

**HISTORIC SURVEY OF**

**CLAVERACH PARK**

**Clayton, St. Louis County, MO**

**Completed April 2008 through March 2014**

**Survey No. SL-AS-050**

**Survey Report Prepared**

**March 14, 2014**

**by**

**Karen Bode Baxter, Preservation Specialist**

**5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109**

**Based upon Work of Neighborhood Volunteers**

**with the assistance of Esley Hamilton, St. Louis County Historian**

**2008-2014**

## **HISTORIC SURVEY OF**

### **CLAVERACH PARK**

#### **Clayton, St. Louis County, MO**

Claverach Park, platted in 1923 and developed between 1923 and 1965, retains a very high degree of historic integrity. The neighborhood appears to be eligible for listing as an historic district, utilizing its original subdivision boundaries (between Wydown Blvd to Clayton Road on the north and south and bounded by the properties facing Ridgemoor and Crestwood Drives). There are 210 primary buildings in the neighborhood and only the newer homes (6 buildings), built from 1982 to present day would be noncontributing. There are 49 detached garages associated with the various properties and it appears that all but 4 would be contributing secondary structures. The areas of significance for the district could include Criterion C: Architecture, because of the large number of noted St. Louis architects who designed homes in the neighborhood as well as for its collection of early twentieth century revival house designs (primarily Georgian, Spanish, Tudor Revival, French Eclectic) as well Modernistic design, but also potentially for its association with Julius Pitzman as what appears to be his last subdivision design before his death in 1923. Claverach Park also appears to be eligible under Criterion A: Community Planning and Development, both as an important part of the history of private place development in St. Louis County as well as for its part in the development of suburban residential developments in Clayton, which serves as the county seat for St. Louis County.

#### **Research Methodology**

This survey was completed over a period of 6 years by Claverach Park neighborhood volunteers (principally Michelle Harris and Jim Sherby) with the assistance of Esley Hamilton, St. Louis County Historian and students from his Spring 2008 Historic Preservation Class, School of Architecture and Urban Design, Washington University. In the spring of 2008, the students in the Historic Preservation Class utilized St. Louis County tax records, plat maps of the subdivision, and historic fire insurance maps to create the historic district base map which includes the names of architects as well as the building outlines. Esley Hamilton provided building permit file data to the neighborhood volunteers to utilize in dating the buildings (which he had compiled before St. Louis County destroyed the original files). Esley Hamilton also provided the biographical sketches for the architects who designed houses in the neighborhood. Volunteers photographed every home and garage in 2008 and those photographs were compiled by address into Word documents by volunteers as time allowed beginning in 2008 and completed in 2013. Streetscape photographs were taken by Michelle Harris in 2009 and retaken in March 2014.

Jim Sherby and other volunteers under his direction created charts to identify by address the basic information on each property (first owner's name, architect's name, contractor's name,

dates as well as dates and names associated with any additions) and wrote individual building descriptions utilizing these permit files and city directory research as well as other primary research information that he gathered. In the process of researching the history of the neighborhood, Jim Sherby gathered primary source documents (deeds, photographs, maps) from prior owners and developers of the neighborhood, which resulted in the preparation of a published book, *From New Madrid to Claverach; How an Earthquake Spawned a St. Louis Suburb*, published in 2009, detailing the developmental history of the property that includes what is now the subdivision of Claverach Park.

At the request of Michelle Harris, neighborhood resident and Clayton City Alderwoman, Karen Bode Baxter, Preservation Specialist was engaged to finish up the survey requirements to satisfy the new requirement of the State Historic Preservation Office for proposed historic district nominations. Karen Bode Baxter and her assistant, Sheila Findall compiled the survey documents, assembling the photos and maps, preparing this survey report and transferring information into the individual inventory forms (Access database)—in other words copying the information from the draft Section 7 of the National Register of Historic Places nomination prepared by Jim Sherby into individual inventory forms—compiling everything as a culmination of the survey project.

### **Claverach Property Background**

Claverach Farm was a large farmstead developed on land claimed with New Madrid Certificate 465 in a portion of St. Louis County. In 1835, Dr. John Kennedy, a very successful frontier doctor and gentleman farmer in St. Louis County) and his wife Jane Kidd Kennedy (and 4 children) moved onto the 150-acre property that they had just purchased. That same year, they built a 1.5 story brick house and separate kitchen building on the property which was in an area that was still being settled, with few neighbors on surrounding properties. They sold the property in 1854 to Benjamin Franklin Thomas, an attorney, who went through the effort to research and clear up the title to the property and he retired with his family to the property to farm it full-time but even by the mid-1850s, the area was remote, only occupied by farmland and a few distant farmhouses, but he gave the land the name used today, calling the farm Claverach, a Welsh word for field of clover (which grew profusely on the farm). It was one of his daughters, Catharine who married John L. Boland and by 1885 the property and house had transferred to the Catharine Boland. John and Catharine Boland were highly respected among the Catholic, business and charitable circles of St. Louis and Boland had a highly successful wholesale book and stationary business into a major supply business that employed traveling salesmen and catalogs that served the entire Midwest, South and West from the downtown St. Louis warehouse and offices. By 1890, with their extensive farm operation growing family and business success, the Bolands built a huge 3-story, brick Queen Anne “addition” in front of the original small 1835 house.

## Claverach Subdivision History

After years of watching encroaching suburban development in St. Louis County, the widow, Catharine Boland sold the majority of the Claverach Farm property in 1921 to the Moorlands Land Company (passing it through her own development company, Claverach Realty and Investment Company, Inc.) for \$650,000 (about \$2000 per acre), but the Catharine continued to reside in the house, with the surrounding 3 acres creating the oval that was originally named Boland Drive (renamed Crestwood Drive). She would live to see the subdivision platted, but not developed since she died January 25, 1923. Her home would be dismantled in 1925 and the oval replatted into 12 additional house lots known as Crestwood Circle.

Originally named Moorlands Park by these developers, they engaged Julius Pitzman, noted surveyor and topographical engineer, to lay out and design the subdivision—a design which was probably his last design since he died shortly after finishing the design in 1923. It followed the contour of the land, using north and south streets to connect to Wydown Boulevard and Clayton Road, but it was designed in the St. Louis tradition of private places and gated communities. Pitzman had designed many of the most exclusive private places in the St. Louis metropolitan area during his career, including: Vandeventer Place (1870), Clifton Heights (1885), Windermere Place (1895, Forest Park Addition-Portland Place and Westmoreland Place (1888), Compton Heights (1889-90), Parkview (1905), and Wydown Forest (1922).

The Moorlands Park development initially focused on large homes individually designed by some of St. Louis' leading architects and builders. Attached at the back of this report is the draft section of Section 8 for the National Register nomination which has the biographical sketches provided by Esley Hamilton for the architects engaged in the neighborhood's home designs. This (provided by Esley Hamilton). This section lists the addresses of known designs for these architects with Claverach Park.

Between 1924-and 1928, 58 homes were built and in December 1929 the trustees changed the name from Moorlands Park to Claverach Park. This helped distinguish this exclusive private place development with its exclusive covenants and building requirements from the area to the west which was known as the Moorlands Addition, where the single family homeowners came into conflict with lot holders at the western end (near Hanley Road) because of slow sales (see the National Register nomination for *Moorlands Addition Apartment District*). Claverach Park continued to develop consistently throughout the 1920s, but developed slowed with the Great Depression, although homes continued to be built until World War II interrupted the availability of building materials. The few remaining lots were completed after the war, still utilizing the styles and massing of the earlier designs with construction in the neighborhood finished by 1965.

### Historic Homes Built by Year 1922-1965

1922—2	1932—4	1946—1
1923—13	1933—4	1950—1
1924—16	1934—8	1951—1
1925—20	1935—7	1952—1
1926—13	1936—5	1953—1
1927—19	1937—2	1956—1
1928—29	1938—1	1958—1
1929—22	1939—1	1960—1
1930—18	1940—1	1964—1
1931—6	1941—2	1965—1

There is one house that got missed in the survey (47 Hillvale) which appears would be contributing to the historic district, but it has yet to be dated as a result. The one empty lot at 43 Crestwood had a house built on it in 1982 and since 1982, 5 houses have been torn down and new houses built on those lots (28, 40, and 57 Broadview, 44 Hillsvale, and 42 Ridgemoor), generating some concern that the historic integrity of the neighborhood will be impacted by this trend to tear-down and build new and larger homes in the neighborhood.