

Historic Architectural Survey
City Of Cape Girardeau
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

CGAS001

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Survey Conducted

by

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OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The City of Cape Girardeau has applied for a grant to prepare and write a National Register nomination for the Courthouse-Seminary Neighborhood District, adjacent to the downtown commercial district along the Mississippi River. A reconnaissance architectural survey was completed of the proposed Courthouse-Seminary Neighborhood District in November of 1985 and January to July of 1993. The area bounded by William on the north; Morgan Oak on the south; S. Lorimier Street on the west and S. Spanish Street on the east, was not surveyed in the 1895 and 1993 survey. To meet the requirements set forth in the grant, an architectural survey was requested for the above mentioned two blocks. The objective was to survey all buildings in the survey area dating from 1960 and earlier; 38 buildings.

The reconnaissance level survey will provide historic data on those building surveyed and identify those buildings that were initially considered locally significant.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri is located along the Mississippi River, approximately 115 miles south of St. Louis, Missouri. Cape Girardeau was incorporated in 1808, and by the mid-19th century was established as a regional trading and distribution center along the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River played an essential role in the development of the commercial and residential development of Cape Girardeau. The river functioned as pathway for travel, commerce and social activities.

Private residential neighborhoods developed as a direct result of the businesses located along the riverfront and in the commercial district of Haarg (Good Hope St). Business owners built their residences near their work environment. The houses that were built represent a way of life that was founded on a society with a focal point around the river. The historic residential buildings were linked with those individuals who were working in the commercial routine of the downtown businesses on the riverfront and in the Haarg area, and also those involved with businesses dealing with the river transportation. Houses were constructed around three focal point buildings; St. Vincent's Seminary constructed 1840-1843 located on Morgan Oak Street; St. Vincent's Church constructed 1852, located on South Main Street, William Street, and S. Spanish St; and the Common Pleas Courthouse, constructed 1854 fronting S. Spanish St and also facing S. Lorimier St. to the rear. These three buildings represent how the neighborhood developed around, the city's government, college and religious activities.

The neighborhood-business correlation is echoed today as it was in the mid-19th to mid-20th century. The neighborhood still reflects the time period it represents. With the change over time in transportation, businesses started to relocate away from the downtown area and to the west side of town. With the movement of businesses, residential life, also experience a movement to the west. However, with the change of time, these residential buildings changed also to meet the growing needs of the community. Some single dwellings were converted to multiple dwellings but their craftsmanship, location, materials are evident today.

Some of the residential buildings are in excellent condition and have recently, experienced rehabilitation or renovation. There are some buildings in poor condition. With the renovation of St. Vincent's Seminary, and converting it into the Southeast Missouri State University River Campus, the area has had growth in rehabilitation of buildings. However, the area has also experienced a loss of several buildings for future use of the campus. Within this two-block area of the survey, while many homes are being preserved, there is the potential threat for more buildings to be razed.

There are four buildings, listed on the National Register of Historic Places within the survey area. Most of the buildings surveyed are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing in a district. Several of the buildings in the survey area were designed in the Missouri-German Vernacular style or have architectural elements influenced by the Missouri-German Vernacular style; a style that reflects the strong German heritage of Cape Girardeau.