

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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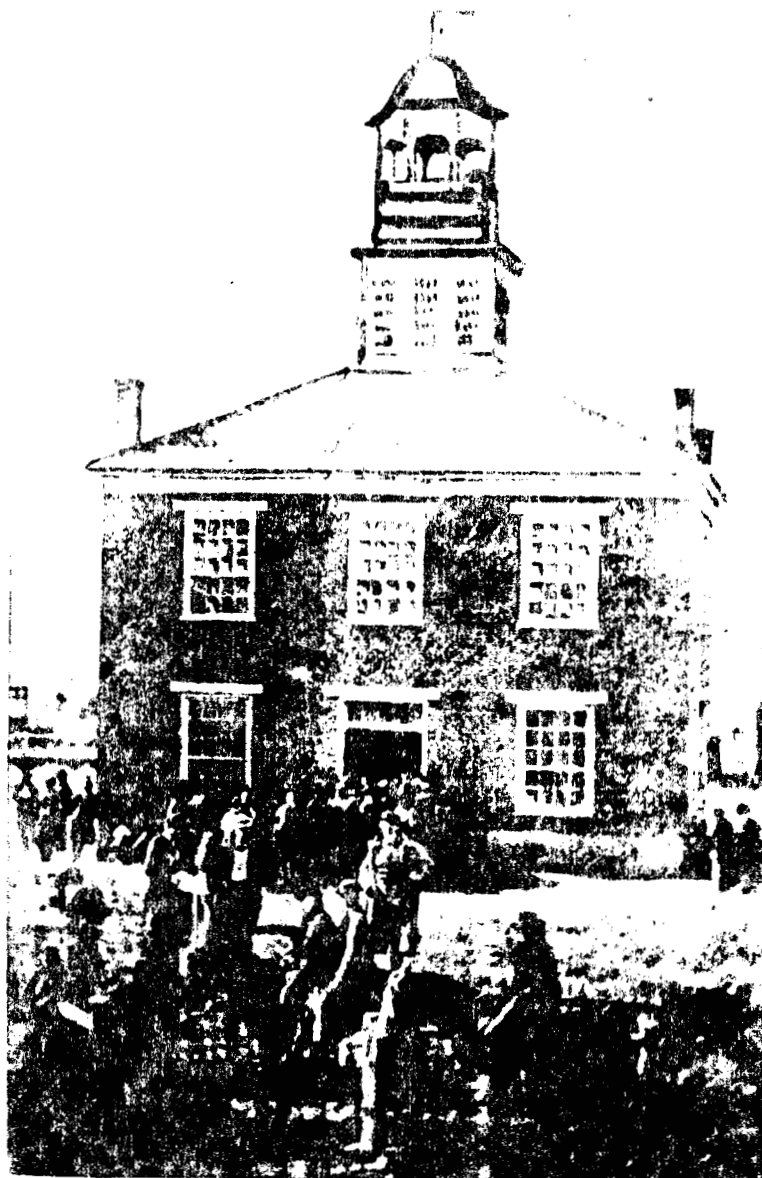
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- 1) Kirk Tavern c. 1840
- 2) Brown Property c. 1860 - #2
- 3) Cumberland Academy
- 4) Unidentified Residence c. 1860
- 5) Townsend Store c. 1846
- 6) Sloan Cabin 1840
- 7) Cutts or Coots House
- 8) First Courthouse c. 1840's
- 9) First Jail c. 1858
- 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



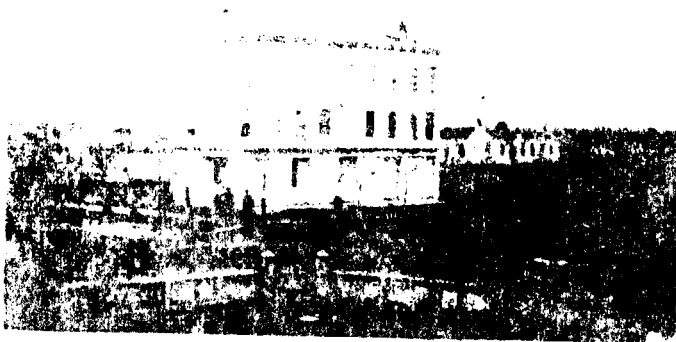
The Parcels Mansion, Circa 1860,
Photo Circa 1900



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 to small, and during Kirksville's first years of expansion, were replaced.

1868-1899 Early Expansion of Kirksville

Prior to the coming of railroad in 1868, Kirksville was rather isolated. The nearest waterway was the Chariton 6 miles to the west, which was not always navigable. A stage lines (at least one) stopped in Kirksville linking it to towns such as Edina and Memphis. Otherwise travel to and from the area was by horse or team. Taverns from this period remain in rural Adair County, though none remain in Kirksville proper. The building of the railroad which made travel easier to and from the town, combined with the arrival of Joseph Baldwin and Andrew Taylor Still set the basis for the expansion of Kirksville in the last years of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The interest resulting from the rail and establishment of schools is reflected in the reorganization and building of churches during this time, and the same pattern can be seen in the school systems. Also during this period in the town's history was the revival of it's government. Kirksville became in 1873 a city of the 4th class, and in 1892 one of the third class.

Following the set back of the war, the interest in buidling a network of rail lines reaching the Pacific resumed. The railroad would be important to Kirksville not only for transportation, but for providing an outlet for coal and livestock production. Since it stopped in Kirksville, it further strengthened the town's position as the economic center of the county.

The North Missouri Railroad was Chartered on March 4, 1851, and was authorized to build a rail line from St. Charles to the Northern border of the state. By 1859 the rail system had reached Macon, which lies c. 30 miles to the south of Kirksville. Work on the railroad was halted by the war, and afterwards it was difficult to find financiers to back further construction. The North Missouri reached Adair County in 1867 and Kirksville on July 4, 1868. The train left Macon at 9:30 that morning, arriving in Kirksville two hours later. Upon it's arrival a celebration was held at a nearby grove. Soon after the completion of the Macon/Kirksville line, the tracks were extended north past the Iowa border, giving Kirksville residents access to Des Moines.

In 1870 work began on a rail line from Quincy, Illinois to Kirksville. The line was completed by 1873. By 1888 it had been extended through Milan to Kansas City. This rail system gave Kirksville residents direct access to Illinois as well as Kansas and Nebraska.

Two important events helped insure Kirksville's success. One was the arrival of Joseph Baldwin in Kirksville in 1867. The other was the arrival of Andrew Taylor Still to this area in 1875. Both of these men would be keys to the development of Kirksville because of the schools they would establish.

Although Joseph Baldwin arrived in Kirksville in 1867, and opened a school in the remodeled Cumberland Academy building that same year, the school did not become recognized until 1870. In that year the school was recognized as one of the State Normal Schools by the Missouri General Assembly. This recognition along with it's growing reputation for academic excellence allowed the school to grow. During the following years the school grew steadily, cramping in it's one building, Baldwin Hall. After 1900 appropriations at the state level allowed for the building of a library annex and later, a science building. These allowed farther expansion of the institution. Fires and the school's own expansions have taken all of it's original buildings.

The First School of Osteopathy was started in Kirksville by Andrew Taylor Still in 1892. Mr. Still came to Kirksville in 1874 and established a medical practice. He promoted a revolutionary treatment of illness: bone manipulation. Prior to his arrival in Kirksville Dr. Still had lived in Kansas. He knew of Adair County through his father, Abram Still, a circuit riding minister who frequented northeastern Missouri for a time. Dr. Still's career in Kirksville prospered very steadily and culminated with his establishment of the osteopathic school. The school's enrollment expanded very greatly just a few years after its establishment. The institution provided jobs for many Kirksville residents, expanded the town's population from students and their families and because of its generated income, allowed the rise of an upper class of doctors. Several buildings associated with the establishment of the school are preserved. Most important is the school's first building, a modest two-room structure (#46).

The effects of the schools combined with Kirksville's role as a coal and livestock center served to make it expand rapidly in the late nineteenth century. Prior to 1900 industry played a relatively small role in the town's economy. The town's architecture was businesses, school buildings and the structures associated with its residents, homes occupied by doctors and faculty of the schools and the town residences of farmers and coal men. A good deal of these structures, especially the most impressive ones have disappeared or been converted to apartments. Kirksville's prosperity is marked not only by its opulent residences, but also by various public works during this time. Kirksville's first public water lines were operable in 1888. In 1890 sewer and drainage lines were installed in the city, and in 1885 the city started to pave its streets. Aside from these improvements, the most important forces which shaped Kirksville were random outside forces: the cyclone of 1899 and the fires that plagued the downtown area.

Notable structures remaining from this period include Italianate residences from the early 1870's (#'s 5-13) to Queen Anne homes from the 1880's and 90's (#'s 16-71). Also are the remaining stores around the square and the Dockery Hotel. Some of the earlier structures continue the tradition of the full or half I-house. The Johnson House (#9), and the Slone House (#10) are both good examples. Most remaining structures from the 1880's are in the Queen Anne style. Most of these are either hipped (one or two story) or Gable and Wing. In both cases these homes were embellished with bay windows and full or partial entrance porches. The Cubine House (#19) is a well preserved example of the former. The Salladay House (#24) shows a variation of a Gable and Wing Queen Anne with a front facade porch.

The Adair County Courthouse, completed 1899, #51, is one of the few Richardsonian structures from this era to survive. Also rather rare are well preserved commercial structures. However, the Dockery Hotel has survived with few alterations excepting its lower story. It also represents a popular material, pressed tin, and the common loose adaptation of Italian Renaissance motifs.

The present public school system began to take shape during this same time. Classes were held regularly in 1867-68 in various rented buildings. The first public school building was begun in 1869. The two story brick structure. It's four rooms soon proved inadequate and the town began renting other buildings. Despite the need for classrooms in Kirksville, the first bond issue in 1884 was defeated. It was not until 1887 that funding was voted to build two new schools. As Kirksville grew steadily, so did enrolment by 1898 two more buildings were needed and after the bond issue passed, work was started in 1899. None of these structures are extant. For various reasons all were replaced after 1900 by larger structures.

It was during 1874-1875 that a school was established for the negro population. Though there were never many black children in Kirksville a school called Lincoln was built in 1877. Most of it's students were descendants of household slaves from Kirksville.

It would appear, that throughout it's history, at least in it's commercial section, that the town has been plagued by fires. (Mention is made only rarely of residential fires.) At least all of the structures around the square have been replaced one or more times. This owes first to these structures being commonly of frame, and the inadequacy of water systems to extinguish fast spreading blazes. The first major fire in Kirksville was in 1873, when the entire west side of the square was destroyed. Between that fire and the more extensive one in 1890 the square has had at least 7 others which destroyed considerable property. The last and worst fire occurred on March 15, 1890. The blaze started on the south side of the square and before it was under control had destroyed all but three buildings on that side of the block. This and the other fires obliterated almost entirely the remaining structures from before 1862, making it difficult to visualize the town at the time of the battle. As it is, most of the structures around the square date c. 1880-1900, though often these are unrecognizable because of later additions or, most commonly, alterations to facades.

Aside from the fires which plagued Kirksville, a great tornado in 1899 nearly wiped out the town. The storm hit the southwestern part of Kirksville on April 27, and destroyed residences in an irregular path which led diagonally through the town. Apparent from photographs taken after the storm are the large amounts of houses either entirely destroyed or at least so heavily damaged as to be necessary to be rebuilt. It is thought that a good deal of the remaining antebellum residences were destroyed by the tornado. Hundreds of homes were destroyed and 40 lives were lost outright. Aid to the storm victims was started immediately despite the still dangerous weather after the tornado. Most of the town which was damaged by the tornado was rebuilt fairly quickly and thus accounts for the large number of late Victorian structures in that part of the town.

The completion of the rail system in Kirksville made it's situation somewhat better and reduced to an extent it's isolation. The two educational institutions, the State Normal School and the School of Osteopathy drew people from diverse areas and backgrounds for education and teaching. Lastly the opening to a larger extent the coal fields in the Novinger area provided opportunities for new jobs. These forces combined helped swell the congregations of the churches already in Kirksville, and allowed the establishment of several new denominations.

The extent of growth for the established churches was so great that new buildings were required. During the 1880's and 90's all the church structures from the late 1860's to the 1870's were demolished and replaced by brick structures, usually in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Exceptions to this were the Roman Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church, both of these were frame. All the churches from this era have been destroyed. Most of these structures have been demolished by their congregations to allow for new structures. The Catholic Church however was destroyed by the cyclone of 1899. There is only one exception to the above. The small frame building of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, #14, constructed 1878, survives as an apartment house. The church itself was organized during this same period, it held it's first services in 1872.

1900-1925

The major era of coal production in Adair County was from 1900-1925. During that time the rail systems stopping in Kirksville were a major user of coal, and major shippers of it as well. The connecting of Kirksville by rail to Nebraska and Kansas opened new markets. The capital generated by this industry and the large number of people who came to the county to work the coal fields swelled the population of it's center, Novinger, and also increased the population and importance of Kirksville.

The growth is reflected in the size of the Osteopathic as well as the Normal School's campuses, in new larger church buildings, and the growing number of public buildings. During this time there was also a growing interest in public improvements, this is reflected in such public buildings.

The osteopathic school and hospital had both prospered in the late 1800's and continued to do so during the early twentieth century. Buildings on it's campus dating from the 1890's were proven inadequate and a new hospital was completed in 1905. A new college classroom building was also badly needed. It was completed in 1920. A new building which provided housing for students in the nursing program was also constructed during this time.

The Normal school students were all taught in the first building on the campus started in 1873. Though large, it had proved inadequate starting in the late 1800's. In 1901 funds were provided through a state appropriation for a three story Library Hall. As still more space was needed for the expanding student body, Science Hall, #62, was completed in 1905. After 1924 a gymnasium/auditorium was constructed, and a new library after the previous one burned. Of these buildings only the auditorium, #74, has remained in it's original form.

Religious bodies felt the need to expand as well. The First Presbyterian Church, #76, is a fine example of an early congregation erecting a modern structure to meet it's needs. The church, like many other buildings during this time was designed by Kirksville resident Irwin Dunbar. He also designed the Episcopal Church, #71, which had also expanded. In 1905 the Catholic Church was also built replacing the earlier one which had been destroyed by the cyclone of 1899.

To meet the expanding population Kirksville schools also had to expand. Built during this time was the Lincoln School, #68, in 1914, which served the black students of Kirksville until the students were integrated with the other schools in 1954. Completed the following year was a new high school building. A new high school was completed in 1924, as well as two primary schools.

Most impressive during this time period are the number of public use buildings. Among these are the Kennedy and Princess Theatres, the Sojourners Library and the OOF Building. Perhaps most important of the new structures from this period is the Shoe Factory, completed 1908. It was among the very first industries established in the town. Styles during this period range from Moorish to Gothic Revival. Many of the more unusual themes were interpreted by Irwin Dunbar.

Residential structures during this period also show a great range. Though Queen Anne inspired homes were popular yet, many examples of simpler foursquare structures survive. A good example would be the Chadwick house, #64. Also extant are Mission houses such as the England/Beard house, #80. It is from this period of much wealth and expansion that Kirksville's remaining mansion survives. The Still/Atlas House, #65, was completed in 1910. It was probably the last of the great houses to be built by merchants or instructors. It is also associated with the School of Osteopathic Medicine.

Kirksville After 1925

As the era of great wealth tapered off with the gradual closing of the coal fields around the Kirksville area, the lessened production in coal had far reaching effects but mainly it lowered rail traffic through Kirksville. This in turn resulted in less trade going on in the town and less revenue gained by the city. When the depression hit, Kirksville was as inadequately prepared to deal with it as any other American community.

During the early 1930's poverty stricken families were forced to appeal to either the county court or the private agencies for aid. These agencies received at first no funding from the federal government and it was only later that adequate funding was given to them. The county tried to cope by giving from whatever funds it had \$10-20 per family. A group of Kirksville women organized themselves to sew and repair clothing so that needy children would be able to wear them to school. This project was taken over by the city. The city moved it from the room donated by a local businessman to their own facilities and supplemented it with a canning kitchen and vegetable garden. Eventually Kirksville citizens were aided by the programs of the New Deal.

Also made available through the federal government were programs for the paving of streets, the installation of curbs and sidewalks, and expansion or addition of buildings on the two campuses. Of these works only the brick streets and the sidewalks seem to have been completed prior to 1936. Two buildings which were constructed during this period were the Masonic Hall, #79, and the Daily Express Building, #78. However, both of these were started before the true beginning of the depression. Greenwood school was started in 1934 as a work project funded by the U.S. Government. On the whole the lack of buildings completed during this era reflects the depression which was felt throughout the states. It was not until the revitalizing effect of World War II that Kirksville would truly recover. With that recovery however came the end of many folk traditions in architecture, and demolition of many structures in the name of progress.

Conclusion

Kirksville bounds in it's limits a moderate density of structures from as early as 1860 through 1936. Because of the pattern of expansion in the town, as well as the damage done by fire and tornado, a cohesive district could not be established. This survey intended to provide a sampling of major stylistic types within the town, and to record the history and appearance of these structures before they disappear. The buildings which are cited in the sheets are examples of the styles adapted to local taste, as well as purer examples and buildings designed by architects. In this report references to no longer extant structures are made to give a better idea of the original town, and because of their purtenance to historical information. From this Phase 1 survey it appears that a district of historic structures can no longer be found here.

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