

AN HISTORIC PRESERVATION SURVEY
in the town of Hermann, Missouri

presented to

The Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
Jefferson City, Missouri

by

the Missouri Heritage Trust

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The major portion of Hermann's central core is on the National Register of Historic Places, a district comprising circa 200 buildings. The nomination was made and accepted in the first rush to place districts on the Register in the early 1970s--only eight buildings are specifically mentioned and there is minimal historic justification. The Department of Natural Resources in an attempt to update the nomination according to new regulations sought a survey to assess the buildings within the present limits and to look at the remainder of the town of Hermann to determine whether the boundaries as made earlier were sufficient to cover the historic building resources. The Department of Natural Resources contracted with the Missouri Heritage Trust to provide the survey culminating in the report and survey results contained in these volumes.

Hermann over the years has profited from its reputation as a beautiful town to visit--its proximity to St. Louis at less than an hours drive has kept a flow of tourism alive. Beginning in the early 1950s there were attempts to revive some of the age-old German traditions of harvest and spring festivals. With the revival came a reawakening of interest among some of the town residents in the historic buildings of the community. The Brush and Palette Club was a focus of much of the early interest, acquiring two of the best known homes, the Strehly and Pommer-Gentner houses, which are now State Historic Sites. Over the years a few people from outside the community bought properties and restored them as summer houses or weekend retreats. The total restoration and reopening of the Stone Hill Wine Company in the early 1960s boosted the local economy and gave the town a new identity, actually recapturing its old pre-prohibition reputation for wine making. The winery complex and the core area of town were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in the early 1970s. Since that time over \$300,000 worth of preservation activity using the 1981 preservation tax incentives has taken place. There are a number of local

projects pending. In the last five years there has been increased interest in the building heritage of Hermann. The report and survey will help in establishing a new framework to fit the history of the buildings into and provide information on specific buildings. It is planned to use the survey as the basis of a new nomination to the National Register of Historic Places which will include a much larger area than the earlier district.

METHODOLOGY

The first act in preparing for the survey was to create a base map for the community marking street addresses and assigning inventory numbers to all buildings built circa 1940 and earlier. Modern buildings were also marked in the area anticipated to be within the new district nomination boundaries.

In the process of walking the streets it was noted whether it was felt any further historic research and an architectural workup was necessary. Of the circa 700 buildings surveyed, ca. 250 are included in the category calling for special treatment. My criteria for inclusion was based on the following:

- 1.) all buildings were included irrespective of date of construction if it was felt to be even remotely associated with traditional building practices. The category accounted for the bulk of the group studied and included both commercial and residential buildings.
- 2.) all buildings of obvious architectural merit which reflected national movements in architectural taste and style in either commercial or residential expression.
- 3.) Over 75 percent sample of residences of more modest pretensions which reflected national movements in taste and style circa 1885-1915.
- 4.) A few selected buildings from the last era circa 1915-1940 were given

detailed description as well.

All 700 buildings have top sheet forms with minimum observable details recorded and a 5X7 photograph attached.

The second category of intensively examined buildings involved a full architectural description of all elevations as seen from the exterior. Where changes had been made and could be seen they were noted. A birdseye roof plan of the building is included on each building giving its relationship to the street, chimney locations, additions, etc.

Selected from the first group of buildings--those built in the vernacular tradition--there was a list drawn up of buildings which might provide valuable information toward understanding residential vernacular forms through a thorough interior examination. Approximately fifty buildings were examined many to the extent that a full set of floor plan drawings could be made in addition to noting relevant original construction details, surviving trim and woodwork, and evidence of any later changes to the building fabric. For all circa 250 buildings selected for intensive work there was an effort made to provide historical documentation on builder and date of construction. The most valuable source for research proved to be the remarkably complete tax records which begin in 1841, 1845, 1851 1853 to the present with a hiatus of missing records from 1896-1900. The valuation of real estate generally made it possible to pinpoint when a building went up or had a major addition. When there was a questionable judgement the deed records were referred to. In approximately 40 percent of the cases it was deemed necessary to seek corroboration from the transfer deeds.

Indexing the census records gave valuable insight into the composition of the community--its continuity and flux. From this material could be drawn relevant biographicla information on the builder and subsequent owners of the properties.

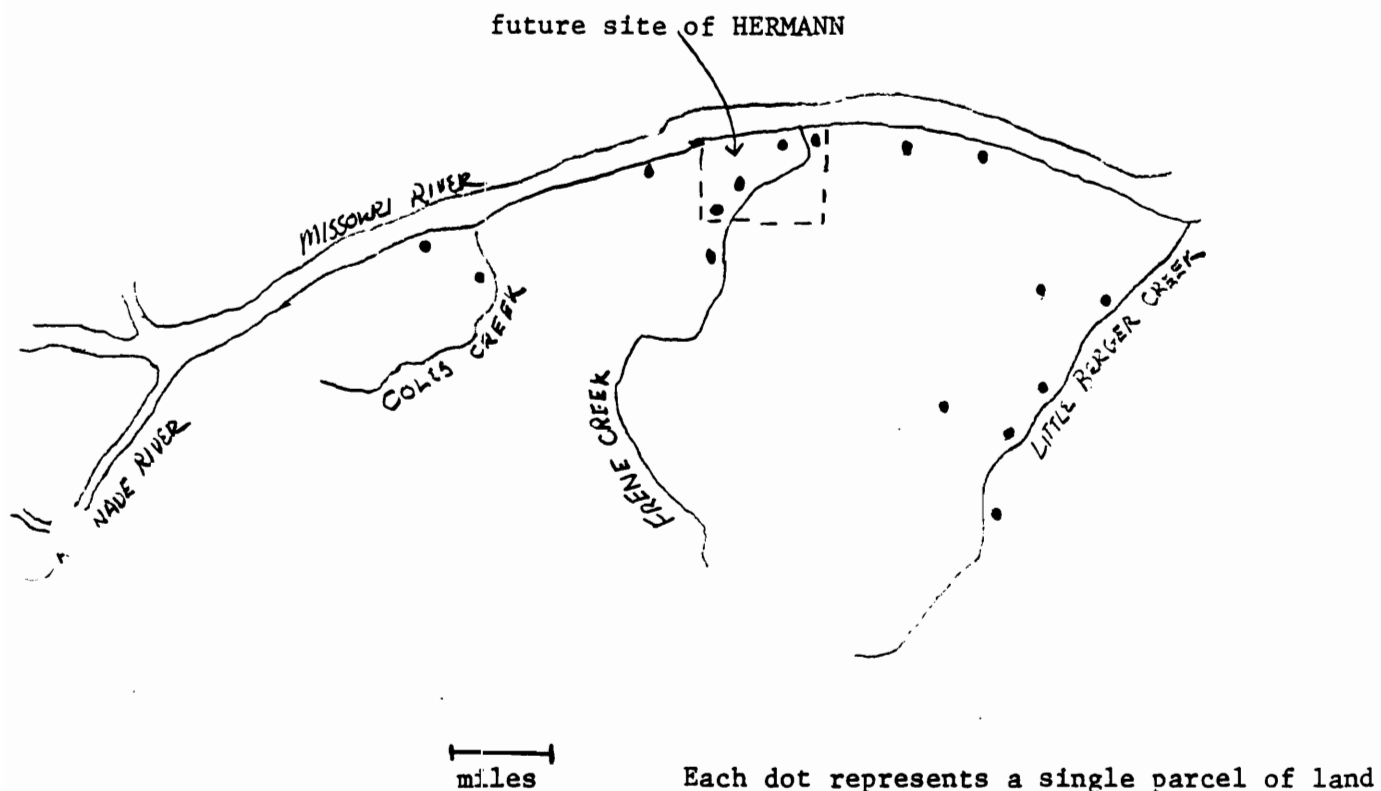
A thorough architectural description accompanies each of the workups of the selected properties. All architectural ornament, features and elevations are noted in detail with especial attention paid to window and door treatments. The careful listing of features frequently difficult to discern from the best of photographs, can be used to differentiate style and period which is especially important in Hermann where there are no acceptable vernacular building typologies. For example: Window casing edges in brick buildings show a pattern of periodization which unless systematically recorded would probably have gone unnoticed.

GEOGRAPHIC MORPHOLOGY AND PRE-GERMAN SETTLEMENT HISTORY

The town of Hermann is located at the confluence of a small stream--the Frene creek--with the Missouri River. The river border is characterized by sheer bluffs of limestone and sandstone rising over 200 feet in some instances punctuated by the steep V angles of intermittant drainages and the more gradual and broad gaps of the year round stream valleys such as Frene creek. The natural terracing of the narrow creek valley provides a small area of relatively gentle sloping hills and some almost level lands all of which is safe from the annual flooding of the broad and unruly Missouri River. To the west is small Cole's creek and downstream or eastward is the more extensive valley of Little Berger creek where early Anglo-American settlement was more numerous. In the region of Hermann there is virtually no bottomland soils in the Missouri River valley itself. The river brushes directly up against the high bluffs in most places. With the exception of the narrow creek valleys the area back from the Missouri River around Hermann is extremely hilly with steep stoney slopes, and V-shaped intermittant drainage valleys with little or no tillable soils. In short, the Hermann region was not a hospitable location for a flourishing agricultural settlement. The choice once made was irrevocable and would be a long term stumbling block to the development of the community.

The history of Hermann must necessarily begin before the arrival of the first German settlers in 1837. Missouri had been a state for sixteen years by that date, and most of the best settlement lands in the state had long since been occupied and improved along the rich river and creek valleys. By 1830 the population in Missouri was 140,455 persons most of who were living in proximity to the Missouri and Mississippi River Valleys. Gasconade county, within which Hermann and its surrounding region is located, actually predates the official date of statehood

LAND PREEMPTED BEFORE 1837 BY ANGLO-AMERICANS



in 1821. In 1820 the county encompassed a larger territory including all of present day Crawford, Phelps, and Osage counties. It was not until 1841 that Gasconade county assumed its present shape.

Anglo-American settlement in the county (present boundaries) before 1830 concentrated in the two major river valleys--the Bourbeuse and the Gasconade--with their extensive bottomlands. Two of the early courthouse locations (before partition) were in hamlets on the banks of the Gasconade river, Mt. Sterling and Gasconade city. With the best lands already taken a few Anglo-Americans began in 1834-1835 to penetrate the narrow valleys of the Little Berger, Frene, and Coles creeks in northern Gasconade county near the future site of Hermann. Several others took out lands immediately adjacent to the Missouri River, though these latter locations were probably intended as wood yards rather than farm sites: The ever increasing number of steam boats plying the river had a voracious appetite for cord wood. There were perhaps twelve families in a thirty two square mile area around present day Hermann before George Bayer, land agent for the German Settlement Society arrived in the fall of 1837 (see Map 1.)

GERMAN SETTLEMENT AND IDEALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

The German presence in the United States had already a long history before the settlement of Hermann in 1837. Throughout much of the eighteenth century German immigrants came to this country settling primarily in the Middle Colonies. The focus of settlement was southeast and central Pennsylvania and north central Maryland the area which came to be known as Pennsylvania Dutch country. However, the actual number of German immigrants remained small until the early 1830s when there began a literal flood of immigration from the various states of Germany. Most of the new tide of immigration passed only briefly in the eastern

port cities, most hastening westward influenced by the sometime hyperbolic descriptions of the west found in such publications as Gottfried Duden's book on his life on a farm in rural Missouri in the 1820s.¹

St. Louis became a funnel through which the Germans found their way to the settlements on the lower Missouri river, into southwest Illinois, or upriver to Wisconsin. From 1845 until the eve of the Civil War German immigrants vied with native Americans in actual numbers of persons of persons moving westward to settle.²

Many of the Germans who made up the post 1830 immigration to this country were different in significant respect from earlier settlers. At the turn of the nineteenth century Germany was not a political or geographic entity but rather a haphazard collection of highly parochial states, municipalities, duchies, etc. with only a mythic concept of a confederation drawn from their heroic past. Post Bonaparte Europe witnessed the stirrings of the romantic nationalist movement which inspired university intellectuals and segments of the German Middle Class into an enthusiasm to change the old fragmented and chaotic order and establish a unified Germany. Fierce pride in German language and culture manifested itself perhaps most noticeably in the years of the 1820s and 1830s during the constant agitation for unification, an effort which was to prove frustrating and disappointing for many. It would be many years before the initial dream became a reality later in the century. Out of the crowd of intellectuals came a few with a vision of establishing a "New Germany" in the New World, frustrated by their seemingly ineffectual efforts in their homeland.³ The energy devoted to their new creative outlet would bear fruit in the lower Missouri River Valley.

The concept of a "New Germany" was born during a period of radical social experimentation culminating in attempts to create utopian communities on the fringe of civilization where supposedly there would be the freedom to prosper

unhindered. Many were religious in nature such as the successful community of 'spirit' founded by George Rapp. Rapp drew his following directly from Wurtemberg in the first decade of the nineteenth century, settling first north of Pittsburg, later at Harmony, Indiana, and later still near their first site. The community was communal in organization and highly successful, though strongly dependant on the charismatic personality of Rapp to hold it together,⁴ which reveals a basic flaw of most of the communitarian experiments.

Communities founded only on intellectual idealism were doomed to fail without the glue of religious zeal. The failure of most communitarian experiments in the early part of the century did not dissuade German intellectuals from further experiments, though apparently the idealism of a New Germany did not offer a strong enough substitute to hold the bonds of a community together for long if organized communally.

There is some evidence that the first organized effort to establish a settlement of Germans in Missouri attempted a communal organization though the evidence⁵ which remains of the 'Berlin Society' as it was called is far from clear.

In any event their colony, in present day Warren county, did not thrive though the area became a focus for continued German settlement. The ill-fated Giessener Society also added to the German influx to the region north of the Missouri River. The group, led by Paul Follenius and Frederick Muench was not communistic in organization though it fostered a communal ideal among its members and was to purchase land as a group to be apportioned to individuals upon arrival. However, the experiment never got the chance to even make the attempt, breaking up before they reached a suitable site. The remnants, including⁶ both leaders, settled near the earlier 'Berlin Society' members.

The idealism of the expatriate nationalists remained undimmed by the spectacular failures of the early experiments of the Giessener and Berlin society groups. The next institutional manifestation built on the experience of the past without

compromising the vision common to all of a 'New Germany'.

GERMAN SETTLEMENT SOCIETY AND EARLY HERMANN COLONY HISTORY

The first indirect reference to the organization of a new settlement attempt came on May 7, 1836 when an unknown communicant wrote a notice for the Die Alte and Neue Welt (The Old and New World) a Philadelphia paper edited by J. G. Wesselhoft, known for his zeal in promoting German culture and ideals. The writer expressed the common vision which would guide the organizations settlement effort:

"For some time past at various localities in the United States societies have been organized in order to discuss the founding of a German city which should be the center of a German settlement in one of the western territories of this country. Such a settlement, in the case that it were to be realized by sincere, intelligent and industrious people, would certainly be a great gain for German language and customs, for German art and science, and would offer a welcome refuge a new home to thousands who would gladly leave the old Fatherland if only they would not have to renounce the fine comfortable German national traits in the foreign land...." 7

All through the summer of 1836 there were numerous committee and public meetings held to discuss the form the organization would take. It is clear from remaining evidence that at least one part of the group entertained a communal vision and agitated eloquently for its adoption. In the end, however, more pragmatic heads prevailed. The ways and means committee, responsible for drawing up the governing rules of the organization prefaced the final report with the notion of promoting a "family-organization" but went on to outline a joint stock company system whose communal responsibility would be limited. In short the constitution officially adopted on August 9, 1836 provided a membership through purchase of shares. The shares would be redeemed as lots of land upon arrival at the colony site. The name of the group was fixed as the "German Settlement Society". Growth was rapid and in only two weeks 350 shares

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were sold. Over the next couple of months in the fall of 1836 the German newspapers in the cities of both Europe and America reacted to the creation of yet another settlement group yielding mixed reactions. But, as William Bek, historian of the German Settlement Society, points out, their notice implies the interest such activity evoked among the people.⁹

The next lengthy step was find a location for the colony. Many places were discussed and amidst much confusion the designated agent of the Society, George Bayer, began purchased land in early September of 1837 at the site of the future colony. The fact was reported to the Society at large on October 5th. At the same meeting the membership discussed a name for the site and determined on "Hermann" the name of a German hero who distinguished himself in the struggle with the Roman Empire.

Thus ended the first period of enthusiastic harmony in the history of the Society. The same enthusiasm moved the leadership to make foolhardy decisions about the governance of the colony toughing on such unrealistic specifics as forcing property owners to build within a prescribed time limit. A town plan was adopted following the typical rectilinear plan common to the conceptualized ideal of nineteenth century town planning with rectangular lots and blocks and wide orderly streets at right angles. The problem was that no one except the agent had even seen the site and they failed to understand how their plan was unsuited for much of the area of the town site. But the rules and plans adopted in Philadelphia would prevail over the colony from that time forward.

Once word of the location reached those in Philadelphia there was almost an immediate move to travel to the site and begin the colony. Seventeen persons left late in the fall and arrived in Hermann on December 6, 1837. The first

winter was a hard one for the small band. Bayer was supposed to have arrived, but was delayed by illness in Pittsburg until the spring of the following year, and only Bayer as sole agent of the Society could assign lots or have them surveyed. A few of the Anglo-Americans lived in log cabins along Frene creek waiting presumably for the new owners to arrive before vacating the land which they had sold to Bayer several months earlier. In the beginning at least there was cooperation between the Anglo-Americans and the new German immigrants. During the winter of '37-'38 they lived side by side probably helping one another to weather the winter as comfortably as possible.¹⁰

The Anglos moved away and the first major wave arrived in Hermann in the spring of 1838 bring the population to 230 in a short time. In one year the population doubled to 450.¹¹

"New settlers arrive daily, and it can definitely be asserted that in the last three months on the average a house has been erected every week...About 90 houses have been built now...There are 5 stores, two large hotels and a post office here....¹²

The difficulty of governing from a distance with communication difficult and rules laid out by idealists unfamiliar with local land conditions coupled with the unfortunate lack of strong leadership from the Society's agent, George Bayer, led to agitation for separation from the parent group. On September 17, 1839 this became fact and the remaining property of the Society was transferred to the newly incorporated town of Hermann.¹³ Thus the experiment ceased to exist. Many of those who stayed in Philadelphia were disappointed and left with a sense of betrayal at the hands of the Hermanners. However, time witnessed the fruition of their idealism in more than one way. In a social sense the discord which ripped the community in the early years over separation was healed. The intent of fostering a community sense of identity met with success and for many years there was a tradition of tuning to general public meetings to decide important town matters.¹⁴ This early form of direct democracy eventually

faded as the century wore on. Of more lasting success was the intent to create a "New Germany". Hermann remained true to German language and culture for longer than most similar communities surviving as John Hawgood, noted sociologist,¹⁵ put it, "as an island in a sea of Americanism".

POST SEPERATION AND ECONOMIC MATURATION 1839-1850

The disastrous national financial Panic of 1837 and the dramatic downward spiral of the domestic economy from 1839 to 1843 coincided with the birth of the Society and the fledgling community. The depressed market conditions did not seem to affect the growth of the community in any significant way. Fortunately the sound business footing of the community after seperation precluded any major difficulties. It is also very likely that many of the new residents came with sufficient means for them to at least eke out an existence in the beginning. But continued hard times and the inability of the agricultural community to export their harvests eventually caught up with them. According to one source people actually left the community in 1842 and 1843 to try their luck¹⁶ in St. Louis or St. Joseph, Missouri.

The natural advantage of a first rate steamboat landing and the steady progress in developing the hinterland into productive farm land eventually guarenteed the limited success of Hermann as an important shipping point. The first personal fortune accumulated in Hermann was made by a shipping and commission merchant, Charles D. Eitzen, who was responsible for the large volume of pig iron bars arriving at the wharf in Hermann from the Maramec Iron Works in Phelps county well to the south. Frustrated by poor access to markets the owners of the iron works eventually came to depend on the "Iron Road" as it was called which they blazed in the late 1840s leading to Hermann. Eitzen was responsible for sending the rion on boats to markets¹⁷ up the Ohio and later to the developing industries in St.Louis. Returning

wagons would carry off-loaded merchandise to the people at the iron works which in the 1850s employed some 700 skilled artisans--a considerable
18
population for rural Missouri. Hermann enjoyed an additional advantage as shipping point for the large rafts of pine timber cut in the pineries of the upper Gasconade River and seasonally floated downstream or carried overland. At times as much as 200,000 feet of pine lumber would be piled near the
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wharf.

The wealth in the community during the 1840s was concentrated in the hands of a few merchants who traded in agricultural goods, lumber, etc., and shipped them to St. Louis or other points receiving in turn the finished goods needed in the community. The pattern of wealth was typical and can be found in other river towns of the period which developed along similar
20
lines. Merchants like Eitzen, Wiedersprecher, Hincke, Burckhardt, and others built some of the finer buildings which survive from the era of the 1840s and early 1850s.

The agricultural region upon which Hermann was dependant for trade was extremely limited. The river which gave the town its advantage of easy transportation access also cut it off from the area north of the river in present day Montgomery county. It would not be until the next decade that a ferry service was established. The trading area of Hermann was restricted to all intents and purposes to the area south of the river in Gasconade county, which with its narrow valleys and ridges was a poor geographic
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area for high profit or large scale farming. In 1850 the dollar value of an improved acre of land in Gasconade county was near the bottom in comparison to other counties with the advantage of river access, and was less than half the per acre value of counties like Howard and Cooper which were, in
22
1850, developing the highly profitable tobacco and hemp culture.

Gasconade county instead developed a two crop culture of wheat and corn with the latter used to feed livestock which then could be marketed, although the statistics do not show that the area exported significant quantities of livestock in 1850. The German farmers of Gasconade county in 1850 may be described as being only slightly above subsistence level producing a small amount for export and sale to the townspeople of Hermann and a limited amount for sale to the markets of St. Louis or elsewhere. Yet limited success was still success for the farmers of the region. They might not get rich but they could be sure of a market for their produce.

INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH: POLITICS, EDUCATION, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS

The maturation of the economic life of the community and region was matched by the institutional development within the community. It rapidly became clear to the German emigrants that it would be a clear advantage to have the apparatus of county government close at hand rather than at a distance which meant convincing the Anglo-American county court of the soundness of their argument. To effect the change the town of Hermann offered the town-site free of charge and donated \$3000 worth of "work and building material for construction of jail and courthouse" which in the currency of the time was enough to finance a substantial brick edifice.²³ The court, at that time officiating from a log building in the tiny hamlet of Mt. Sterling on the Gasconade river, accepted the towns' offer. The city took responsibility for the building of the courthouse and on August 29, 1842 received a plan²⁴ for its construction from Johannes H. Bohlken, a local architect. Despite the proximity of the mechanism of county government the composition of the court remained chiefly in the hands of Anglo-Americans for most of the pre Civil War era, though a few bilingual Hermanners were occasionally part

of the government structure--the first was Hans Wiedersprecher who was appointed
25
county treasurer in 1842.

Education was of paramount importance to the members of the community. The role education played in perpetuation of German culture and ideas was not lost on the German settlers. One of the earliest public buildings in Hermann was the school house erected by the Society before separation of the colony in the spring of 1839.²⁶ That summer the Society hired a teacher upon examination by a committee "in regard to his knowledge of the German as well as the English language..."²⁷ Teaching the English language was always a part of the curricula but never a dominant part during the whole of the nineteenth century.

In the early 1840s the state of Missouri put into effect the necessary laws and guidelines toward the establishment of district schools. There is no direct reference to the occurrence in the trustees minutes, but their actions in the spring of 1847 indicate the alarm with which the development was received for it must have been understood that state established schools would
*
not allow the teaching of any other language than English.

On May 14, 1847 the city trustees approved the content of a petition presented to them creating an independent town school fund. On December 22nd of the same year the town appropriated the then large sum of \$5000 towards a capital endowment fund. Ten years later they doubled that amount
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through sales of town held property. A separate board oversaw the running of what would be officially known as the 'German School of Hermann'. On March 10, 1849 the school obtained a state charter for its school. The final section is significant: "This school shall be and forever remain a German school, in which all branches of science and education shall be

* Despite continuous fulminations from some individuals the rural district schools in Gasconade county taught primarily in German despite the letter of the law in the nineteenth century.

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taught in the German language."

Until 1871 there were two schools in Hermann--the German School and the District School (building survives on West 5th street inventory #428). In 1871 they were combined in the same building though the character and intent of the German School was preserved (this building also survives see inventory #174). There was also a private school in Hermann in the 1840s run by Christopher Moller who boarded Anglo-American students in his home next to
30
the courthouse. Later in the 1850s Moller joined W. Krech to form an independent 'High School'. Unfortunately nothing else is known of this venture.

The rich cultural and intellectual life of the community found concrete expression in 1849 with the creation of the Gesellschaft Erholung which received a state charter in the same year, "having for its object the intellectual improvement of its members in literature, science, and arts, and to assist
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each other in misfortunes, and to...collect a library..." To build a hall the society sold shares for fifty dollars, a large sum at that time, and within the year constructed the building still surviving today near the corner of East 2nd and Market streets (inventory #45). All the many activities organized to date in town now had a suitable hall to meet in, and it would appear that there were many different groups ranging from Men's Choirs, bands, a Free-Thinkers society, study groups, etc., in this very social and intellectually active community. A part of the enthusiasm for group discourse and activity came from the fertile mind of a single important person who contributed much to the early years of the town.

In July of 1843 Eduard Muehl arrived in Hermann and together with Carl Strehly began to publish a newspaper, the Lichtfreud, a four page paper of German literature and politics. Muehl would come to be an important voice as editor of the paper striving always to whip up the fervor and idealism

that gave birth to the community reminding the Hermanners of who they were³² and what made them special. In the early 1850s the paper was changed to the Hermanner Wochenblatt and included much welcomed local items and news for the first time.

In the early years of the community there were three churches in town--the General German Church, the Evangelical Church and a Catholic congregation. In the late 1830s and early 1840s there seems to have been small enthusiasm for the institutional religions remarked on in an early history of one group affected--the Catholic church--which had the additional burden of being held³³ in contempt by Muehl's Freethinkers group. When the small but dedicated members of each congregation approached the trustees of the town for grants of land on which to build their churches a public meeting of the townspeople³⁴ denied their request. Two years later the trustees relented with the stipulation that the congregations built on their lots within two years or forfeit the³⁵ land. The Catholic Church began in 1845 and completed in 1850 a stone³⁶ edifice on the site of the present St. George's Catholic Church. The Evangelical Church built a brick church in 1844 on the site of the present day³⁷ St. Paul's Christian Church (direct descendant of the earlier church). The German General Church was not able to put their plans in motion and disbanded. A small German Methodist congregation held meetings with a circuit preacher until they could build a church in 1883 (inventory #63). A small congregation of German Presbyterians built a stone church in 1863 but did not last a decade--the building survives as a residence (inventory #395).

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND GROWTH OF THE COMMUNITY TO CIRCA 1845

The physical appearance of Hermann underwent its greatest change in the first years of settlement. When the first German emigrants arrived in the last months of 1837 the site was probably wholly forest covered with only

a few crude log cabins built by the former Anglo-American land owners; perhaps a few acres had been cleared. During the initial two years of settlement the first 300 odd residents built their first houses of the trunks of trees felled to clear the lots. By the spring of 1839 it was reported that a new house was being built every week. There were approximately 80 homes³⁸ in that summer most built of logs. There survives an excellent description of the town site made in the summer of 1839: "You can hardly tell where the streets are going to be because of the many felled tree-tops lying criss-cross everywhere and the left-over trunks which were not used in building the cabins."³⁹ The readily available timber in and around the town was quickly used up. In January of 1840 the town trustees moved to impose a fine on anyone "cutting down or destroying corner trees" which had been used by the surveyors to mark the boundaries of lots when the site was forest covered.⁴⁰ The minutes of the trustees meetings begin in the 1840s to deal with the problem of indiscriminate cutting of timber from reserve lands owned by the city.

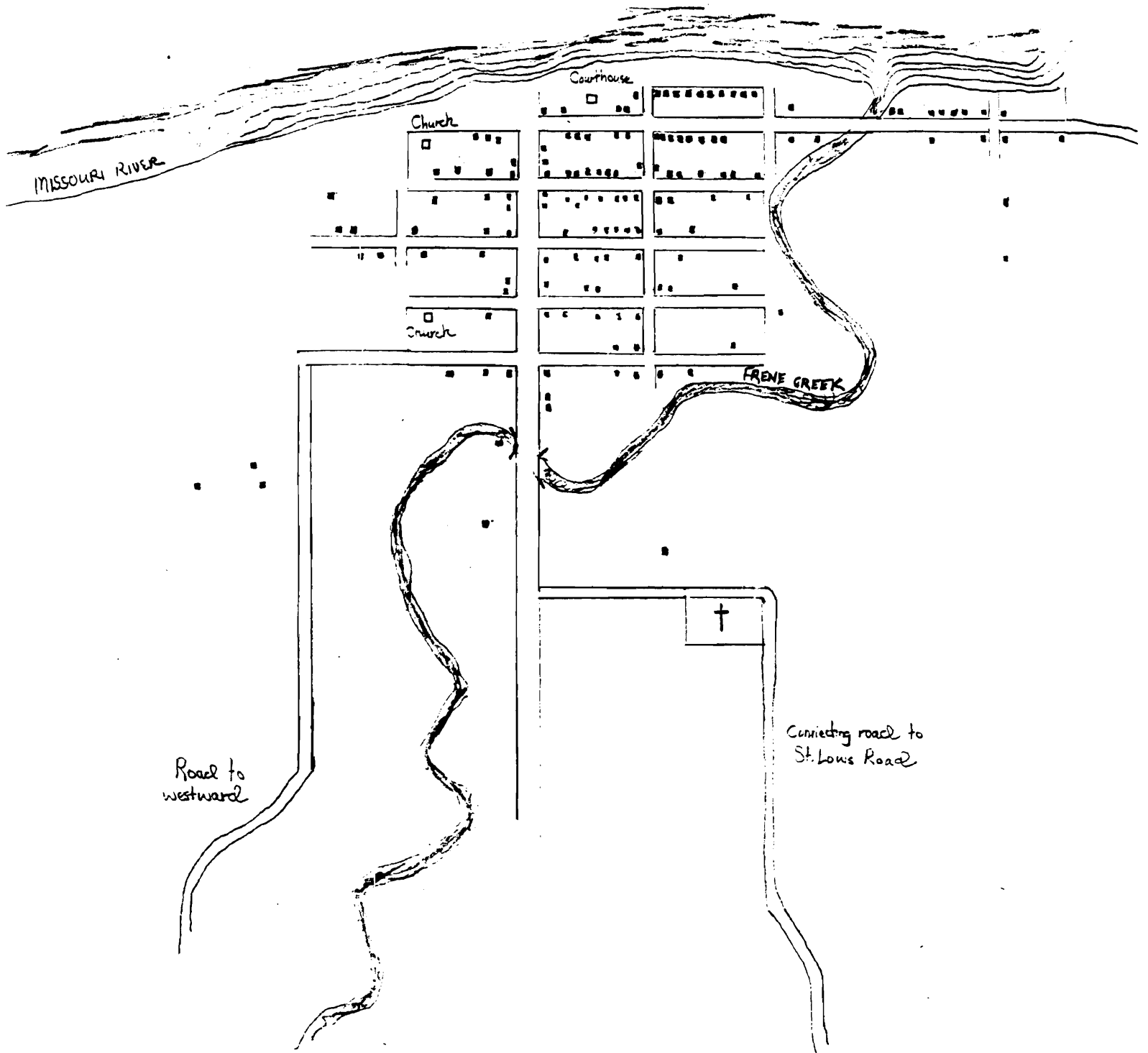
However, even as early as 1839 there was already a move away from the rude first rough and ready log cabins to something more reflective of the maturation of the community. A statement made in the spring of 1839 stated that "only frame or stone houses are built here as it seems that log houses are no longer in style."⁴¹ As far as is known none of the early log buildings survive to the present day though quite a few of the equally early "frame" or fachwerk half timber buildings survive in the area of the early town's nucleus.

The effort to change the aspect of the community as a fresh and raw frontier settlement to a more polished established community can be seen in the early movement toward public improvements. As may be imagined the

imagined the streets in the first years were nothing more than rough paths between the tree stumps, which turned into a viscous mud in the slightest rainfall. The best of the early streets were merely muddy the worst were rapidly eroding mud gullies on the slopes of the hills in the heavily traveled center section of town. As early as 1842 there was an effort by the trustees to mitigate the worst of the problems on the four numbered streets running east-west on the hill which rose in the center of town terminating at the courthouse bluff on the Missouri River. From 1842 until the late 1850s there would be a series of projects to grade and gutter the worst of the streets in the thickly populated center section of town (see Map 2). East Third street from Market to Schiller street was a massive project which when completed left the numerous one story houses on the street high and dry precariously overlooking the dramatically lowered roadway. The house owners solution was to build new first stories under the older buildings on some while others graded their own lots and built anew. Macadamizing and setting of curbstones followed the major street gradings of the 1850s and 1860s⁴¹ beginning with Wharf street in 1856.

Public projects extended to much needed bridge building over Frene creek which bisected major roads at two crucial spots near the creek mouth on First street and on Market street below 6th street. The bridge building projects came to dominate public debate and concern in the 1840s. The first completed bridge in 1844 was at the Market street location, by far the easier of two locations to bridge. After several abortive starts in 1847 the town began to build a massive single arch stone bridge over Frene creek at First street using the plans furnished by Charles Vogt (whose house survives--inventory #76), a stonemason who was also employed to build it. The well built bridge stood for one hundred years until destroyed by the Missouri Highway Department in 1951.

HERMANN - ca. 1851



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS AND GROWTH 1840-1850

Between the census years of 1840 and 1850 the population of Hermann more than doubled from circa 400 persons in 1840 to 944 in 1850. Almost all of the residents in 1850 were of German birth--there were only ten adult persons born in the United States reported in the census. Of some significance is the point of origin in Germany, which in other German settlements frequently was relatively homogenous with large numbers from specific cities or states in Germany. Not in Hermann, however, where there were large number of Swiss, High and Low Germans, and even a few from the French speaking provinces of Alsace-Lorraine. Hermann was a heterogenous mix from "all⁴³ parts of Germany" as one Herranner, Michael Poeschel wrote in 1849.

In the country side in the vicinity of Hermann during the early 1840s the population was less strictly segregated between the Anglo-Americans and Germans than found in Hermann itself, though becoming more so with each passing year. In 1840 the census of Roark township which surrounds the town of Hermann gives an approximate population of 400 persons. The mix of Anglo and German was about half and half based on the surnames of residents with members of either group interspersed with one another. By the census year 1850 the composition was almost exclusively German as the Anglo-Americans sold their land and improvements to the land hungry German emigrants.

INTRODUCTION OF WINE CULTURE 1844

As already stated the agriculture of the region was undistinguished and only just above subsistence levels with small exports of wheat and livestock to the St.Louis markets in the 1840s. However, a few of the emigrants brought grape vines with them when they came to this country attempting to establish the vineyard culture and wine making they were

accustomed to in the Old World. The attempts in the early 1840s were dismal failures--the foreign vines did not flourish and fell prey to the phylloxera infestation which would eventually be carried across the ocean to Europe where it devastated the vineyards in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴⁴ It wasn't until a Hermanner brought in one of the native American grape varieties that vineyard culture experienced its phenomenal growth in the Hermann region. The cultivation of the grape vine had caught the imagination of a number of persons in the town of Hermann persuading a parsimonious and generally cash poor town administration in the spring of 1844 to grant special exemption to those persons who purchased town lots and would "cultivate the vine". The town trustees allowed a longer period for land payment without interest to anyone who would begin to plant vines so that within a certain period the whole of the property would be vineyard. The trustees were careful to stipulate that taxes would be paid on the land however.⁴⁵ One hundred and fifty persons took advantage of the town's offer claiming nearly 600 "wine lots" between 1845 and 1849 while the first flush of the grape vine planting fever raged among the townspeople. However, the town did not enforce the provisions stipulating that the ground was to be planted in vineyards. Perhaps most made the attempt but in the end only the suitable locations would become producing vineyards. A few of the early and successful vineyards got their start with the liberal town offer so that much of the future growth of the wine industry would stay focused in and around the town of Hermann itself.

Fifty thousand vines were planted in the spring of 1845--the vast majority were of the Catawba grape variety--and after demonstrated success in the fall of that year, 150,000 more vines were planted the following spring.⁴⁶ Most of the vines planted were concentrated in seven vineyards, totalling seven planted acres, four within the town boundaries, the remaining three in the countryside close to the town.⁴⁷

The real makings of a boom came in the fall of 1848 with the first full crop of the Catawba grape bore fruit. Sixteen acres of vineyards in and around Hermann produced about 10,000 gallons of wine sold on the market for one dollar and fifty cents a gallon. Michael Poeschel alone made 1200 gallons of wine from just 600 vines at his vineyard of less than one acre, for which Poeschel made the phenomenal sum of 1600 dollars with an additional 48 400 dollars from the sale of slips and yearling vines.

The success of the first significant effort at wine making in Missouri was well received. "...The intelligence of the success in grape culture had spread all over Missouri, as far as the German language was spoken, and visitors, ladies and gentlemen, had come even from St. Louis on steamboats" 49 to attend the first "wine fair" held in Hermann in 1848. 1848 was the banner year for the burgeoning wine industry in Hermann and Missouri. It was now proved to even the most pessemistic observor that grapes and wine making could be enormously profitable leading one commentator in the St.Louis published Western Journal in 1849 to remark "Is any California gold mine more profitable 50 than this?" Gert Goebel remembered later that: "...the general excitement was so great, that one might have imagined, that the art of making gold had 51 really been discovered." Once the significance of their discovery set in the people of Hermann and the small hill farmers in the surrounding countryside jumped at what appeared to be a perfect opportunity to rise above their meagre condition and grasp at a chance to make their fortune. George Husmann, a prominent grape grower and ardent publicist for wine making in Missouri, remarked: "...a perfect rage for growing grapes, as a sure source of riches, 52 took possession of our sober, steady citizens."

The identification of the German immigrant population in Missouri with the consumption of wine figured largely in the development of the industry

in the Hermann region. In 1849 the Anglo-American editors of the Western Journal noted, "...that the cultivation of the vine is at present confined to our own German population, exclusively; but...when the profits of this business shall be made known, nothing but the 'California fever' will prevent our own countrymen from enter⁵³eing into it." Their hopes were ill founded however, and the future of the wine industry of Missouri would stay firmly in the hands of the first German immigrants and their descendants in and around Hermann and throughout the wine producing region of the lower Missouri River Valley.

By the spring of 1849 it was readily apparent to any observer that the heart of the wine region would be in Gasconade county. Michael Poeschel estimated that in May of 1849 fully 700,000 vines flourished in and around Hermann.⁵⁴ The primacy of the Hermann area in wine making would remain the rule until prohibition went into effect in the 1910s.

The decade of the 1850s consolidated the gains of the late 1840s firmly establishing the hegemony of the Hermann region. Wine making brought an influx of cash into the local economy providing a firm foundation despite the vagaries of bad weather and infestations which plagued grape growing through the next several decades. The new found wealth in the community fostered a building boom as a number of the newly prominent wine growers built homes incorporating wine storage cellars and press-fermentation rooms. Merchants and artisans benefited indirectly from the boom as the increased flow of cash into the economy eventually filtered through their hands as wine growers purchased goods and services in town.

ECONOMIC GAINS OF THE 1850s

The growth spurt in Hermann during the 1850s was not merely the result of

wine making. The decade was one of state wide growth and development spurred in part by the penetration of the railroads into a larger and larger territory making it possible for these areas to market goods which would have been impossible before unless they were close to a navigable stream. It was known as early as the summer of 1851 that a railroad would be built through Hermann when the town trustees voted 2000 dollars towards the purchase of railroad shares. The Pacific Railroad reached town in 1854 pushing on to Jefferson City by the next year. The railroad may be seen as having a definite positive effect on the economy, but not as profound a change as was experienced by previously isolated communities far from river transportation. However, Hermann's location along the line made it a logical lunch and overnight stopover, and along Wharf street and on First there sprang up saloons, hotels, and lunchrooms to accomodate train passengers. Over the years as steamboat travel and shipment became less and less important losing out in its competition with the railroads, the presence of the line in Hermann would become more and more important as the century progressed.

The 1850s was a period of rapid agricultural expansion in the county with an increasing market dependence on product sale; moving beyond the early years of subsistence agriculture. The number of improved acres of farm land nearly tripled as more land was cleared and planted. In the area around Hermann the German farmer planted vineyards and built wine cellars and presshouses to add to the farm building complex. Out of 260 reported farms in the 1860 census in Roark township which surrounds Hermann there were 72 farmers who reported wine production--half of them producing over 50
55
gallons. Wine making became a major source of income for those with producing vineyards.

Another source of dramatic gain was in the production of wheat for export. In 1850 Gasconade county produced 20,000 bushels of wheat but just ten

years later the amount more than doubled to near 50,000 bushels, a greater⁵⁶ volume of increase than in most counties in that period. Most of the wheat produced for export was milled into flour in Hermann and shipped on steamboat or railroad. In 1860 Henry Reitmeyer built the huge Hermann Star Mill, a brick four and one half story steam buhr mill which survives on First street (inventory #34). The mill was one of the largest of its kind in the state at the time of its construction with a capacity of 160 bushels⁵⁷ per day.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS 1850-1860

The population of Hermann grew about 25 percent during the 1850s to a total of 1145 persons in 1860. There were approximately 220 homes standing⁵⁸ in Hermann at that time. The occupational makeup of the community had changed considerably from 1850 to 1860 as well as did the distribution of wealth. There were 104 persons who might be considered to be the upper economic class of the community with reported personal wealth of greater than 500 dollars and real estate value equal or greater to 1000 dollars. Table 1. gives the breakdown by occupation. In number the 'vine dresser' stands above even the merchants indicative of their status and importance to the communities economy. In addition there are nine persons who derived significant income from vineyards they owned but who still maintained other occupations with which they identified more strongly. All nine were members of the upper economic class. Still the merchants controlled a greater total amount of personal wealth. Charles D. Eitzen alone reported a personal wealth of 40,000 dollars nearly one half of the entire reported wealth of the community (\$112,210). The increased wealth of Hermann visible in its architecture, gave it an air of stability and permanence. Adding to the impression was the uncharacteristic constancy of the people of Hermann.

Population stability was a unique feature to Hermann as compared to similar Missouri communities during the decade of the 1850s. Of the householders present in 1850 over fifty percent were still living in Hermann during the census year 1860. ^{*} Compare this to the less than twenty percent figure for recurrent households in Rocheport, Missouri during the same period. Rocheport is a Missouri River town upstream from Hermann. Both are towns of the same age--Rocheport was platted in 1832--though Rocheport was smaller in 1860 with ⁵⁹ just over 700 population. The difference was that Rocheport was an Anglo-American community with a population drawn from the Upper South (Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky) to Missouri lured by the promise of cheap rich farmland and quick business profit. The twenty percent of the population in Rocheport which remained were the propertied economic elite; merchants and artisans who had hitched themselves to what they hoped would be the rising star of Rocheport's fortunes--future growth. The eighty percent who moved on were for the most part day laborers, emigrants moving through, etc. to whom ⁶⁰ Rocheport was only an interlude in their migration. The relative impermanence of Rocheport could be seen in its architecture with a few substantially built homes and a large number of shacks and shanties few of which survive to the present.

In contrast to Rocheport Hermann was almost one hundred percent German who even though drawn from diverse regions were related by common language

* NOTE--The figure arrived at through comparison of surnames of householders which is imperfect at best. The resultant fifty-sixty percent figures err on the conservative side. It does not take into effect the households broken up because of the death of parents--there was a tradition of orphaned children living with relatives or friends when this happened. Nor does the figure reflect the even more important movement of families through Hermann where they would stay for a short time, and move onto newly acquired farms in the immediate vicinity.

| <u>census</u> <u>year 1850</u> | <u>total</u> | reported personal wealth more than \$500--real estate <u>more than \$1000 *</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| merchants | 13 | |
| shoemaker | 19 | |
| carpenter | 32 | |
| stonemason | 12 | |
| blacksmith | 8 | |
| physician | 4 | |
| cooper | 7 | |
| vintner | 1 | |
| <u>census year</u> <u>1860</u> | | |
| merchants | 11 | 9 |
| shoemaker | 16 | 2 |
| carpenter | 16 | 8 |
| mason | 11 | 4 |
| blacksmith | 5 | 3 |
| cabinetmaker | 7 | 3 |
| wine maker | 32 | 18 |
| <u>census year</u> <u>1870</u> | | |
| merchants | 17 | 11 |
| shoemaker | 10 | 4 |
| carpenter | 23 | 5 |
| mason | 12 | 3 |
| blacksmith | 6 | 3 |
| cabinetmaker | 6 | 3 |
| winegrower and vinedresser | 55 | 19 |

*In 1870--to compensate for postwar inflation the required minumums were doubled

and culture dramatically different from the vast majority of the state's residents. Once having settled among those who shared common traits the German immigrant was far less inclined to move on preferring to stay in one location for better or worse.⁶¹ The German settler who stayed built homes whose sum impression left the observer with a feeling of stability and permanence not found elsewhere moving a number to record their perceptions. The following is a sample:

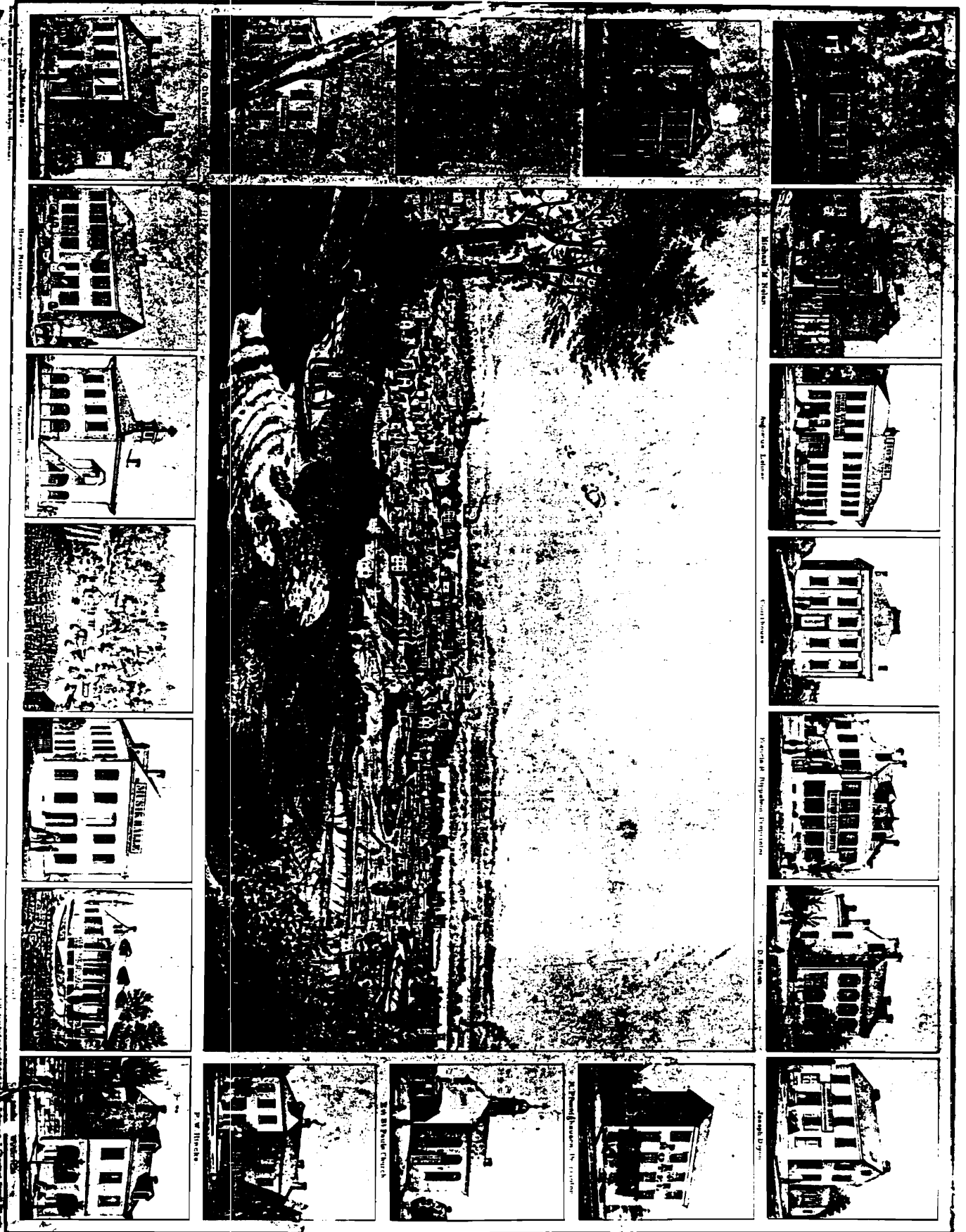
"A walk through the City, if possible at the time of the blooming of the fruit trees, reminds an old German very much of his home, for he can imagine himself suddenly transplanted into one of the large prosperous villages of the old native country...." 62

"One of the most delightful journeys that I ever made in my life was this from St.Louis to the little German town of Hermannnot yet twenty years old...neither a great commercial nor a trading centre, but a collection of lovely little houses and gardens, of vine-clad hills and neat farms...."63

THE CIVIL WAR AND POST WAR PROSPERITY

The Civil War left Hermann virtually unscathed. The Germans of the region were non-slave holding and there were none in the area. The loyalties were solidly federal putting them at odds with the Democratic Anglo-Americans in parts of the southern section of Gasconade county. The area of the Missouri river from Hermann to St. Louis was relatively free of the skirmishing and raids which plagued other sections of the state in the most slaveholding counties bordering the river. General Sterling Price's march through Missouri in 1864 briefly touched Hermann when Confederate forces occupied the town for a short time burning part of the railraod and depot besides looting a few stores.⁶⁴

Hermann actually prospered from the war benefiting from trade with the occupying Federal forces and with the St.Louis markets. Numerous artisans such as leather merchants, millers, shoemakers, saddlers, as well as the



Birdseye view of Hermann circa 1859 with vignettes of the principal buildings

dry goods and grocery merchants made large profits in the years of the Civil War and the post war period fueled a building boom from circa 1860 to circa 1872 during which many of the outstanding buildings surviving today were built (see inventory numbers 1, 79, 162, 187 for example). Complementing the general prosperity was the very rapid growth in the wine making industry during the 1860s.

The ten years from 1860 to the mid 1870s were years of dramatic growth and change in the wine industry in the country, state and in Gasconade county. Missouri produced more wine in 1870 than any other state in the Union with 326,173 gallons of wine of which nearly one half came from the vineyards of Hermann and vicinity. Never again would the state and region claim top honours in production nationwide, but while the focus of attention was on Hermann, as the center of Missouri's wine industry, her reputation was secured.

The first reference to the state of wine culture during this decade came in 1865 when it was estimated that the product for Gasconade county would be around 50,000 gallons of wine. The total estimated value of wine for 1865 was the phenomenal sum of \$100,000 for Gasconade county. Another \$50,000 would be made from the sale of grape roots, cuttings, slips, etc. to prospective vintners. With a prospectus as optimistic as the above (confirmed in the next year's report) it is little wonder that the widespread enthusiasm
65
for wine growing was kindled into a blaze. The significance of the wine crop and sales of cuttings can be seen when compared to the total value of all real estate and personal wealth in 1860 for the town of Hermann was just \$425,000. In a single year there was over one quarter of that amount in cash flowing directly into town or indirectly through the town from the farmers with vineyards in the immediate vicinity as they bought what they needed from

Hermann merchants. The influx of capital contributed to the post war building boom. One of the state's more unusual buildings dates to this period in Hermann. To accomodate the burgeoning interest in wine and in horticultural in general the increasingly active Agricultural Association of Gasocnade county built in 1864 an octagonal shaped single story brick exhibition hall with a steeply pitched double cupola roof. It was here that⁶⁶ the annual fair was held after the fall season (see inventory #628).

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS 1860-1870

There were only slight population gains in the 1860s in both town and county. In 1873 one observer stated that since the war perhaps 200⁶⁷ German immigrants came to the county. In Hermann itself the population rose to 1339--a modest gain of only 194 persons. Once again approximately one half of the households found in the 1860 census were present in 1870 as well.

Between 1860 and 1870 the reported wealth of the community in personal and real estate wealth increased dramatically even after discounting for post war inflation. To arrive at a meaningful analysis of the upper economic strata in the community it was necessary to increase the requisite reported wealth two fold to a minumum of \$2000 in real estate value and/or \$1000 in personal wealth. One hundred and thirty three persons reported such wealth in the census of 1870. The largest group was the winegrowers as was found in 1860 with merchants next followed by carpenters, the same sequence found in 1860. As in 1860 there were ten persons reporting income from vineyards whose occupation was other than winegrower. All ten were of the upper income group. The actual number of persons employed at various trades changed during the 1860s. The fifty five persons listed as winegrower or vinedresser were

twice the next most numerous occupation class--carpenters and represented
*
one-fifth of the total work force in Hermann.

The list of property ownership and various sources of indirect evidence indicate that there were numerous individuals who worked small vineyards on the outlying hills of Hermann. The actual number of people directly involved in the culture of vineyards in the town of Hermann itself in 1870 was probably closer to one third of the total number of workers. In the countryside around Hermann the wine growing momentum continued unabated as well. Of the approximately 250 farms in Roark township over 150 reported⁶⁸ making quantities of wine in the census of 1870.

METAMORPHOSIS OF THE WINE INDUSTRY 1870-1885

After the halcyon years leading to the census year 1870 the growers of Hermann and vicinity were given two more years of relative prosperity before the first unmistakable signs appeared of trouble ahead. After the season of 1873 George Husmall wrote, "Grape growing in the west, and especially in our State, promising and lucrative as it was in its infancy, is at present under a cloud. The markets are flooded and glutted with cheap wines and low⁶⁹ priced grapes, so low, indeed, that they will hardly pay the grower...." Too many had entered the field and wine that had sold for four dollars per gallon in 1865 ten years later sold for just 60¢ a gallon. The inevitable result of overplanting and wine production were exacerbated by extremely bad crop years later in the 1870s.

While the 1870s dampened the spirits of many, the resultant shake-out of the industry left the few who remained in a better position to capture the market. From the remaining group the firm of Michael Poeschel and Scherer

★

not included in the figure are day laborers, apprentices.

stood out well above the others. Their reputation for quality had been repeatedly augmented by various awards including a bronze medal at the 1875 Vienna exposition, and much more important, a gold medal at the Philadelphia Centennial exposition in 1876, giving them a broad based national reputation and name recognition so valuable to commercial prospects.

During the 1870s the company had sought and won a larger share of the always growing St. Louis market for wine, establishing a St. Louis office to handle the growing trade. In 1867 and later in 1871 George Starck and William Herzog, in that order, came to the firm as traveling salesman with the purpose of opening markets in other parts of the country. Both were so successful that they were later brought into the company. Even in troubled financial times it was possible to sell Missouri wine, and particularly the product of the vineyards of Hermann.

As the decade progressed the strong association already fixed in the minds of the outside world of Hermann and its winemaking reputation underwent a fundamental change. It was in this era that the single winery of Poeschel and Scherer (later the Stone Hill Wine Co.) became virtually synonymous with Hermann. The first such association came in a description of Hermann published in the St. Louis Journal in 1877, but the best illustration was published ten years later in the Jefferson City Tribune:

"THE LARGEST WINE CELLAR IN THE UNITED STATES LOCATED AT HERMANN"

"It is curious that so few people have a correct idea of the immense capacity of the Stone Hill Wine Company. A glance at the map shows Hermann to be a small town of some 1500 inhabitants, and hence the common idea that great things must come from great cities. The Stone Hill Wine Company has no competitor in the west, either in magnitude or superior facilities. In the vicinity of Hermann the country is devoted almost exclusively to grape culture, and while the company utilizes all home products, grapes are shipped from the far west. The wine cellar has a capacity of nearly 400,000 gallons, one great cask alone holding 4,552 gallons. The casks in the cellars cost over \$63,000, and every else is in

comparison. The quality of the wine manufactured is the very best. For a little town like Hermann, such a vast and valuable enterprise is a great wonder, but it has existed and increased rapidly for thirty years." 71

Despite the increasing centralization of the wine industry with the growth of the Stone Hill Wine co. in the 1870s and 1880s, there were still important wine makers in Hermann and the surrounding countryside, but relative to the Stone Hill Wine co. they were small indeed, though many survived through establishing a strong reputation for quality wine assuring them at least a small market share. Many former wine makers became grape growers selling the product of their vineyard to the Stone Hill Wine Co.

72

or one of the smaller vintners. Only a handful of the former wine growers in the town of Hermann continued to commercially make wine in the 1880s, though it is difficult with certainty to diagram the production with any accuracy because for the first time in four decades the census enumerator neglected to cover the vineyards within the town itself. Only one wine cellar and press house was built after circa 1878, and that was cause for notice in the paper with a comment alluding to the poor state of the industry for small wineries: "The new winecellar and presshouse of Julius Hundhausen is intended to be completed in time to receive the grape juice of the next vintage. It is an indication that the winegrowers are not disheartened

73

yet when they build new wine cellars"

Significantly it is during the 1870s that many of the first generation of wine growers were approaching advanced age. Many simply gave up their vineyards, sold them or in a few instances passed them on to their sons. The net result of the upheaval in wine making during the 1870s and 1880s was a decrease in its importance. The limited profits compared to the immediate post war era caused or influenced many to drop out of the business.

Financial conditions at large were not favorable for a number of years following the nationwide Panic of 1873. Few buildings were erected during the mid 1870s, but apparently the bust gave way to a boom in construction⁷⁴ in the late 1870s, lasting for almost ten years. Growth in trade passing through Hermann fostered the development of a fourth commercial street in Hermann to add to Wharf, East 1st, and Market streets. East 4th street between Schiller and Market was for the most part residential before 1878 with a few residence-shops, the newspaper office, and a cooper shop. In 1878 with addition of a number of buildings the newspaper editor remarked that E. 4th street "will be one of the main business streets in Hermann ere⁷⁵ long." Just a few years later he was able to write that new construction gave "the south side of the street the appearance of a solid business block⁷⁶ only found in larger cities...."

The trade territory of Hermann prospered in the late 1870s and 1880s directly affecting the town of Hermann itself. Wheat continued to be the staple product for market export and Gasconade county and region became leading producers in the state with a ready market in the expanding⁷⁷ St. Louis urban area. A few enterprising Hermanners were also busy expanding the trade territory further by sending steamboats up the Gasconade River to tap the huge market in the broad valley which, without a railroad, had difficulty getting their produce to a market profitably.

In the early 1880s the two Wohlt brothers, August and Gustav, built several steamboats with the necessary shallow draft of 12 to 16 inches needed to ascend the broad but shallow Gasconade River. By 1885 there were four boats operating the river bringing back country produce--primarily wheat and lumber--to be offloaded at the Hermann wharf. In one year from 1884-1885 the boats hauled over 225,000 bushels of wheat and over 400,000 feet of walnut and pine lumber. The steamers continued in business on the

Gasconade through the early part of the century augmenting the financial
78
health of Hermann for many years.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and into the present
century fruit growing became a major item of export raised in town and
countryside. Peaches, apples and pears would be brought in during season
and bartered or sold to the wholesale grocery merchants who shipped them
79
out by railroad car to St. Louis. In 1883 one Hermann entrepreneur,
Eugene Nasse built an evaporating apparatus to dry apples. During season
80
the business ran day and night employing 200 persons.

Fruit growing and wine making provided a focus for the newly reincorporated
agricultural fairs held at the fairgrounds. The county agricultural society
had, since the late 1850s held fairs for judging of wines, but these affairs
were attended by those in the business and were seen as opportunities
for wine makers to gather and discuss new innovations, etc. In 1876 there
was a reorganization under the name Gasconade Agricultural Association
which began a more vigorous campaign of promoting local wines and
fruits through the agricultural fair. At least as early as 1881 special
excursion trains of eight to ten cars with upwards of 1500 people (equal
to the entire population of Hermann at that time) would come to town for
a special day of entertainment. Local and regional music groups, bands,
etc. would entertain while the visitors made free of the wine cellars,
brewery, saloons, etc. Though the emphasis was on the very obvious products
of the vineyard the excursions appear to have been oriented to the family
81
with special rates for children on the train.

CULTURAL LIFE

The focus of social and cultural life in Hermann was fixed on the

saloon or wine hall through most of the nineteenth century after an initial phase centered on the Erholung society whose building was designed to accomodate meetings, theatrical productions, etc. However, with the construction of the Musik Halle (inventory #42) in 1857 the orientation shifted to the building which would function as both saloon--center of social function--and on the floor above as a hall for dances, lectures, etc. Interest waned and the Erholung society disbanded selling their building in 1867 the same year another of the combination function buildings was construction; the St. Charles Hall (inventory #187). The Concert Hall (inventory #24) built in 1878 was the greatest of the three stirring great excitement when it was built and quickly assuming first place in the social-cultural scale--a position unchallenged until well into this century.

The status of the better saloons was augmented by their role in the music culture of the community, a source of great pride in the German communities of Missouri. Several of the saloons had bands which played for the entertainment of their customers, Sundays being a particularly popular day. In the 1880s the Concert Hall and Koeller's Saloon (inventory #176) added outdoor 'summer gardens' where music was a regular feature.

Wine was not the only drink sold in the Hermann saloons, There were beer breweries in Hermann as early as the 1840s, and in 1856 Jacob Strobel built the first part of the building complex that would become the biggest and best known (inventory #219). Through the 1860s Strobel made around 1000 gallons annually. In 1875 Hugo Kropp, an experienced brewer from St. Louis, leased and later purchased the newly expanded brewery and continued until his death early in this century, acquiring a regional reputation for quality beer. At the brewery Kropp kept a saloon with ladies parlor and a brass band for entertainment bearing his name.

The making and consumption of beer and wine was an important part of the social, cultural as well as economic way of life in Hermann in the nineteenth century. So much so that when their Anglo-American neighbors, and forces throughout the state, tried to swing the state into the alcohol prohibition camp in the late 1870s and the early 1880s the Hermanners reacted sharply and swiftly. As the temperance movement gained momentum in the 1870s Hermanners derided those who took the pledge with sarcastic humor. The following quotes come from the Advertiser-Courier the first in 1875 and the second in 1877:

"Hermann is a poor place for a man to take the temperance pledge as a certain gentleman found out ...He had made up his mind that he would not drink anything intoxicating during the next year.... During the afternoon he stepped into the brewery of Mr. Hugo Kropp and this proved to be the downfall of all his castles in the air resolves. As soon as friend Hugo espied him he filled up two bumpers with his delicious lager and invited him to drink to the new year. His surprise was great when he was told by his guest that he did not drink anymore, but he was also up to the emergency, calling on several parties to assist, seized the teetotaler and gave him a glass of beer about the same as a mother would compell an obstinate child to swallow a spoonfull of castor-oil...After the first drops had passed down his throat he found that it tasted excellent and...ordered the jolly host to set them up again as he had to drink pretty fast now to make up for what he lost in the fore part of the day. He thinks Hermann a very poor place for teetotalers..."⁸²

The editor reserved his best thunder for the Anglo-American protestants many of who led the charge for prohibition:

"Grape Jelly dissolved in water has been adopted for communion purposes in a Troy Methodist Church composed largely of Prohibitionists. Evidently the prohibitionist people are holier than Jesus Christ, who used good wholesome table wine."⁸³

Unfortunately, the problem became more serious as the prohibitionists gained political support. The next move from Hermann was to send a resolution to the legislature in January of 1881 describing the economic dependency of the region on wine making:

"that in our county very large interests are involved in fruit and grape growing and that such a law (prohibition) as is now proposed in the legislature would be ruinous to best interests of our county--That while we are not blest with rich and valuable lands our citizens by their energy and hard labor have converted our hill sides and slopes into fine orchards and vineyards and that such a law as proposed would at once ruin the labor of many years...."84

One month later the citizens of Hermann organized the "Anti-Prohibition Society", a response to the prohibition movement which could well have been unique.

Besides the threat to their way of life--economically and socially--the Hermanners came to feel that the prohibition movement was also an attack on their culture: that they were being singled out as German by 'nativists'.⁸⁵ Ultimately the momentum diminished in the push for prohibition in the state and the external threat to Hermann passed away for the time being.

However, there was an undercurrent of animosity that surfaced periodically between the American and German-American. The 1880s would prove pivotal to the assimilation of Germans into mainstream American culture or their resistance to it. The issue was alluded to but never referred to directly in the local paper. The following, however, illustrates the pressure building up within the community:

"One of the most thoroughly Americanized Germans and withal a very excentric (sic) individual was brought ...on a charge of disturbing the peace. It seems this individual...first made his appearance at the residence of Mr. J. Jordan...where he in the language of the Fatherland, requested Mr. Jordan to give him his breakfast and a shirt....When he reached Hermann he....opened conversation with Mrs. Bauer in the English language, which, it seems was not understood by his fair hostess, whereat he became thoroughly disgusted and informed her in the German language that she was living in the United States: that the english was the language of this Country and that any body who could not speak and understand the English language had no rights which other people were bound to respect...."86

One can easily read the tension which existed within certain community segments.

The issue in the confrontation illustrated above may have been limited to language, but the division went deeper than that. Language was only the overt and easily grasped difference between Anglo-Americans and Americanized Germans on the one hand and German-Americans on the other whose loyalties lay with their heritage first.

Most of the community chose to adhere to their German culture and heritage, and the 1880s gave them two opportunities to express their choice. The first came in 1883 with the celebration of the Bi-Centennial of German immigration to this country. In Hermann the celebration was of two days duration culminating at the Concert Hall on the last day with singing, dancing, various tableaux of past historical events, one "representing German life today, i.e. the social features". The whole was followed by a speech which summed up the reawakened sense of the community:

"...in all vital questions the Germans had been found on the side of liberty and equal rights to all, and had taken active part in establishing and sustaining our free institutions and at the close of his remarks exhorted his hearers to do their part to perpetuate German customs and German virtues in this country. The speech was received with great applause and it was evident that the speaker had expressed the sentiments of nearly everybody present."⁸⁷

Three years later the town celebrated the semi-centennial of the founding of the town. The enthusiasm generated by the event astonished all with a three day festival which attracted visitors from all over the state for dancing, parades, speeches, music, and special parade floats commemorating special events with historical tableaux and floats sponsored by the major business concerns.
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Hermanners were very much aware of their uniqueness and preserved an image of the ideals which motivated those who were its early founders. The recognition of the special history of the community included mourning the

the loss of those early founders one by one in the 1880s. By 1886 and the semi-centennial the newspaper noted that only three of the original founders⁸⁹ of Hermann survived--Louis Austermull, Peter Zorn and H.G. Gentner.

The zest with which the Hermanners embraced their history and culture in the 1880s did not lessen the appearance of cracks in the facade. Perhaps most illustrative of the conflict is the change found in the architecture of the period. During the same decade as the two German festivals the first residences were built departing from traditional appearance and shape. Both were the residences of the enormously wealthy owners of the Stone Hill Wine Company, George Starck and William Herzog. Herzog's mansion is a pastiche of architectural elements and form dominated by the theme of the German Renaissance revival with its prominent multiple stepped gable parapet (inventory #514). George Starck's 'Wine Castle' as it was called was built in the popular Second Empire style with an exuberance of detail and visual eclecticism (inventory #619). Both mansions must have shocked the sensibilities of most Hermanners. In 1886 the first commercial building to depart from tradition was built on a prominent corner lot in town (inventory #6). Monnig's store is a Mansard roofed Second Empire building which stands in stark contrast to the staid straightforward facades of its neighbors on First street.

The united front of German-Americanism was broken in the most highly visible way. Actually, it was not the first time. Charles D. Eitzen built a high style Greek Revival mansion facing the wharf in 1853-5, a house which could have been built in any urban center in the United States at that period (inventory #2). However, Eitzen's house was an anomaly while the appearance of national taste and fashion in architecture during the 1880s was the leading edge of a transformation in the community. The cultural chauvinism and conservatism of Hermann was immune to the rhythms of sweeping nationwide

movements which had an impact on the community but always in a most limited wayas for example an Italianate bracketed porch might simply be added to the facade of a traditional German vernacular dwelling.*

Now the break was complete. Beginning in the 1880s there would henceforth be a small number of dwellings and commercial buildings erected whose origins were the rapidly multiplying architectural plan booksavailable from coast to coast, rather than the traditional lexicon of the traditional regional German builder. However, it should be noted that the vernacular tradition remained dominant for many years well into this century.

THE PERIOD ca. 1885 to ca. 1915

The next phase of the history of the Hermann region begins in the late 1880s and extends to the period of World War I. For the majority of the region's farmers and, thus indirectly the town of Hermann, it was a period of diminished expectations. The wine industry was still one of the pillars of the regions economy, but the movement toward centralization begun in the early 1880s was stabilized with most farmers dependent on selling their grapes for whatever the big wine makers would pay which, coupled with unfavorable growing seasons, made for hard times for many:

"The area of vineyards has rather decreased since the last eight or ten years. A great many wine growers who formerly made their own wine have to sell their grapes now to large wineries. The prices for grapes have come down, and rot very often diminishes the crops."90

The reputation the county had developed for wine making over the preceeding 50 years remained unchallenged, despite hard times. Even the staid Bureau of Labor Statistics described Gasconade county as "Missouri's banner county

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See the second section of this report:"Classification of the Vernacular Traditions in the Hermann Region"

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for grapes and wine" in 1896. In that year there were 214,000 gallons of wine shipped to market from Gasconade county far above the smaller wine producing counties in the state.

For the dozen or so small scale wineries which survived there was still a ready market for their quality wines. In proof of this in 1904 a medium scale winery was built with presshouse and cellars on one of the primary business corners in the town of Hermann, probably the last winery to be established in the state and region before prohibition. Henry Sohns and Sons winery (inventory #404) broke into the market with apparent success. for the brief length of time it was in business before Prohibition in 1918.

The formula for success seems to have been aggressive marketing and no one was better at this than the Stone Hill Wine Company under the sole ownership of George Starck. By 1895 the wine company's share of the wine market was probably near 90 percent. The capacity production of the winery was approximately 200,000 gallons annually. Starck had several drummers (traveling salesmen) on the road most of the year traveling throughout the entire eastern and northern parts of the country taking orders. Starck added to the building complex on the hill above the town and expanded the company's range of products by adding brandies made from local orchard fruits such as peaches, apples, apricots, etc. By 1905 the company shipped
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nearly 30,000 gallons of various brandies.

But it was in the area of wine production that the Stone Hill Wine Company together with other local wineries surpassed themselves at the turn of the century. A series of favorable crop years coupled with the expansion campaign of the Stone Hill Wine Company boosted production of wine by an astonishing ten times so that in 1904 very nearly 3,000,000 gallons of wine was shipped from Gasconade county placing the county fifth

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nationwide among wine producing districts. By way of comparison within the state Putnam county was next in production with 20,316 gallons. The incredible production in Gasconade county was enough to take Missouri into 12th place nationally in a period of rapid growth of the wine making industry nationwide. However, production was dependent on a wild array of variables most out of the control of vintners. In 1909 not quite 250,000 gallons of wine were reported from the entire state. The production figures would continue to fluctuate for the rest of the era of wine making in Hermann until 1918 when Prohibition brought everything to a standstill.

The loss in jobs and income to the community and vicinity as a result of Prohibition must have been enormous. However, the community of Hermann had by good fortune acquired a shoe factory in 1902 established by "several liberal minded citizens" which later incorporated with the International Shoe company (inventory #201). The factory employed about 400 persons in Hermann and continued to do so as late as 1930. In a town of 1500 people the number employed at this single enterprize represented a significant portion of the potential workforce, especially significant when measured against the loss of the wine industry.

In a curious turn of events it was found that the extensive cellars of the Stone Hill Wine Company were suited to the growing of mushrooms which was first successfully attempted in the early 1920s. The daily harvest was from 800 to 2200 pounds shipped to Kansas City, St. Louis and Chicago. The important enterprize employed 31 persons in town by 1930. Agriculture of course was a mainstay in the trade region of northern Gasconade county. Wheat and some livestock continued to the primary exports.

On August 27, 1930 the bridge over the Missouri River was dedicated culminating a campaign of several years duration. The primary motive force for the bridge came from within the community and a committee of local men who succeeded in interesting a toll bridge company in its construction. After much political wrangling the plan was approved in Congress (who had final say in the matter) providing a mechanism whereby the state could purchase the bridge which is what happened before the bridge opened.¹⁰⁰

The bridge provided an important north-south link between US highway 40 to the north and highway 50 to the south. The favorable financial and business climate emerging from the wreckage of prohibition in the 1920s, the secure employment and payroll of the shoe factory and the mushroom factory, and the vital market link provided by the bridge created a small spurt in growth for the first time in nearly 75 years in Hermann's history as the population grew from 1500 to just over 2000 in the 1930s.

New houses went, most built in the late 1920s on the lands of the former vineyards of the Stone Hill Wine Company a tract of 80 acres designed and¹⁰¹ plated in 1923 and added to the town as Stark's Addition.

With the new construction boom of the 1920s the thread with past building traditions was visibly broken completely, as was much that was held of value for the sake of German heritage and tradition in Hermann. World War I brought disillusionment among German-Americans and raised the level of antipathy toward things German among the nation at large leading to the overt abandonment of much that had distinguished communities such as Hermann from the country as a whole. After World War I the German language would never again be taught as the primary language in the schools of Hermann. The newspaper ceased to publish its German edition in the mid 1920s.

The eclectic revival styles and bungalows built in the 1920s are physical evidence of the mass movement of Hermann into the mainstream of national American--not German-American--culture.

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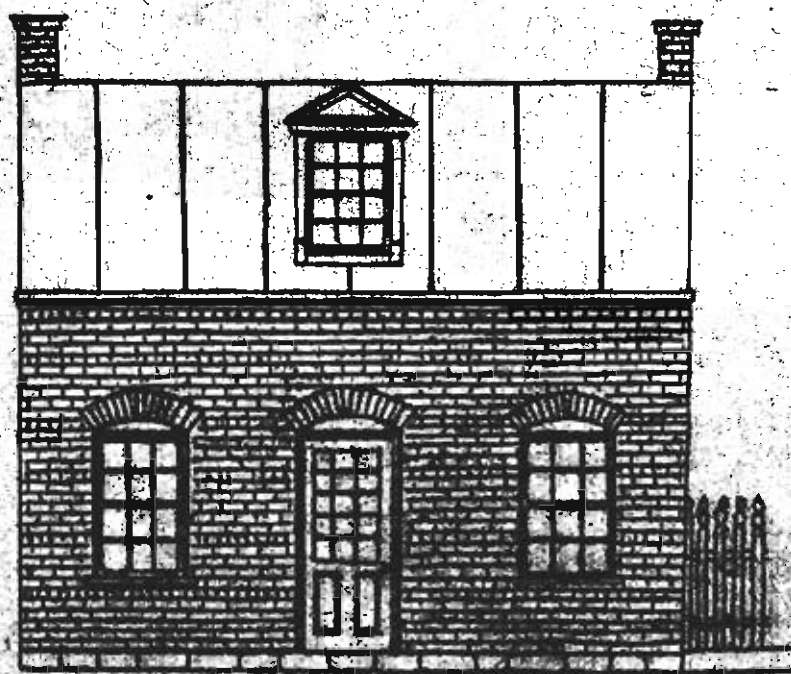
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HERMANN SURVEY

Phase 1 - Part 1



ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY AND STUDY OF HERMANN, MISSOURI

PHASE ONE--PART ONE

MISSOURI HERITAGE TRUST

with matching grant funding through

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources--
Division of Parks and Historic Preservation

Prepared by:

David Denman

October 1984

The following architectural inventory is only a small part of a long range project which the Missouri Heritage Trust has begun in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources--Division of Parks and Historic Preservation, and with local Hermann organizations and government.

Our goals begin with a comprehensive study and analysis of the architecture and architectural history of Hermann working cooperatively toward a preservation planning program addressing the needs of all the participating groups.

This volume is composed of the first group of detailed architectural descriptions that will ultimately be expanded to include all the buildings fifty years and older within the greater Hermann area. It should be noted that there is no historical information appended to the forms on each building. Part of the program for the next year will be to supply that information together with an historical-cultural narrative context.

Each building has a unique inventory number which may be located through reference to the map on the following page. The cover sheet to each building is the inventory form used by the Missouri Heritage Trust throughout the state. The information on the inventory form is only intended as a quick reference backed up by further detail found on the additional accompanying sheets. The second page is a verbal description of exterior architectural form and element. It is intended to be as complete as possible, though sometimes circumstances--such as the late summer foliage--made it difficult if not impossible to accurately describe certain elevations on a given building.

A drawing of the roof plan and building shape follows giving in most cases the relationship to adjacent buildings and always the position of the building relative to the streets--indicated by a broad heavy line. The last item is a photograph.

This volume will be expanded and incorporated into the larger product anticipated approximately one year from this date.

