverage frequently included direct quotes and dramatic narrative elements, offering readers detailed portrayals of private family tragedies.

While it is unclear how the legal proceedings ultimately concluded, the documented reporting confirms that the event occurred at **856 Marshall Avenue**, permanently linking the property to this tragic moment in Webster Groves history.

Despite the tragedy, the home remained part of the community. Over the following decades, families lived, worked, and raised children within its walls. For more than half a century, the Rene family called the house home, illustrating how structures endure long after the events that occur within them.

856 Marshall Avenue stood not as a symbol of tragedy, but as a home that carries layers of stories — some joyful, some ordinary, and some deeply sorrowful.

In researching Webster Groves' historic properties, it becomes clear that houses are more than architectural artifacts. They are witnesses to the full spectrum of human experience.

Here are some pictures of the house (2025) vs (1926 + Picture of the Kohring family) - As of April 2026 the house has been demolished and a new home will be built.

856 Marshal prior to being demolished.



Photo of the house from a newspaper story on the murder.



(Citation: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*/January 16, 1926)

Another Story:

Property Research 3185 S. Brentwood Blvd

Long before the traffic of Brentwood Boulevard ran through the heart of Webster Groves, the land surrounding 3185 S. Brentwood Boulevard was part of a much larger rural property. The story of this site begins in the late nineteenth century and centers on a remarkable woman whose life spanned slavery, emancipation, and the growth of Webster Groves itself.

Deep Roots with property:

The parcel on which 3185 S. Brentwood Boulevard it stood was part of **Lot 21 in the Cynthia S. Marshall Subdivision**, a tract that once covered roughly three acres of land. Research conducted by the **Webster Groves Public Library** shows that the property owned by **Maria Powell (From the 1880's to 1939)**, stretched from what was then **Shady Avenue** (later renamed Kirkham Avenue and eventually Brentwood Boulevard) to Holland Avenue. Over the years, Powell gradually sold portions of the property as Webster Groves expanded and developed. Houses were built along the subdivided lots, transforming the former rural tract into a residential neighborhood. Unfortunately it was torn down in 2025. But 3185 S. Brentwood Boulevard represented the final remaining house on property owned by Maria Powell.

Research: A Building Permit in 1926

City records show that an **application for a building permit was filed on August 30, 1926**, for the construction of a brick-veneer residence. The permit was issued shortly afterward, on **September 1, 1926**, to **Mrs. Laura Pierce**.

The structure was described as a one-story residence measuring approximately **37 by 50 feet**, with a concrete foundation and brick veneer exterior. Construction was scheduled to begin in September 1926 and be completed by December of that same year. The address originally associated with the permit was **245 East Shady Avenue**, though the street numbering was later changed, eventually becoming **3185 South Brentwood Boulevard**.

Backstory

Perhaps the most compelling part of the property's history lies with its earlier owner, **Maria Powell**.

According to census records and historical research:

Maria was born in **Missouri around 1850** while enslaved.

Her first husband, **David Johnson**, was born in **Alabama in 1840**, also enslaved. The couple married around **1867**, when Maria was approximately 17 years old.

By the time of the **1880 U.S. Census**, the family was living in the Webster Groves area with several of their children. Records suggest they may have acquired the land sometime in the **1880s**, though the exact purchase date remains under investigation.

David Johnson died in **1887**, leaving the property to his family. Despite the loss, Maria continued to manage and maintain the land.

Census records from 1900 indicate that Maria had **11 children, eight of whom were living at the time**.

Later, she married **Charles Powell**, and the couple continued living in the Webster Groves area. The 3-acre parcel was co-owned with her children(Who were David Johnson's)

Dividing the Land

In **1905**, Maria Powell owned Lot 21 outright, consolidating her claim to the property. Over the following decades, she began selling portions of the land. These sales gradually transformed the three-acre tract into multiple residential lots along Holland Avenue and what would later become Brentwood Boulevard.

At one point, Maria lived in a house at **237 East Kirkham Avenue**, after selling an earlier residence next door at number 239. Both of those homes have since been demolished.

Maria Powell's Final Years

Maria Powell lived to the age of about **89 years old**, passing away on **July 20, 1939**, at her home on East Kirkham Avenue.

Her death certificate listed her occupation as **laundress**, a common profession for many African American women of her generation who worked to support their families after emancipation.

Yet her legacy extended far beyond that occupation. Through persistence and determination, Powell owned and managed several acres of valuable property in Webster Groves during a time when opportunities for Black landownership were extremely limited.

A Piece of Webster Groves History

Current Status: While the original homes that were built on South Brentwood have been demolished, the land remains a symbol of the North Webster community's deep roots.

Extra facts

Dr. Alonzo Leroy Reynolds owned the house from 1930 to his death in 1947. He rented the house 1926-1930. He used the house as his clinic.

This property history was investigated when the Webster Groves Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed a demolition permit for 3185 S. Brentwood. The HPC reviews all demolition permits to learn its properties. The final house was demolished in 2025, but the developer of the lot states that they will put up a plaque to honor Maria ownership of the property.

(Section of a 1909 map of Webster Groves. Maria Powell's lot is circled in red, and the grey square is where she had lived.)



3185 S. Brentwood 2007 (Google Maps)



3185 S. Brentwood 2011 (Google Maps)



3185 S. Brentwood 2025 (Google Maps)

