

Boulevard Historic District Survey

Broadway to Highland Driver

Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Conducted by
Students of the Historic Preservation Program
Southeast Missouri State University

Spring, 2008

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HP 588: Legal and Economic Principles of Historic Preservation
Dr. Steven J. Hoffman

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Students in the Legal and Economic Principles of Historic Preservation class (HP 588), under the guidance of Dr. Steven Hoffman, conducted an architectural survey of residential buildings in the Boulevard Local Historic District in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The main purpose of this survey was to construct an inventory of the buildings in the neighborhood immediately adjacent to Southeast Missouri State University and Capaha Park for the Historic Preservation Commission of Cape Girardeau.

The area surveyed is bounded by Highland Drive on the north, West End Boulevard on the West, Henderson Avenue on the East, and Broadway on the south.

The proposed Boulevard Historic District is architecturally significant as an excellent example of an early twentieth century neighborhood housing Cape Girardeau's expanding middle class from the early twentieth century until the present day. The Boulevard District retains its character as a distinctive neighborhood comprised of homes built in a variety of early twentieth century architectural styles. This neighborhood is characterized by its streets and sidewalks lined with mature trees, and its similar architectural styles, rooflines, and building heights.

The predominant styles represented in this neighborhood include Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial, Neoclassical Revival, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch. Other early twentieth century American styles represented in this neighborhood are the Craftsman Bungalow style and the American Foursquare. These are the dominant housing styles favored by America's middle class families from the early years of the twentieth century through the immediate post-

World War II years. Similar to other developing cities, Cape Girardeau experienced new suburban growth at the end of street car lines and on the edge of town at the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. With increased circulation of national magazines and pattern books, the styles popular with America's expanding middle class were readily available to the citizens of Cape Girardeau. The Boulevard Historic District reflects the national trend the United States experienced in the 1910s and 1920s when a wave of suburban building occurred as a direct result of the expansion of the American economy and the coming of the automobile. In this neighborhood, as with neighborhoods across America, new homes were built with garages in the rear in order to accommodate the growth in automobile ownership among the middle class.

Several of the specific features of the houses and streetscape highlight the cohesiveness of this neighborhood. A majority of the houses still retain their original sash windows with multiple panes over a single pane, a distinctive feature of early twentieth century architecture. Similarly, many of the houses have Bungalow style porches. In addition, throughout the district many houses have matching garages set back behind or to the side of the house. Houses in this area are mostly one and a half or two stories and the roof lines are generally the same height. Brick construction tends to dominate, although there are excellent examples of frame, stone and half-timber construction as well. Most buildings retain the majority of their original building materials. The streetscape also contributes to the unity of this district. The streets are all lined with large shade trees and there are sidewalks between the front yards and the street. The front yards are all about the same depth and width and nearly all of the houses have prominent centered front doors. The neighborhood as a whole retains its integrity and successfully conveys the look and feel of an early- to mid-twentieth century residential neighborhood.

Methodology

At the request of the Cape Girardeau Historic Preservation Commission, in the Spring of 2008, students in HP 588: Legal and Economic Principles of Historic Preservation extended their Historic Resource Survey to include the neighborhood adjacent to Southeast Missouri State University and Capaha Park. The Commission asked the class to survey the area bounded by Highland Drive on the north, West End Boulevard on the West, Henderson Avenue on the East, and Broadway on the south.. Archival research and reconnaissance survey was utilized to survey, photograph, and inventory the buildings in this entire area. Due to the limited time available, only a reconnaissance level survey could be conducted by this class, which will assist the city in future Preservation Planning.

Students worked in teams of two each, with each team assigned ten to twenty buildings. Flyers were posted to inform business as well as homeowners of the survey. The students documented their assigned buildings which, included taking photographs, researching the history of the building with the use of property tax records, and filling out State of Missouri Historic Resource Survey forms based on observations of the building from the street.

This information was compiled, photocopied, and bound. One copy was presented to the Historic Preservation Commission of Cape Girardeau, one copy deposited in the Regional Archives of Southeast Missouri State University, and one copy retained by the Historic Preservation Program, Department of History, Southeast Missouri State University. Upon completion of the survey of the entire district, the original forms and photographs will be forwarded to the State Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Natural Resources in Jefferson City, MO.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following for their invaluable help and assistance, without which this survey could not have been completed:

- ◇ Cape Girardeau County employees for their help with the Property Tax Records of the many buildings included in this survey.
- ◇ District property owners for their cooperation and assistance.
- ◇ The staff of University Printing and Duplicating for their help duplicating and binding the final report.
- ◇ Employees of Cape Girardeau City Hall, especially Ms. Brenda Schloss, for providing assistance and maps of the survey area.
- ◇ Cape Girardeau Historic Preservation Commission for providing assistance and support for continuing survey work in Cape Girardeau.

Boulevard Local Historic District



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