

BALLWIN
INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
1994

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**for the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation
under a grant from the City of Ballwin and with the assistance of the Ballwin Historical Society**

CITY OF BALLWIN
1994 INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

1.	Christian Schluesner House	103 Elm Street	c. 1860?
2.	*Old Ballwin School	110 Elm Street	1900
3.	Sophia Brockmann Dower House	125 or 205 Elm Street	c. 1880
4.	Henry Buermann House	240 Main Street	c. 1865
5.	Charles Buermann House	330 Main Street	c. 1870
6.	Clare-Koch House	14816 Manchester Road	c. 1901
7.	*Salem United Methodist Church	14825 Manchester Road	1870
8.	Ruppel-McKinnon Hardware Store	14834 Manchester Road	c. 1928
9.	Charles B. Zeinert House	14900 Manchester Road	c. 1870
10.	Krueger-Schleusner House	411 Orchard Avenue	c. 1888
11.	Fischbeck House	601 Parker Drive	c. 1890
12.	*Schrader-Walka House	149 Ries Road	c. 1860
13.	*George Bernges House	151 Ries Road	c. 1880
14.	George Hartman House	251 Ries Road	c. 1901
15.	William H. Hain House	210 Temple Avenue	c. 1900

* = From previous survey

RESEARCH METHODS

Ballwin's status as one of the oldest communities in St. Louis County has long been recognized, but few of its old buildings have been studied in detail. The best known is the Salem Methodist Church, which was included by the St. Louis County Historic Buildings Commission in its 1970 and 1983 publications. An inventory form for it was included in the inventory, "Churches," prepared in 1992. The Old Ballwin School was included in the "Schools" inventory prepared the previous year. Two other properties, 149 and 151 Ries Road, were researched at the request of the State Highway Department in 1983.

On May 2, 1993, the newly restored Harrison-Schmidt-Dahlke Log House was dedicated. Built about 1849, it was moved to its present site in Vlasik Park (at the corner of Holloway Road and City Hall Drive) from a location about a quarter of a mile to the north. This house has been researched in detail by the Ballwin Historical Society and is open for tours by appointment.

The properties included in the present inventory were selected by the Ballwin Historical Society on the basis of their supposed age, known historical associations, or architectural interest. In naming and dating these properties, the primary source has been the chain of title established through deeds found in the city and county offices of the recorder of deeds. Since deeds do not often mention buildings, they have been supplemented wherever possible by other sources. The city and county probate courts have wills and inventories for several of these property owners. County directories beginning in 1893 give some addresses and occupations for Ballwin residents, although Ballwin is not fully reported in some editions. Ballwin has been included in several county histories, including Walter Scharf, History of St. Louis City and County (1883, p. 1902), William L. Thomas, History of St. Louis County (1911, p. 347), and the Watchman-Advocate History of St. Louis County (1920). The City of Ballwin commissioned its own history during the Bicentennial era, A History of Ballwin (1979), researched and coordinated by Dorthea M. Loehr and written by Caverly Scott Wallace.

The inventory forms included here have been arranged according to the street addresses of the properties, alphabetically and numerically. Four inventory forms prepared for earlier studies have been included here for convenience. Maps for many of the properties are taken from the records of the St. Louis County Department of Revenue. They show property lines and subdivision outlines as well as building outlines. The building outlines are in pencil and do not reproduce well, but they are more detailed and accurate than any other source.

Inventory forms have been numbered according to St. Louis County's locator system. This nine-digit system is based on a coordinated grid that covers the entire county and gives each parcel of land a unique identification. Most county records are keyed to this system, and it is hoped that inclusion of it on these inventory forms will facilitate further research. All photographic negatives are in the files of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation. Roll and frame numbers have been included on the inventory forms under item three. The roll numbers are assigned by the photo processing companies. Roll and frame numbers have also been marked on the backs of the inventory photos.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

John Ball owned Survey 1908, which encompassed 340.8 acres, but his original town encompassed only 17 blocks of an acre each. It was situated at the highest point of the larger tract, which was one of the highest points in the whole area. Aside from its elevation, the new town had the advantage of being located on the Manchester Road, which was one of the major routes to the west and the only one to leave St. Louis County without crossing a major river. Ball seemed unconcerned by the fact that Manchester Road crossed the site on a diagonal, cutting across several of his new blocks. He anticipated that his Main Street would be two blocks south of Manchester, and he named it First Street. Second Street was never fully opened and has been eliminated on current maps. Third Street, partly usurped by Manchester Road, is now called Temple Avenue for the adjacent Masonic Temple. The cross streets were originally named for trees: Oak, Elm, and Mulberry. After about 1880, Oak connected with the road to the J. W. Ries Farm, and it eventually took that name. With only four quarter-acre lots in each block, Ballwin had an unusually spacious design.

The original town plan was supplemented in 1868 by Louis Kessler's Addition, nine parallelograms located south of Manchester Road and immediately west of the original town. Kessler named his north-south streets for the Union heroes of the recent Civil War, Fremont, Lincoln, and Lyon. Lyon Street was never paved in its original location, but its name, modified to "Lyons," was later used for the alley south of Manchester Road. Mary J. Eickerman laid out another addition in 1891. It was located west of Kessler's and north of Manchester Road, extending west to Holloway (once known as Landvalter). It was divided into three irregularly shaped blocks, with Orchard Avenue paralleling Manchester and Florence Avenue extending Kehrs Mill Road to the east. That name has now taken over the whole right-of-way.

Ballwin was connected to the surrounding farmsteads by a series of radiating farm roads. These roads jogged around property lines and were, as we have seen, only imperfectly connected with the town or with Manchester Road. West of town, Ballwin Road went south to connect with Kiefer Creek Road. At the foot of Kiefer Creek Road near the Meramec River was the Fern Glen Station of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, the closest railroad to Ballwin. Ries Road was a later north-south road that also connected with Kiefer Creek Road. It was sometimes called Oak Street Road, because it crossed the east-west Oak Street, which is now a continuation of Big Bend Boulevard.

The ground continued to rise north and west of Ballwin, and the only close access to this territory, which was in Township 45 North Range 4 East, was Kehrs Mill Road, which originally met Manchester Road only by way of Holloway Road. Kehrs's Mill's winding, irregular path eventually connected with Long Road and the Gumbo flats (now bowdlerized as Chesterfield Valley) along the Missouri River. The only other road to the north was Baxter, which also angles northwest from a point considerably east of Ballwin. Even though it was on a major highway, Ballwin was historically somewhat isolated from its hinterland, and even today, the community is dependent to a large extent on Manchester Road.

With the explosive suburban development of Ballwin, and with the more recent spread of

development beyond Ballwin to the City of Ellisville and beyond that to the unincorporated communities of Grover and Pond, the amount of traffic on Manchester Road has increased exponentially, and the road has been widened over the years almost to superhighway width. Except for the historic centers of Manchester and Ballwin, the road is almost entirely given over to strip commercial development, with both freestanding businesses and minor shopping centers, and the road has become a byword for the visual blight typical of unregulated suburban development.

Behind the commercial development which forms the public face of Ballwin, the original old community is almost entirely surrounded by post-war residential subdivisions, with their typical pattern of winding streets and cul-de-sacs. Some of the old section and survey lines can still be identified in property maps such as the one included here. A few properties have been bypassed by development, and Ballwin has distinguished itself by acquiring some of these for public open space, notably Vlasis Park and the Fox Creek Golf Course.

After remaining unincorporated for over a century, Ballwin finally formed a city government in 1950. Since that time, its population has grown from 5,710 in 1960 to 21,722 in 1990. Gradually, the city limits have expanded, and new annexations are anticipated in the area to the south and toward Ellisville.

HISTORY

The general history of Ballwin has been covered to some degree in the sources mentioned above. Ballwin was founded in 1837, a very early date for a town. Even though the city of St. Louis was doubling its population every five years during those decades, the county was sparsely populated. The 1850 census listed only five other towns or settled places in the county: St. Ferdinand (now Florissant), Manchester, Jefferson Barracks, Carondelet (now part of St. Louis), and "Stringtown" (a settlement in the Carondelet Common, also now part of St. Louis). Manchester had a population of 210 in that year, while Ballwin had 84. All the rest of Bonhomme Township had only about 1,500 residents.

One important reason for this was poor transportation. Manchester Road was a very important thoroughfare, the main road to the west from downtown St. Louis, where it became Market Street. But its condition was at times almost impassible. One account in 1847 described the lowlands beyond Manchester as "one continuous, almost unfathomable morass, so the horses sank into their bellies at every step."

In these circumstances, Ballwin primarily developed to serve the surrounding farmlands, with a general store, a tavern, and a blacksmith shop, much as many other crossroads settlements around the county that lacked the advantage of a formal town plan. Most of the farmers were originally from the slave-owning eastern states below the Mason-Dixon line, and about a quarter of the population in the township was slave. No slaves resided in either Manchester or Ballwin, however. By 1850, Germans, generally opposed to slavery, were beginning to supplant the Anglo-Saxon population in the west county, and by the turn of the century, Ballwin had become a community of largely German ancestry.

John Ball still had not sold all his town lots by 1850; he sold the lots where both 103 Elm and 14834 Manchester are standing only in 1851. If any buildings remain standing from that period, they have not been identified. The Harrison-Schmidt-Dahlke Log House, now moved to Vlasits Park, probably dates from 1849, but it was a farm house, not a town house. The little stuccoed house built at 103 Elm by Christian Schluesner and the Schrader-Walka House at 149 Ries Road both may date from 1860 or so.

Because Ballwin was bypassed by the railroads, its growth remained slow, and even in 1900 its population was only about 100. By that time, however, nearly all the buildings in this inventory had been constructed. The Salem Methodist Church is the city's premier landmark, located at the top of the long hill leading up from the town of Manchester. The original 1870 sanctuary retains its dominant position in front of large modern additions. The old Ballwin School also survives, now used as a residence. Built in 1900, its design continues a tradition going back at least half a century. Among surviving early schools in the county, it is one of the best preserved externally.

Ballwin's business district was nearly wiped out by successive widening and regrading of Manchester Road. Among the surviving buildings, the old hardware store at 14834 Manchester Road is the most notable. It has associations with many of the most important businessmen in Ballwin, going back to Frederick Schlep, whose wagonmaking factory was considered by Walter

Scharf to be the most important business in town in 1883. In spite of alterations in the twenties, the building still retains a casual appearance characteristic of small-town Missouri. The building at 14900 Manchester Road, originally built about 1870 as a residence, has long been used for commercial purposes, and it also contributes to this character.

The residences included in this inventory are for the most part modest in size and reflect an equally unpretentious lifestyle. The inventory made of Charles Buermann's House in 1905 bears testimony to just how simple life could be then. Another Buermann house is located only a block away, and Ballwin seems to have been made up of few but relatively large families, most of whose members lived and married in the area. The one surviving exception to the prevailing small houses is the Fischbeck House. Now located at 601 Parker Drive, it has been moved a short distance on the same farm. It is an example of the Queen Anne style, not unusual in Ferguson or Webster Groves, but remarkably high-style for a rural area. The former doctor's house at 14816 Manchester Road, now accessible only from Temple, is a smaller, but still attractive example of the same style.

Two of the houses identified here bear a resemblance to a group of South County houses generally built in the twenty years after 1890. These houses are one and a half stories high, with steep front gables over the front door. They are often associated with small truck farms. Both the George Hartman House at 251 Ries Road and the Krueger-Schleusner House at 411 Orchard show these characteristics, although the proportions and detailing of the two houses otherwise differ from each other. Since these houses are not found in the north parts of the county, there was presumably some link between Ballwin and South County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A comparison of present-day Ballwin with the old photos published in Caverly Wallace's history demonstrates that much has been lost. Ballwin no longer resembles the placid country town seen in those pages. Nevertheless, in the original part of the town, the quarter-acre lots, the right-angled street pattern, and the small scale of the houses create an ambiance that is distinct from the surrounding suburban development and from most other old communities in the county. Nearby Manchester, for instance, has retained a good number of old buildings along its commercial strip but it never had a grid of residential properties behind Manchester Road. The town plan of Ballwin has its own historical significance as one of the oldest in the county, possibly preceded only by Florissant and the old part of Bridgeton, "Marais des Liards," which has recently been obliterated by the expansion of the St. Louis airport.

This old heart of Ballwin is currently threatened by the proposed construction of a highway linking Ries Road on the south with Kehrs Mill Road on the north. This project was included in a bond issue for street improvements approved in 1992 by the voters of Ballwin. Most of the cost of the project, however, would be paid by federal matching funds. The project would eliminate the sharp-angled turns on Ries Road, and it has also been seen as a way to encourage development in the so-called "Old Town" part of Ballwin, the original subdivision. Its diagonal line would almost entirely obliterate the original town plan, not to mention the impact it would have on buildings, both those actually demolished and those exposed to subsequent redevelopment. The use of federal funds in this road project calls for its close scrutiny by state and federal officials under so-called "106" review procedures.

Beyond this immediate and large-scale threat to the historic resources of Ballwin, many of the buildings included in this inventory are threatened over the long run. Many are modest in size at a time when the fashion is for ever-larger residential units. Many have already been substantially altered in appearance through the use of unhistorical building materials, and others may be, as maintenance dilemmas arise. For these reasons, Ballwin should adopt a local historic preservation ordinance, as provided by state statute. The ordinance recently adopted by the City of Hazelwood might serve as a model, and the communities of Florissant, University City, and Webster Groves have experience administering similar ordinances that may be helpful. While the National Register of Historic Places is widely recognized as a mark of historical distinction, only a local historic preservation ordinance can prevent a building from being demolished or inappropriately altered using local or private funds.

Ballwin is lucky to have an active and effective local historical society. The society should take an active role in collecting materials relevant to the city's history, particularly written records relating to family histories. Genealogical data collected now about such large families as the Buermanns would simplify the work of future historians.

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