

HISTORIC BUILDINGS SURVEY

CENTRAL LADUE

LADUE, MISSOURI

1986

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RESEARCH DESIGN

The City of Ladue is located in the central part of St. Louis County west of the county seat of Clayton. It covers 8.6 square miles and has a population of about ten thousand people. Its 4,300 buildings include 1,147 built by 1946. Institutions include five country clubs, five churches, five major private schools, five public schools (part of the Ladue School District and the Special School District), one city park, one county park, and a monastery.

The survey area was selected as being the heart of the community. It includes the St. Louis Country Club and its grounds, which for many years gave the community its popular image. Nearby are Cella Road and Kent Road, slightly older subdivisions which also helped to establish the spacious and expensive character of later development. The survey area includes many architect-designed houses of the 1920's and 1930's, many of which are distinguished in execution, and all of which contribute greatly to our understanding of trends and accomplishments at the top of the architectural profession during that time.

Since its incorporation in 1936, the City of Ladue has kept excellent records of building activities. These are, however, keyed to the names of present owners, and one goal of the present survey was to provide references to these records by street address. Because of the continuing employment in Ladue of architects of distinction, these names have been included wherever possible. The Village of Ladue, the predecessor of the City in this survey area, began to issue building permits in 1932, and these have also been retained. Prior to that date, however, and beginning in 1907, the County government issued building permits for the survey area. These documents have been destroyed, but they were reported in summary by the legal publication, the St. Louis Daily Record, which survives in microfilm. The reports of the Daily Record did not always note the architect, however, nor are the descriptions of location always sufficient to identify the building described. Since the Daily Record is not indexed, permits can only be found by a day-by-day search. Even at that, permits do not always appear, particularly for houses in the mid-1920's. Where building permits have not been found, buildings have been approximately dated by comparing land ownership records (contained in deeds) with city and county directories and the Social Register.

The handful of buildings in the survey area constructed prior to 1907 has been dated by locating deeds for the property. Since 1878 deeds have been recorded by the St. Louis County Recorder in Clayton. Prior to that time St. Louis City and County were in the same county jurisdiction, and those deeds remain in the St. Louis City Hall. Frequently deeds can be more easily located by reference to wills and other probate records, and St. Louis County is fortunate in having excellent probate records on microfiche. Atlases of St. Louis County were prepared periodically throughout the nineteenth century, and these provide benchmarks to land ownership. Atlases date from 1838, 1847, 1862, 1870, 1878, 1893, and 1909. The 1878 and 1909 atlases include indications for buildings.

Most of the residents of Ladue over the years have been distinguished by their high positions in St. Louis business, and many have been members of old and prominent families. For purposes of this survey, however,

biographical references have for the most part been limited to the builders of the houses. St. Louis is fortunate in having an extensive biographical resource in the necrology file of the Missouri Historical Society. It is primarily an index of newspaper obituaries but also includes biographical information from many other sources. Where such data were not available, an indication of professional association was obtained from city and country directories.

Ladue is poor in printed historical references, and the current fiftieth-anniversary celebration of the incorporation of the city has been the occasion for an effort to collect historical data. A major publication should be forthcoming later in 1986. This survey is greatly indebted to the book committee for sharing its information, which includes transcribed interviews, privately owned photographs, newspaper references, and municipal documents. In particular, Charlene Bry and Mayor Edith Spink were unstinting in their generosity.

The survey that follows is arranged by street name and address. Basic information is listed for each building, beginning with the name of the present owner and the 9-digit locator number. This number is assigned by the county tax assessor and provides a ready means of access to such data as the current deed, owner's address, and assessed valuation. The legal description of the property is given where it can be concisely stated; several properties in the survey area are described solely in terms of their location in the section. The survey area is entirely within section's 7, 8, 17, and 18, Township 45 North Range 6 East. Where known, the house is dated, and the contractor and architect are named. Finally available building permits are given. Individual inventory forms have been prepared for the more significant buildings, and in three districts where the entire district appeared to be significant, inventory forms have been prepared for all the buildings in the district. These are Picardy Lane, the St. Louis Country Club, and Upper Ladue Road.

Copies of this report will be available at the St. Louis County Department of Parks & Recreation offices and at the Ladue City Hall.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The survey area is bounded on the north by Ladue Road, on the south by Clayton Road and Conway Road which begins at this point, on the east by Price Road, and on the west by Warson Road. The boundary roads are the oldest in the survey area and have some of the oldest houses as well as the most mixed development in terms of date and use. The only commercial property in the survey area is the gas station at the corner of Clayton and Price Roads. Institutional uses include the John Burroughs School on Price Road, Ladue Junior High School on Clayton Road, and two churches, the Georgian Revival Lutheran Church and the Romanesque Catholic Church Annunziata, both on Clayton Road. On Clayton Road are also two fire stations and the City Hall.

All the other streets in the survey area extend from the peripheral ones into the interior, but none goes the whole way through. This broken street pattern assures little through traffic and helps to maintain the quiet atmosphere on which Ladue prides itself. All the residential lots are spacious, many being an acre or more in size; the smallest lots slightly under one-half acre, are on Picardy Lane, which is, however, one of the more prestigious addresses. Most lots are shaded by large old trees, and particularly on the peripheral road many houses are completely screened from the street by shrubbery.

HISTORY

The City of Ladue is currently compiling a general history in celebration of its 50th anniversary. The following history has the more modest intention of providing a context for the inventory information contained in the following pages, highlighting some of the findings of the study.

Through the nineteenth century the area now encompassed by Ladue was rural land of the quietest kind, a series of small and scattered farms. Several farmhouses survive in the survey area, including one associated with Peter Ladue himself. It is the house at 9450 Ladue Road, which is one of two properties that Peter Ladue, a St. Louis businessman, owned in this area. The road built in 1850 to connect his farms with Old Bonhomme Road to the east was named for him, and the village and later city were named for the road.

Since Ladue sold his property in 1864 to Charles Philip Mueller, it is not clear whether the mid-nineteenth century cottage which survives in part was built by Ladue or Mueller. The house has been greatly altered, as have most of the other nineteenth-century farms. 810 Warson Road was built by the Luedloff but remodeled in the 1920's. The house at 9375 Clayton Road and the Ganail House at 9465 Clayton Road have also been completely transformed in appearance. The house built by Adam Seibert at 9725 Conway Road has been incorporated as one wing of a more modern structure, and it retains a semblance of its original appearance. Seibert, another small farmer, died in 1878 but his widow Mary remained here for decades afterward, and his many children settled in the vicinity. Christoph Fey built 600 Warson Road in 1907, according to a building permit discovered in the St. Louis Daily Record. It is a relatively unaltered example of the simplified Queen Anne, sometimes called the Princess Anne Style. The most striking example of nineteenth-century domestic architecture in Ladue is the house at 9966 Old Chatham Road, a one-story, 5-bay structure with attractive gingerbread trim. This house was moved to its present location in 1975, and its earlier history is not known.

The foundation of Clayton as a new County seat in 1878 did little to stimulate development in Ladue during the nineteenth-century, as Clayton itself remained very small. The area first found itself in the path of suburban development about 1910, especially after the 04 streetcar line was extended west to the site of the present city hall along a line parallel to Clayton Road. The first evidence of the attraction that the rolling landscape of Ladue might have for wealthy St. Louisans was the Mahlon Wallace estate, "Amagraja," built between 1904 and 1908. Wallace was a nephew of Robert Brookings, who had engineered the move of Washington University to the present Hilltop Campus at Skinker and Forsyth and who knew most of the influential and socially prominent people in St. Louis. Wallace's decision to move to Price Road no doubt influenced other similarly inclined people in his circle. His house is also important in the context of St. Louis architecture; it is a unique representative of the white neoclassical style of the pavilions that had been erected in Forest Park by many of the states and foreign countries during the Louisiana Purchase Exposition.

The first suburban subdivisions were Cella Road and Kent Road (Lancashire Gardens Subdivision) laid out in 1910 and 1911. Cella's subdivision had only 6 lots, and only 4 houses were built there, including the Samuel Plant House, which has already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Lancashire Gardens had more lots but initially attracted only a few more builders than Cella. All these houses were spacious, and most were designed by leading St. Louis architects. From this early date the Georgian style was frequently adopted, and its popularity has continued to the present. As the century progressed, rambling, relatively informal plans became more popular, a trend to which even the seemingly formal Georgian was adapted.

The move of the St. Louis Country Club from Clayton assured Ladue's status as a desirable residential community. The St. Louis Country Club was only one of many golf clubs of the era, but it was one of the most expensive and generally considered the most prestigious. The Country Club grounds were designed in 1912 by Henry Wright, the landscape designer, planner and architect who later became internationally famous for this advocacy of new towns and moderate-income housing. His design for Radburn, New Jersey, was especially celebrated. His designs of 1910 for Brentmoor Park and Forest Ridge in Clayton have been listed in the National Register. Like them, the Country Club design exhibits the same principles later applied at Radburn, but in an upper-income context. Housing sites are located on the periphery of the central open space. Although all the lots were sold as soon as the grounds were platted, no houses had been built by the time the club moved into its Mauran, Russell & Crowell clubhouse in 1914, and few appeared until the mid-1920's.

By that time the property to the west was also being developed. Ladue Lane and Apple Tree Lane both began as private easements connecting lots that were being carved out of the surrounding farmland. Upper Ladue Road was laid out by Ralph and Lucy Bixby, but several of its lots incorporated parts of adjacent farms too. Boyle O. Rodes, whose house was at 8 Upper Ladue Road, acquired a total of 45 acres and laid out his own private road to the Country Club; part of this is now the west spur of Barnes Road. Mrs. Rodes recalled the mud of the unpaved lanes in those years, the essentially rural way of life, and the many trips on the 04 or in private autos to Clayton and the City of St. Louis.

The only subdivision in this district that was promoted by a real estate company in the conventional suburban way was Picardy Lane. Exermont, as the subdivision was called, was developed by Norman O. Comfort, later in partnership with Gunther Meier. They not only sold lots, but also built many houses for sale. Their staff architect, Dan Mullen, was particularly partial to the Tudor Revival style but also worked in Georgian, French Eclectic and other period styles. Meier and Comfort kept up a continual stream of publicity about their projects, which also included Clermont just to the west of this study area, but after the stock market crash of 1929 even this was not enough. Their mortgage on 53 Picardy Lane was foreclosed, and many of the vacant lots remained so until after World War II.

A village of Ladue was incorporated in 1928, partly to prevent annexation by the City of Clayton and partly to reduce insurance costs by establishing a fire department. The village encompassed the present study area plus the Log Cabin and Bogey Clubs to the south of Clayton Road and the subdivision north of Ladue Road. The combines firehouse and village hall was built at the end of the 04 line on ground that had been occupied by the Dean Sisters Restaurant. It was designed by the architectural firm of Study and Farrar. Benedict Farrar lived in the adjacent village of McKnight, and after the two villages merges with the village of Deer Creek in 1936 to form the City of Ladue, he served as Building Commissioner until 1965.

In the Village of Ladue, planning took precedence even over police protection (which at first was considered a private matter). The village hired the nationally-known planner Harland Bartholomew to prepare a zoning ordinance, and his work has remained the basis for planning in Ladue to the present. His very spacious residential zoning had most of the present study area restricted to minimum 1.8-acre lots. Ladue also established an architectural review board, which has reinforced the generally conservative taste of the community.

In contrast to many other parts of the country, construction continued in Ladue throughout the 1930's. Houses tended to be smaller and stylistically less rigorous than earlier ones, but there were exceptions, including notably the Morrill and Sunnen houses on Warson Road. Contemporary trends in design made their appearance very tentatively in Ladue, in this survey area not until after World War II. In the post-war era, however, Ladue was notable for its support of William Bernoudy and Edward Mutrux, partners whose designs reflect their admiration for Frank Lloyd Wright. Examples of their work include 745 and 821 Cella Road, 801 Kent Road, 6 and 15 Upper Barnes Road, and 9501 Clayton Road.

The increasing demand for a Ladue address has resulted in many new houses being built in the study area; within the limits of the zoning ordinance less than ten lots remain unbuilt. The mixture of new with older houses somewhat compromises the historical integrity of several of the streets of the study area, but the high quality of the period design of many individual houses makes them worthy of preservation.

LADUE SURVEY AREA

Apple Tree Lane

Barnes Road

Casa Audlon: - See St. Louis Country Club

Cella Road

Clayton Road

Conway Road

High Downs

Kent Road

Ladue Lane

Laughing Lake: See 803 and 805 South Price Road

Mayfair

Old Chatham

Picardy Lane

Price Road, South

St. Louis Country Club

Braeburn
Foreway
Glen Eagles
Pine Valley
St. Andrews
Sunningdale

Tirrill Farms

Upper Barnes Road

Upper Ladue Road

Warson Road, South