

HISTORIC INVENTORY
Kirksville, Missouri

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The Northeast Missouri Regional Planning Commission was contracted for a reconnaissance level survey of structures of interest for various reasons within the city limits of Kirksville, Missouri. This area is located within Benton Township in the County of Adair, Township 62 N and Range 15 W. The survey was designed to provide a sampling of any structures of value, because of age, architectural quality, or historical significance. From the buildings looked at and their resulting forms the development of Kirksville, from it's founding in 1841 until it's decline during the years of the Depression, can be traced.

In this historic inventory 80 structures were surveyed. Most of these fall within the earlier platted areas of the town, but because of the scattered situations of these structures some fall into later additions to the town. A good example is the Brashear/Shane House (#1) which was originally surrounded by farmlands. It was gradually surrounded by other residential structures as the addition started by it's current owner filled in. An historic inventory sheet was completed for all buildings of 1936 or before on the basis of their value as considered in relation to their age, historical, and architectural interest. These sheets are arranged chronologically from earliest to latest. All inventory sheets include: the street address if available, a description of prominent architectural features concentrating on the main facade, an estimated date of construction and additions, a tentative identification of style or design, an on-site completion of #'s 28-40 on the historic inventory sheet; and at least one photograph of the principal facade. When available and pertinent the names and years of occupation of various owners has been included, with a focus upon those which were most socially or economically important to the development of Kirksville. In most instances historic information including early photographs of the structures and also their builder/occupants has been included. Various maps have been included in the survey.

History about the town of Kirksville is available from several literary sources. The two most important were: The History of Adair County Missouri, by E.M. Violette, and The Book of Adair County History compiled during the American Bicentennial and edited by a Board of prominent Adair Countians. Large amounts of information were drawn from atlases and plat books of Adair County and from interviews with residents of the area. Also helpful were pre-1936 city directories and fire insurance maps.

1830-1861 Antebellum Kirksville

As the rest of Missouri, Kirksville started as a part of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. In 1821 the State was admitted to the Union even though the bulk of that territory was unsettled or even broken down into small governmental units. Until 1841 Adair County was a part of first Howard and then Chariton counties. After the creation of the county, the Missouri General Assembly appointed three men to locate the county seat. The site they located was the northwest quarter of section nine in township 62. At that time the nearest structure to the town site was the long since disappeared tavern of Jesse Kirk. Local tradition holds that Mr. and Mrs. Kirk fed and liquored the three commissioners and in gratitude they named the town after the Kirks. As far as is known no structures from this very early period in the town's history survive. If examples did remain they would almost certainly be log or milled wood: the log structures being single pen or dogtrot, (both of which have documented examples in the county) and the structures of lumber variations on the I-house. It appears that only 3 structures remain from antebellum Kirksville and none of them lie within the original 16 blocks of the town. The Shane property (#1), the Brown property (#2) and the Fickell residence (not inventoried) have all been considerably altered (the later so much as to make it unidentifiable as an antebellum structure). The former two are variations on the I-house form. Both these structures are built of milled hardwoods and have foundations of soft local brick and limestone. The limestone was brought probably from the Chariton River, about 6 miles to the east. All these structures have hand-hewn sills and/or other hand hewn members. There are no reports of any log structures remaining in the city limits of Kirksville.

Kirksville was incorporated in 1857, while the town's population had yet to reach 700. Despite this number of people no formal church or school buildings had been completed. Church services and school classes were held in private homes or the courthouse. Religious services were held by different denominations and conducted by circuit riding ministers. Because of the wide spectrum of ethnic backgrounds of persons settling in Kirksville neither a concise ethnic nor a religious history can be traced. As with the remainder of Adair County, settlers in Kirksville were from Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri or other parts of the U.S. Perhaps this lack of coherence in religious and ethnic heritage is responsible for the slow development of the town prior to the Civil War. Though very little evidence is available to show the exact number of structures in the town at that time, a photograph of the Linder Building soon after it's completion in 1858 shows no buildings adjacent to it and only one in the background.

The Battle of Kirksville is the most important event in the early history of the town. On August 6, 1862, the residents of Kirksville were forced to evacuate their houses so Confederate troops could barricade themselves in them. The battle started at about 11:00 and continued for 3 hours. It's fighting centered around the second courthouse which was situated where the present one stands. This structure was completed in 1858, but burned in 1865. References are made to the courthouse, the Cumberland Academy, the Ivie Hotel and the Parcel Mansion. The latter three were used as hospitals. Their locations, along with others, which have at least vague references, are shown on the following maps.

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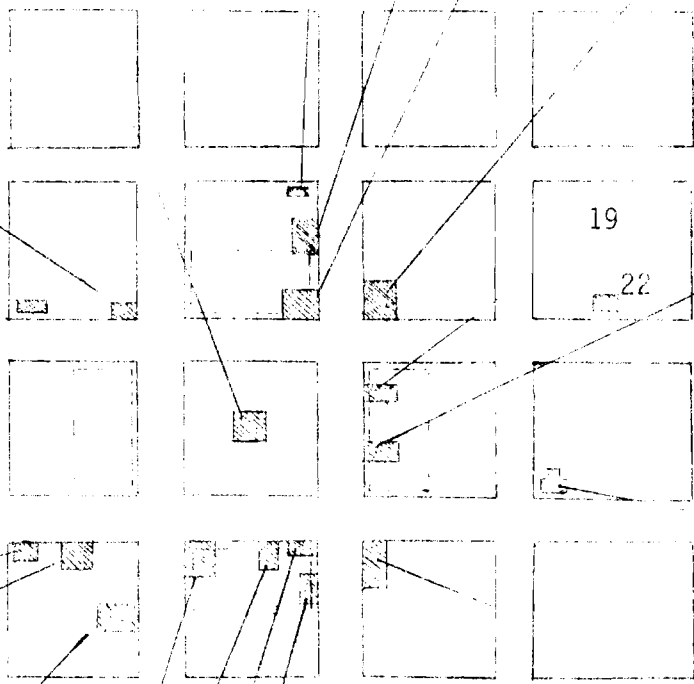
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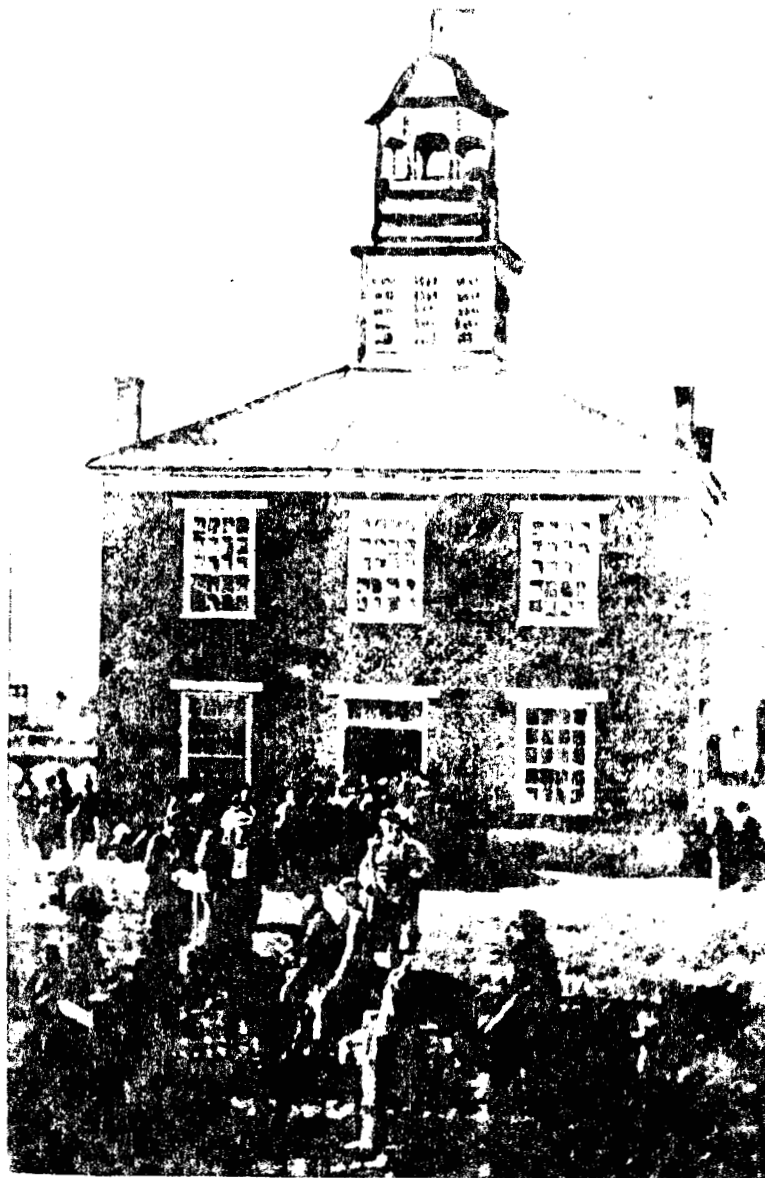
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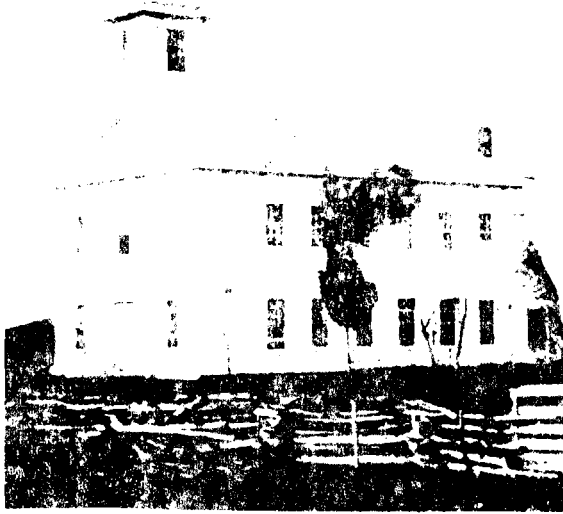
- 1) Kirk Tavern c. 1840
- 2) Brown Property c. 1860 - #2
- 3) Cumberland Academy
- 4) Unidentified Residence c. 1860
- 5) Townsend Store c. 1846
- 6) Sloan Cabin 1840
- 7) Cutts or Coots House
- 8) First Courthouse c. 1840's
- 9) First Jail c. 1858
- 10) Unidentified House c. 1860
- 11) Ivie Hotel or Building c. 1860
- 12) Second Courthouse 1858
- 13) Unidentified Residence c. 1860
- 14) Ben Murphy Saloon c. 1846
- 15) Unidentified Hotel - possibly North Missouri Hotel
- 16) Sherwood Hotel
- 17) Saloon c. 1860
- 18) Kirksville Branch of St. Louis Bank Building 1859
- 19) Hannah General Store c. 1855
- 20) Harness Shop of A. Medley
- 21) Linder Building c. 1858
- 22) Unidentified Residence c. 1850 remodeled by Irwin Dunbar c. 1920
- 23) Unidentified Residence c. 1850
- 24) Presbyterian Church begun c. 1860 never finished
- 25) Dr. Willard's House c. 1850
- 26) Unidentified 1 story house in Linder Building Photo c. 1858
- 27) Pickell House c. 1860 - remodeled c. 1920
- 28) Thatcher Store Building c. 1855
- 29) Unidentified House c. 1860



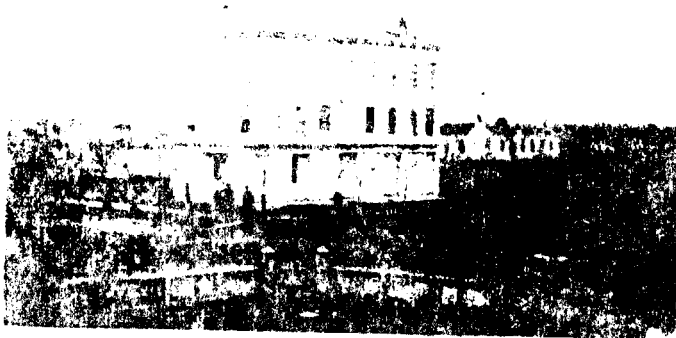
The Parcels Mansion, Circa 1860,
Photo Circa 1900



Second Adair County Courthouse, Circa 1853-55, burned 1865



The Cumberland Academy, Building #3



The Linder Building #21



The St. Louis Branch Bank Building #18

Slave Schedules from 1860 and 1850 show that slavery was never a great issue in the county or in Kirksville. However some residents did have house servants. The Parcel Mansion is said to have had a rear wing in which slaves were kept. This home was also something of a social center and may indicate the opulence of lifestyle enjoyed by at least some residents of Kirksville prior to the war. The house was demolished in 1962 but a photograph of it remains. It is said to have had double parlours (with a grand piano), 3 staircases, a balconied cupola and a fireplace in every room. During the war the house was hit by at least one cannon and riddled with bullets.

Education in Kirksville prior to the war was probably rather sketchy. Apparently W.P. Nason operated a small school which was funded by tuition and whatever public funds were available. He conducted classes in a rented room at first, then in a school he had built, and lastly in the Cumberland Building. Probably there were other private schools as well. During the war school was to a large extent suspended.

Religion has played an important role in the settling of the county though it's role has always been a secondary one. Prior to the Civil War church services were held by circuit riding ministers in private homes or any available structure. When faced with crowds of greater size ministers often held services in groves. After the completion of the courthouse, it was made available on Saturdays and Sundays for religious services.

The earliest ministers in the Kirksville area were Baptist and Methodist preachers. Rev. Abram Still is reputed to have been the first person to deliver a sermon in Kirksville, probably in c. 1840. He came to Macon County Missouri in 1836, and like other circuit riders, rode to the scattered settlements in the newly settled county. Due to his and other's efforts the Baptist and Methodist churches gained the earliest foothold in Kirksville, and remain yet the town's strongest denominations.

Prior to 1856 Kirksville residents held religious meetings in homes or other buildings. In that year however, the county court issued an order allowing it's chambers to be used by any religious denomination on Saturdays and Sundays provided that it was not needed for county functions. If either a political or railroad speaking was planned it would take precedence over a religious service. The use of the court chambers was particularly helpful to denominations with very few members, such as Roman Catholics. It allowed them to hold regular services without the burden of supporting a building.

Though according to some accounts Kirksville had no church buildings prior to the war at least one reference is made to a Presbyterian church south of the square. It was possibly from it's tower that part of the battle was watched. The only reference to a church building prior to the war was to the Cumberland Academy Building. The structure served a variety of purposes and was almost certainly used for church services. Despite the lack of buildings it is known that the Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Methodists and Presbyterians had congregations in Kirksville prior to the war.

It seems that Kirksville came about only because it was selected as the site for the county seat. It's growth prior to the war was sporadic. Much of the progress made by it's residents was obliterated during or after the war. Kirksville came not to rely upon itself but upon outside circumstances which insured its future.

1862-1868 The Post War Years

After the war little activity took place in the town. This period is marked by the courthouse fire of 1865 and the suspension of the city government. The fire completely destroyed the two story structure. Some of the records were saved and are preserved today in the present courthouse. It appears that this era was spent mainly in re-building and re-organizing. Apparently the county was poor as it was not until 1898 that a new courthouse could be constructed. Records from this period are sketchy and it appears that until the coming of the railroad in 1868, that Kirksville was depressed. If examples of architecture exist from this time they are yet to be identified. The gap in structures dating from this period seems to reflect the lack of activity in Kirksville.

Almost all church activities were suspended during and for a good while after the war. Most of the early congregations in Kirksville reorganized in the late 1860's and by 1870 most had started to plan church buildings. The first church building for the Methodist Episcopal church was completed in 1871. The M.E. Church South completed two structures in Kirksville in 1871-72. The Baptists erected a brick building in 1872. The Disciples of Christ had aquired a lot by 1871, but their building was not completed until 1876. The Presbyterian churches (the earlier congregation were called the Cumberland Presbyterians), were the earliest to reorganize after the war and build buildings, both completing structures by 1869. It was after 1870 that an Episcopal denomination was started in Kirksville. A small church building was erected that same year. Other miscellaneous denominations were started during those years, but none had any lasting success. None of the above mentioned buildings, most of which were frame, still exist. Almost all of them were found to be too small, and during Kirksville's first years of expansion, were replaced.

