

INTERIM REPORT

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CATHEDRAL HILL SURVEY PART I

HISTORIC PRESERVATION
PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

When the survey project was first conceived for Cathedral Hill it was thought that boundary for a potential district on the north side of the survey area would be an easy matter to ascertain. To the east the survey area adjoins the Hall Street Historic District; to the south the area joins to the commercial zone along Frederick Avenue; and to the west the area partly adjoins a cemetery and an area of low housing density. However, to the north the boundary is unclear and the area of dense historic construction continues for many blocks beyond the arbitrary line established for the survey. For this reason the survey known as Cathedral Hill was determined to be a phased survey with this being the first phase and with a later phase to be determined which would define the extent of the potential district.

On January 3, 1987 a survey was begun in the Cathedral Hill area of St. Joseph, an area bounded by Ridenbaugh street on the north, the commercial fringe of Frederick Avenue on the south, N.9th street on the west and N. 13th street on the east. The area is almost exclusively free-standing residential with houses on lots of varying sizes with a variety of setbacks from the street. One hundred and fifty inventory forms were produced in the course of the survey.

METHODOLOGY

All buildings regardless of age or condition were noted on the site map and an inventory sheet created. All buildings fifty years old or older were photographed. Positive identification of the site was made with the aid of the field map and a street address and legal description of the property made. With this unique site information at hand it was possible to examine the building permit record on each discreet parcel. These records extend back to 1887. The records give the name of the person taking out the permit [generally but not always the owner] the date of the permit, the type of permit [e.g. residence, place of business, repair, garage, etc.] and the dollar amount of construction. Almost all of the 150 properties date to post-1887, and thus a positive date was available in most cases, though occasionally the permits were missing. The building records yielded the name of the person taking out the the permit for repair or construction. City Directories were consulted for relevant years to determine yield biographical information on the builder or occupant of the dwelling. the Insurance maps were consulted to confirm the configuration of the existant building. Where it was necessary other record groups were consulted to create a basic historical context.

On each inventory a relevant architectural description was made of the existing condition of the building with an analysis of

significant alterations and additions. A 5X7 photograph [occasionally two photographs] was attached under the written description as a separate page to the inventory sheet.

GENERAL RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Almost all of the surveyed buildings are freestanding single family dwellings. Over fifty percent are brick or masonry [tile and stucco] and the rest of frame construction.

The Cathedral Hill area was not part of the initial settlement of St. Joseph in the pre and immediately post Civil War years. During that time it was farmland overlooking Frederick Avenue, the primary overland artery into St. Joseph from the east. However, the survey area began a rapid development phase in the early 1880s concomitant with the boom experienced in other neighborhoods of the inner ring on the hills overlooking the Central Business District. The Cathedral Hill neighborhood is integral with the development of the inner ring neighborhoods. These neighborhoods were the preferred residential addresses of the wealthy and the aspiring middle class and continued as such through to the turn of the century. The building phase lasted some 35 years at which point it abruptly ceased as the impetus to new development moved further to the east in St. Joseph.

Virtually all of the predominate styles of residential architecture of the latter half of the 19th century may be found in the survey area. There are several good examples of Italianate architecture in the survey area, but the predominate style is Queen Anne.

The Co-Cathedral on N. 10th street is an important grouping of ecclesiastical buildings though in large part compromised by the alterations to the sanctuary building and the school building. The Church facade was completely obscured in an early 1950 remodeling and most of the decorative trim was replaced on the side elevations and in the facade gable during the same period. At virtually the same time the school building was cut down from three stories to two and much of the original architectural detail was removed and windows filled in.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the surveyor's opinion that there is a district with both local and National Register Level potential in the area of the Cathedral Hill. Unfortunately the survey limitations make it impossible to determine the north boundary with certainty and to characterize accurately the architectural inventory of the district. It is recommended that additional survey be conducted north from the limits of the present survey to more accurately determine boundaries.