

CLARKSVILLE, SURVEYING THE PAST -- PHASE I

FINAL REPORT

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Clarksville was laid out to take advantage of its riverfront setting, and it still does so, although in a way different from the one envisioned by the founders. U. S. Lock and Dam No. 24 was located directly in front of the town in 1936, and as a byproduct of that project, much of the riverfront has been landscaped as a park, in which the tracks of the Burlington Railroad (formerly the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) scarcely show. The town is unusual in preserving its business street directly fronting the river. Many river towns in Missouri once were so constructed, but because of economic changes and repeated flooding, most have now retreated to more distant situations.

The surrounding hills penetrate to within a block of the river in the north part of the town. The Pinnacle, the big hill on which the skylift now operates, makes Missouri, Walnut and Mulberry Streets legal fictions. Two blocks of Mississippi Street and several of Washington have never been opened because of their steepness, and Lewis and Howard, though open, are remarkably hilly. Farther south, parts of Fourth and Fifth Streets are also imaginary, while to the west of Fifth Street south of Main Cross Roberts Hill (pronounced with a long "o") rises. South of the original town, however, the ground opens out into a larger plain closed at the south by Forgey's Bluff.

The town plan is a typical American grid, with the blocks turned toward the river and at an angle to the points of the compass. Each block has a 12-foot alley and 8 lots measuring 60 by 110 feet. Block numbers are not used, but lots

are numbered consecutively, starting at the south end of First or Front Street. The original plat filed in 1826 had 228 lots extending west to Fourth Street. The proprietors apparently thought that Main Cross Street would be the center of town, because they reserved 8 lots at its intersection with Third "for such public purposes as the Trustees or other body having power in said town" should determine. Although a public square was plainly intended, it was not shown as such on the plat. Even now, the streets are opened only part way around the square, and the official city map still shows Main Cross and Third meeting at right angles. Eventually the square was leased to the School Board for a public school, and after that was demolished in 1961, a medical center was built there.

In the meantime, however, the business center of town had rapidly established itself two blocks north of Main Cross on Howard, presumably because the elevation was slightly higher.

The street names in the original town seem to be drawn from several different naming systems, including trees, rivers, and states. From north to south, they are Mulberry, Walnut, Missouri, Mississippi, Lewis, Howard, Washington, Main Cross, Virginia, Smith, Kentucky, and Tennessee. First Street was also called Front Street or Water Street. Although it was the primary commercial street of the town, its functions were limited by the fact that it did not tie directly into the main roads leading out of town. It is blocked at the south by the railroad right-of-way, and to the north it trickles out into a gravel path. For through traffic the more important street was Second, which was sometimes called Main in the nineteenth century and in more recent times Highway 79. It has been realigned through the blocks south of the original town to make it tie in more directly with the rural portion of the highway.

To the west, the street pattern is similarly imperfectly joined to the regional road system. Both Mississippi and Kentucky Streets continue for a short distance out of town and then terminate. Main Cross once extended farther than it does now. The most important route into Calumet Township, County Highway W, comes into town as an extension of Fourth Street, from which the traveler must diverge onto one of the cross streets to reach the center of town.

The blocks between Fourth and Fifth Streets were added to the town plan in 1851, increasing the total number of lots to 197. Benjamin P. Clifford, one of the town's most active citizens, surveyed a Western Addition in 1867 (12 lots on the west side of Fifth Street between Main Cross and Kentucky) and a larger Southern Addition the next year (50 lots south of Tennessee). Both were filed in 1869. James D. Davis added another 22 lots to the northwest in 1867. Clarksville has seen only one further subdivision since that time, the modern Glenwood Subdivision, a suburban-looking loop of 13 houses to the south of town.

Factories and other large industries appeared all along the waterfront in the nineteenth century, but today the only industrial buildings in Clarksville are the Apple Shed, an apple storage building dating from the 1930's located at the south edge of the original town, and a more modern factory, recently closed, located at the south city limits. Middleton and Fern's Blacksmith Shop, at 302 Kentucky, dates from the late 1850's; it has for years been used as a plumbing and hardware shop, but the building is a rare survival of nineteenth-century industrial buildings.

The row of one and two-story commercial buildings along First Street has been drastically shortened by fires, floods, and urban renewal, but the blocks on either side of Howard still give some idea of the original. The first block of

Howard is all commercial (with the city hall occupying a former bank), and south of Howard, the east side of Second Street has commercial buildings extending a few doors. North of Howard, the east side of Second Street is largely the preserve of the Duvall family, who have an automotive store, gas station, motel and restaurant there. This commercial strip terminates with the new tourist center completed in 1987, which has a broad view of the river and dam.

Clarksville has eight churches and one former church building, of which five are architecturally or historically significant. The medical center and the public library are the only other notable public buildings, as there are no schools within the city limits.

Most of Clarksville's buildings are residential, and they range in quality from its eight well-built though not palatial Italianate brick houses of the mid-nineteenth century to very modest frame cottages. A fair number of houses have been constructed since World War II, particularly in the aforementioned Glenwood Subdivision and a scattering at the north end of town, where they appear both on the original town lots and between Fourth and Fifth on Luke Street, which is really a continuation of Missouri Street. Most of the older frame houses have been more or less altered over the years, but a few substantially retain their historic appearance, while others retain enough of their original fabric to make restoration feasible.

HISTORY

Clarksville is located on a tract of land that was granted by the U. S. Government to John Miller and Richard Graham. The U. S. Certificate, number 586, was signed by President James Monroe on November 1, 1823. The whole tract of 121.09 acres constituted the north fractional half of Section 16, Township 53 North, Range 1 East. Both Miller and Graham lived in St. Louis County. John Miller served as governor of Missouri from 1826 to 1832. Major Richard Graham owned much land in the neighborhood of Florissant, inherited from his father-in-law, millionaire John Mullanphy. The two were joined by Robert Wash, another St. Louisan, in platting the town of Clarksville, which was named for Missouri's territorial governor William Clark. The plat is dated June 18, 1826, and was filed with Pike County's Recorder of Deeds on July 31.

These events postdate the actual settlement of Clarksville by several years. Most histories give the founding of Clarksville as 1817 or 1818, and abstracts reviewed in this study record sales of lots by Miller and Graham as early as 1819, the year Pike County was formed. That would have been four years before they owned the land and seven years before they had a legal description of it.

None of the earliest houses mentioned in histories of Clarksville survives, and very few can be dated to before 1850, when the census found 300 inhabitants who must have had forty or more houses. In the meantime the proprietorship of the town had changed from absentee to resident. John Miller died in 1846, leaving his gold watch chain and seal to Richard Graham. The next year his executors, who included William Clark's nephew John O'Fallon, conveyed all Miller's surviving interest in his land grant to Samuel Pepper, Benjamin P. Clifford, and John S. Luke. This included unsold lots in the town and also a

interest in the land in the north half of Section 16 that had not been included in the town. Pepper sold his interest to Clifford in April of 1848, and that November Clifford and Luke were able to acquire Richard Graham's interests as well.

The Luke family was prominent for several generations in Clarksville, but it was Benjamin Patton Clifford who became Clarksville's most important citizen. Born in Logan County, Kentucky in 1817, he began his career as a steamboat operator, but opened a store in Clarksville in 1846. In 1857 he entered banking, and the Clifford Banking Company is still in existence. Clifford's fame gave rise to the story that most of the best houses in town were built by him for his children. This inventory has been able to demonstrate that most of these houses were actually built by other leading businessmen but later sold to Clifford or members of his family. The association of these houses with Clarksville's early businesses is important because the actual mills and factories no longer exist.

Daniel Douglas, who built 101 South Second Street, was the co-owner of the Douglas and Sparrow Saw Mill located just north of town. He sold the house in 1862 to William Elliott, who became a partner in the mill at the same time. Benjamin Hughs made in lumbering the money that built 109 North Third Street. George Turner, who built 101 North Fourth Street, was also involved in lumbering, while Caleb Pharr, who bought the house in 1870, manufactured barrels, hoops and staves, the town's biggest employer. Pharr's partner Lucius Haywood built the house at 111 Main Cross. The house at 301 South Third Street appears to have been built by John Williamson, who was associated with his brothers in a woolen mill.

The 1870's and 1880's were Clarksville's heyday. The population grew from 300 in 1850 to 573 in 1860, to 1,152 in 1870 and 1,493 in 1880. According to the history of Clarksville included in the recently rediscovered Hawley's Clarksville City Directory for 1875-1876 (Jacksonville, Illinois: Hawley, Martin & Seaton, 1875), Clarksville's growth was retarded because of the high price at which the original owners held it and also because the railroad was never properly utilized. Population began to decline after 1880:

1890	1,186
1900	843
1910	918
1920	729
1930	739
1940	879
1950	702
1960	638
1970	668
1980	585

In the long decades of decline, however, houses and other notable buildings continued to be erected. The retail business district was largely reconstructed in the aftermath of fires in 1892, 1901, and 1906. A fire in the lumberyard destroyed the entire block bounded by First, Second, Main Cross, and Virginia in 1923. The new lumberyard built to replace the destroyed one is remarkably well preserved, an unusual commercial survival from that era.

The temporary increase seen in 1940 was the result of construction of the lock and dam on the Mississippi River. People still remember that the workmen and their families occupied every available space. A reminder of that period of temporary prosperity is Grace Episcopal Church at Third and Howard, a fanciful Georgian Revival design by Nagel and Dunn. The improvements during this period also included the riverfront park, which gives Clarksville one of the finest settings of any city along this stretch of the Mississippi, a feature taken advantage of by Spiro Kostoff in his recent television series, "America by Design."

SURVEY RESULTS

The initial Research Design for the Clarksville Survey called for preparation of 125 inventory forms. The purpose was to record all the potentially significant structures within the city limits and to establish a data base for determining the boundaries of the proposed Clarksville Historic District. As the inventory progressed, the decision was made to include those buildings less than fifty years old that were found within the potential district boundaries while excluding them when they were in peripheral locations. As a result, about 160 inventory forms were prepared in total.

The dating of these buildings was based primarily on title abstracts. Many property owners generously loaned the survey committee their title documents. Other abstracts were compiled by the volunteers directly from the records of the Pike County Recorder of Deeds in the Court House in Bowling Green. This procedure resulted in building histories far more accurate than any previously compiled, but it had certain shortcomings. Most deeds do not refer specifically to buildings. Evidence for the construction of a building is found in the sudden increase in value of the property, and often this could be substantiated by comparison with a Sanborn map -- the earliest is 1886 -- or the one city directory, dating from 1875. In other cases, however, the value of the building, for example, a one-story cottage, was so low that the value of the property was not substantially increased. Some lots seem to have had more than one building in the course of their history, with a resulting fluctuation in values. Stylistic evidence is often not much help either, since most houses in Clarksville are vernacular rather than high style, and the simpler houses are the ones most likely to have been altered. Nevertheless, given the limited research sources available, the dates and attributions given in this inventory are the best possible. Recommendations are given in the following section for the compilation of new research sources that could result in the revision of

some of these building histories.

Buildings have been named for their first owners where possible. Hyphenated names represent the first two owners or the first owner and a later one who substantially modified the building. Similarly, building histories have concentrated on early owners. For most properties a full or nearly full chain of title has been compiled in the form of a title abstract summary that will be available to interested persons, probably through the public library.

The inventory sheets have been arranged by street number, first north, then south, with numbered streets arranged numerically, followed by named streets arranged alphabetically. Clarksville is unusual in having the lots of the original town numbered consecutively throughout rather than by block, and title abstract summaries will be kept by lot number. In contrast to street numbers, however, lot numbers are impossible to guess without reference to a map, and for this reason street numbers seemed a more appropriate system for the inventory forms.

The complete inventory will be on file at the city hall and the public library, and each property owner will receive a copy of the form for his property. The indexed photo negatives and the title abstracts will be on file in the public library.

The recommendation of this survey is that a Clarksville Historic District be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. The survey did discover a number of buildings that were outstanding in themselves and might be listed in the National Register individually. One house in Clarksville has already

been so listed: the Clifford-Wirick House, built about 1878 at 105 South Second Street. It is a little-altered example of vernacular Victorian architecture, the stylistically neutral mode of most of its contemporaries in Clarksville, and the restoration carried out after it was listed gives an indication of how attractive others like it could be. The Clifford-Wirick House is, however, primarily significant for its associations with two leaders of Clarksville's nineteenth-century industries. Since with one exception all the industrial buildings of the period have been demolished, most of Clarksville's economic history can now best be seen in the houses its entrepreneurs left behind.

Of the individual structures eligible for listing in the National Register, the most outstanding is undoubtedly "Landmark," the c. 1850 frame house at 203 South First Street. Only one story in height, it is one of the gems of Greek Revival architecture in the state.

Eight brick houses in transitional Greek-Revival-Italianate style immediately strike the visitor's eye:

Hezekiah Elgin House, 209 South First, c. 1845

Daniel Douglas House, 101 South Second, 1859-1862

Benjamin Hughs House, 109 North Third, 1860

B. P. Clifford House, 301 South Third, c. 1860

Turner-Pharr House, 101 North Fourth, c. 1867

William Prewitt House, 214 Howard, 1868

Lucius Haywood House, 111 Main Cross, c. 1866

Owsley-Drake House, 212 Washington, c. 1860

A few later 19th-century frame houses are also worthy of note, most particularly the Pendleton-Carroll House, 404 South Second Street, constructed in 1874. Recently restored as a bed-and-breakfast establishment, it is a model of how frame houses can be modernized internally without in any way compromising their exterior character.

Bryant Chapel AME, the former Northern Methodist Church at 309 Smith Street, is the most historic of Clarksville churches, dating from 1866 and reflecting the austere meeting-house architecture of the first part of the century. It is also the most endangered, having been sold by its congregation in 1982 and now boarded up. Presbyterian and Disciples of Christ churches, both dating from 1886, and the Methodist Church of 1907 are all good examples of their kind. Grace Episcopal Church, built in 1940 to designs of Nagel & Dunn, is the most distinguished building built in Clarksville in the past fifty years and probably ranks high in all of northeast Missouri.

The one industrial building is the Middleton and Fern Blacksmith Shop at 302 Kentucky, built 1857-1858, which has been a plumbing shop since 1913. While this was not one of the big industries in Clarksville, it is a rare survival from horse-and-buggy days.

The business district could probably be listed in the National Register on its own. Its significant buildings form continuous street frontages on both sides of Howard and from 107 South First to 115 North First. Most of the storefronts on Howard Street are intact, and those on First have alterations of primarily superficial nature. It should be noted, however, that only 101 and 103 North

First may date from before the Civil War, while the entire south half of the district was rebuilt after the disastrous fire of 1901.

The LaCrosse Lumber Company, a complex of buildings at 301 South First Street, should also be mentioned. It was rebuilt after the fire of 1923 leveled the whole block, and it has not been significantly altered since then.

The Clarksville survey has been outstanding in the number of citizens who have volunteered their time and resources to its completion. They are listed below:

Joann Barnes	Louise Jenkins
Melvin Barnes	Geri McClusky
Helen Barron	Jamie McIlroy
Katie Darnton	Helen Mirick
Jack Darnton	Martha Pope
Emily Dockery	Florence Roberts
Bud Estes	Alice Rodhouse
Lou Estes	Sally Sterne
Marge Gray	Janet Stubblebine
Ralph Huesing	Shirley Underwood
Vernon Hughes	Betty Zimmerman

RECOMMENDATIONS

This inventory confirms the impression that Clarksville has made on visitors for years: that it has a number of outstanding houses and that it is in its totality an exceptionally picturesque river town. Several of its buildings are probably individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and a major portion of the town could be listed as an historic district. On the negative side, post-war buildings intrude into the historic context of almost every block and the great majority of frame houses have modern siding or other inappropriate alterations. These liabilities underscore the need for sensitive control of future building activities in Clarksville, and the city has courageously responded by establishing a historic commission. This commission now has the option of establishing a larger historic district or districts than would be eligible for listing in the National Register at present, but that through careful management may have its historic character improved over a period of years.

Any Clarksville historic district that goes beyond the business district will encompass at least a few buildings less than fifty years old and older buildings whose historical integrity has been compromised by insensitive alterations. To draw the district in such a way that it extended the full five blocks south from Howard Street to Middleton & Fern's on Kentucky Street would require the inclusion of so many historic but altered buildings that the whole nomination might be compromised. I therefore recommend a smaller National Register district with separate nominations for the Bryant Chapel and the Blacksmith Shop. The district would include the following street frontages:

113-115 North First to 301 South First;
 119-121 North Second to 404 South Second;
 109 North Third to the corner of Virginia, including 209 Virginia, but
 excluding the west side of Third from #107 South to 215 South;
 101 and 102 North Fourth.

The local historic district, by contrast, should include as many historic buildings as possible where there remains a potential for restoration.

Inclusion in the district would in no way obligate a property owner to undertake restoration, but it would insure that such repairs and improvements as the owner might wish to make are in the direction of historic accuracy rather than further mutilation. Such a district would include the following:

113-115 North First to 309 South First, and including 102 and 104-106 Virginia;
 119-121 North Second to 509 South Second;
 109 North Third to Kentucky, including 280 and 302 Kentucky;
 211 North Fourth to Howard;
 503 South Fourth to 509 South Fourth, and including 309 Smith and 314 Kentucky.

Several recommendations need to be made regarding other matters:

Business District

Many of the buildings in the business district are in very marginal use, and two of them are near collapse. Professional assistance is needed to determine realistic income-producing uses for these buildings, without which historical and design studies will be useless.

Building Restoration

Historic district ordinances are essentially negative sanctions, telling property owners what they can't do. If funds can be found, Clarksville could

take a more positive approach by making grants and loans to encourage restoration. For example, the storefront of the Piker Building at 107 South First Street could be restored and the ridiculous vertical striped siding removed. Similarly the asbestos siding on the cottages at 107 North Third and 503 South Fourth could be removed to bring out the architectural significance of these unusual Gothic Revival structures. Some buildings may need to be purchased outright to prevent their collapse or simply to hold them until a suitable buyer can be found. Bryant Chapel and 113-115 First Street are examples.

Research

Several important sources of information on the history of Clarksville remained largely untapped in this survey because they have not yet been put into a usable form. This effort could be a valuable contribution by the active local historical society.

1. The 1850 census has been transcribed and indexed. Similar work should be done with all the censuses for Calumet Township, ideally from 1820 through 1880. This would tell who lived here when, how old they were, who they lived with, and sometimes their occupations.

2. Clarksville was served by the Sentinal newspaper from 1867 to 1950, and during some years there were two competing papers. Copies of these papers may be at the State Historical Society in Columbia or at the public libraries at Clarksville or Louisiana. They should be systematically searched for information pertinent to the building history of the town, including construction news, fires, obituaries, and advertisements giving locations of businesses. A similar project in Hannibal was so successful that it has been microfilmed by the State Historical Society to serve as a reference in Columbia. Such information would be invaluable in furthering the new, more accurate history

Clarksville that has been begun in this inventory.

3. Photographs of old-time Clarksville were infrequently seen in the course of this inventory, but a few were very useful. The local historical society should begin a collection of old photos or of good quality modern copies of old photos. Such a collection would be helpful to historians and to restorationists and could serve to inform the decisions of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the appropriateness of building changes that come before its review.

Esley Hamilton

August 24, 1987

CLARKSVILLE, SURVEYING THE PAST -- PHASE I

CHECKLIST

NORTH FIRST STREET

101
103
105
107-109
111
113-115
115
401

SOUTH FIRST STREET

101
103
105
107
117
203
205
207
209
301
309
503
505
507

NORTH SECOND STREET

101
111
115
116
119-121
120
200
206

SOUTH SECOND STREET

101
105
106
107
109
110
112
116
202
203
205
206
207
209
303
305
306
307
308
310
401
404
409
410
500
502
503
505
507
509
601
610
614
710

NORTH THIRD STREET

107
108
109
110
204
205
208

SOUTH THIRD STREET

101
106
107
108
109
211
215
300
307
406
407
408
409
411
501
508
605
608
610

NORTH FOURTH STREET

101
102
106
107
110
111
204
205
207
208
209
210
211

SOUTH FOURTH STREET

104
208
505
506
507
508
509
606
608
804

SOUTH FIFTH STREET

405
406

HOWARD STREET

107
108-110
111
112-114
116
118
209
210
213
214
407
409

KENTUCKY STREET

101
105
209
250
280
302
314
315
413

LEWIS STREET

408

MAIN CROSS STREET

111

112

401

Fifth &

MISSISSIPPI STREET

301

302

305

309

515

SMITH STREET

210

211

309

310

410

TENNESSEE STREET

301

311

VIRGINIA STREET

102

104-106

209

407

WASHINGTON STREET

212

213

401