

Pruitt-Igoe opened as a revolutionary public housing project in 1955. Only eighteen years later, its implosion was shown worldwide. What causes a 36 million-dollar housing project to become so uninhabitable that it must be demolished? Interested, I did some background research and discovered that Pruitt-Igoe's demolition has become the symbol of failure for public housing, and its tenants and architecture have been blamed for its demise. These misconceptions take Pruitt-Igoe out of its historical context, causing the reactions and reforms to its demise to not truly address the issues. The failure of Pruitt-Igoe was a great fit for this year's National History Day theme, so I began my project.

I began my research by looking at articles blaming the residents and architecture, and comparing them with articles that show the flaws in their arguments. Then, I broadened my research to examine the history of public housing, the urban history of St. Louis, the decline of cities, urban renewal, and other aspects that set the scene for the failure of Pruitt-Igoe. On a couple of weekends, my mom drove me to colleges libraries in the area so that I could access online databases and microfilm collections. I looked at newspaper and magazine articles on Pruitt-Igoe, many of which became important primary sources. Since I didn't choose a local topic, I used numerous online databases and archives, and corresponded with the Missouri History Museum. I was able to interview Professor Joseph Heathcott, Professor Robert Fishman, and Cheryl Lovell, Executive Director of the St. Louis Housing Authority.

Last year, I tried out Weebly and found out that I loved the website category. This year's topic fit the website category perfectly because it had breathtaking multimedia relating to Pruitt-Igoe. Striking pictures showed the buildings and their residents, videos showed the deteriorating conditions and the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe. I created pages to keep me organized and help me determine where I needed more research. I edited the CSS code to get the look I wanted.

Pruitt-Igoe's failure fits this year's theme, *Revolution, Reaction, Reform*, in an interesting way. When Pruitt-Igoe opened, it was a revolution in public housing. As the project deteriorated, the tenants of St. Louis public housing projects reacted with the 1969 rent strike. The result of the rent strike was a complete change in the management of the St. Louis Housing Authority and increased tenant involvement in the operation of public housing projects. This trend soon spread throughout the nation. Another reform, the Brooke Amendment, capped tenants' rent at 25% of income and provided a subsidy to the housing authorities for operating expenses. For Pruitt-Igoe, however, it was too little and too late. This resulted in the most famous reaction to Pruitt-Igoe's horrible living conditions- its demolition. The image of Pruitt-Igoe's implosion, used out of its historical context, simplifies the complex issues that led to its demise. This causes many of the reactions to the project's failure to not address the real issues.