

**BN-AS-020**

1986 Survey of the Harris District  
St. Joseph  
Buchanan County

**Note**

This survey included and references inventory forms from Thomas Carneal's 1979 survey of the Harris Addition. They have since been returned to their original location. Please refer to BN-AS-014 for information from the 1979 survey.

August 17, 2010

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY  
OF THE  
WILLIAM T. HARRIS HISTORIC AREA  
SAINT JOSEPH, MISSOURI

Saint Joseph Landmarks Commission

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## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The William T. Harris Historic Area is predominantly residential and located in the Midtown Section of St. Joseph, west of the Central Business District and the Museum Hill area. It contains 88 properties and 22.41 acres, and is irregularly bounded (please refer to survey map): on the north by Faraon Street between 20th and 22nd, and by Jule Street between 17th and 20th; on the east by 22nd between Faraon and Jule, by 21st between Jule and Francis, and by 20th between Francis and Felix; on the south by Francis between 20th and 22nd, by Felix between 18th and 20th, and by Francis again between 17th and 18th; and on the west by 17th Street. This area was selected for documentation because of its conspicuous stock of outstanding 19th and early 20th Century buildings, which are threatened by severe urban decay along the southern border.

The primary objective of this survey was to make an intensive inventory of 54 buildings in the William T. Harris Historic Area and to further document the other 34 properties in this area previously researched for the 1979 National Register Nomination. Other important objectives for the documentation of the architectural and historical significance of the buildings within the survey area were: to research the information necessary for resubmission of the enlarged district's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and designation of the area as a City of St. Joseph Historic District, both of which will encourage preservation, make possible rehabilitation tax credits for property owners, and provide legal protection of the cited buildings; to provide information for consideration in revitalization projects in the survey

area; and to heighten the awareness of survey area residents and other citizens of St. Joseph of the historically and architecturally significant structures in St. Joseph's inner city so that these often decaying buildings will not be viewed as a liability, but, rather, as a resource to preserve, to market as a tourist attraction, and, above all, to be proud of.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey properties were documented in the following ways.

1. Legal descriptions and current addresses to identify properties;
2. 35mm black and white photographs;
3. On-site survey of properties to examine siting, building materials and detailing, condition of property, use and outbuildings;
4. Architectural analysis and description of building type, material, detailing and style to determine significance;
5. Historical research of extant records pertaining to the construction of survey buildings and their original and prominent occupants, such as: water permits; building permits; city directories dating back to 1859; title abstracts; Buchanan County land ownership records; 1868 illustrated map of St. Joseph; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1897, 1911 and 1956; 19th and 20th Century histories and illustrated guides of St. Joseph and Buchanan County; St. Joseph Newspress and Gazette; and the historical collections of the St. Joseph Public Library; (sources used are cited at the bottom of each survey sheet); and
6. Illustrated on an updated 1956 Sanborn Map of the survey areas with building configurations color-coded to indicate architectural and historical significance.

HIERARCHY OF ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN SURVEY AREA:

KEY TO SURVEY MAP

- RED        1. National Register of Historic Places or Saint Joseph Landmark Calibre
- GREEN     2. Significant Contribution to a National Register or Saint Joseph  
Historic District
- ORANGE    3. Contribution to National Register or Saint Joseph Historic District
- PURPLE    4. Architectural Intrusion Detracting from the Cohesiveness of  
Historic District

Each category in the preceding hierarchy of significance is represented by the numbers and colors shown above. Each building in the survey area has been placed in this hierarchy and recorded numerically on each survey sheet next to item #43 and colored on the survey map in the corresponding color.

These categories were determined in the following ways.

1. The top category represents: a) outstanding, unique and/or well preserved examples of architectural styles; b) representative works of important architects; and c) buildings associated with residents prominent in the history of the city.
2. The second category represents: a) notable and/or largely intact examples of architectural styles; and b) buildings associated with residents significant to the history of the city.
3. The third category represents: a) buildings which originally might have appeared in the two preceding categories, but have been demoted

because of significant alterations; and b) buildings indistinguished in themselves, although their use, proportion, period, building type and material might render them compatible with the establishment of an historic district.

4. The last category represents buildings incompatible in proportion, use, period, and/or building type and material which detract from the architectural and/or historical continuity of the survey areas.

Also, represented and differentiated on the survey map are the 34 properties previously nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, which are cross-hatched in black, and the 54 properties being surveyed for the first time, which are outlined in brown.



HISTORIC CONTEXT AND PROPERTY TYPES

Theme: Purveyors of the West

1843-1869 Gateway to the West via Steamboat and Train

Saint Joseph was founded in 1843 by Joseph Robidoux, a french fur trader who worked in the area preceding the Platte Purchase of 1836. The development of this new settlement was spurred on by the migration west to settle new territories and, especially, by the Gold Rush beginning in 1849. St. Joseph served as a major jumping off place to the west during the 1840's and 1850's because it was one of the most westerly destinations easily navigable by steamboat. This position of western terminus was secured in 1859 with the completion of the St. Joseph-Hannibal east-west connection. St. Joseph remained the western terminus throughout the Civil War and until the Union Pacific transcontinental railroad connection was completed north through Omaha-Council Bluffs in 1869. During this "Gateway" period. St. Joseph outfitted the hundreds of thousands of pioneers passing through with such things as wagons, harnesses, groceries, drygoods, and hardware.

The first generation of building in St. Joseph during the 1840's and 1850's was concentrated near the Missouri River on the bottom of the valley formed by bluffs on the north, east and south of the "Original Town" plat. Commercial buildings from this period do not remain intact; however, there are several vernacular houses from this time that are scattered around the northern part of the city. This type of house is commonly one-story, built of brick, symmetric, with a deep, rock-faced stone basement, capped by a gabled roof with central chimney, and with rectilinear windows surmounted

by simply molded lintels. These modest buildings well suited the early settlers before they earned their fortunes. Robidoux Row would be a good example of this type of building.

Today one can almost use a topographical map to locate the finer and more ambitious buildings which tend to be sited on higher elevations, as is evident in the William T. Harris survey area. This is true of the more sophisticated Gothic and popular Greek Revival styles which were selected for the houses of wealthy merchants and farmers as St. Joseph became established. These buildings are often two-story, symmetric, and have entries framed by sidelights and a transom. The Gothic Revival style seems to have been rare in St. Joseph, as there are few examples today. However, one can find a few examples, mostly in frame, with the characteristic gabled roof dominated by a pronounced central gabled dormer. Though altered, 720 S. Tenth Street would be a good example of this style. There are no examples of the Gothic Revival style in the Harris survey area. The Greek Revival style, on the other hand, is well represented in St. Joseph. The style manifested itself often in two-story, brick houses, with symmetric fenestration and entries flanked by sidelights and Doric columns. Outstanding examples of this style are the Issac Miller farm house on Ashland Avenue and the William T. Harris house which is the centerpiece of the survey area.

Toward the end of this period as prosperity grew, an even more flamboyant style came into favor. It was the Second Empire style whose earmark is a Mansard roof richly ornamented by brackets, dormers and cresting. An early and well intact example of this style is the St. Joseph Landmark Gustavus H. Koch house, built in 1866, at 1023 Main Street. The Second Empire style was present during the following period, labeled the "Golden Age", as well, but in a more elaborate

form as shown in the John S. Lemon House at 517 North Fifth Street. In the Harris survey area, there is only one modest example of this later stage at 109 North 18th Street, built circa 1883.

1870-1915 Wholesale Center, the "Golden Age"

Not to be left behind in a new railroad era, St. Joseph businessmen saw to the completion of the Council Bluffs-St. Joseph railway connection in 1868, the same year city founder Joseph Robidoux died. St. Joseph turned its sights toward the development of wholesale drygoods, grocery and hardware businesses which continued to outfit the west, as well as the rest of the country, although now as jobbers rather than direct suppliers of emigrants who would now travel west by railroad.

The Italianate style was employed for both commercial and residential buildings during the first part of this period. These Italianate commercial buildings were often two to four stories in height, constructed of brick, with segmental or round arched label lintels accented by keystones, capped by a bracketed cornice, and with a cast metal storefront framed with paneled pilasters and various moldings. A good example of this, minus its cornice, is located at 210 South Fourth Street. The residential Italianate buildings had many similar decorative features, although they tended to be two-story with a low hipped roof, the entry set to one side, an occasional projecting bay, and ornamental entry porches. In the Harris survey area, 108 North 19th Street is a good example of an Italianate house. There is not a large stock of either commercial or residential Italianate buildings in St. Joseph today.

During the "Golden Age" of the 1880's and 1890's with the establishment of large fortunes in such areas as the wholesale, banking and meatpacking

businesses, more pretentious commercial and residential buildings were desired. These large commercial buildings ranged from four to seven stories and were constructed of brick with richly varied fenestration, window treatment, decorative terra cotta, surface texture, and prominent cornice line. The favored styles were Victorian Eclectic, essentially described above, and the Richardsonian Romanesque style, which satisfied the need to impress in its monumental proportions and massive appearance. The C. D. Smith wholesale drug company building at 313 South Third Street is an outstanding example of the latter style.

The residential counterpart of this need to impress found expression in variations of the Richardsonian Romanesque and Queen Anne styles. These houses were large, often built of brick or stone, asymmetrical, and irregularly massed having many projecting bays, dormers and towers. These houses also had lavish decoration, richly textured surfaces, jewel-like stained and leaded glass, and varied fenestration and window treatment. There are many fine examples of such houses in St. Joseph, especially in the Harris survey area. Among the most outstanding ones in this area are the J. W. McAlister house at 105 North 19th Street and L. C. Burnes house at 1923 Francis, both of which were built in 1889 and have top calibre stained glass windows.

Toward the end of the "Golden Age", the older fortunes in St. Joseph were well represented by the conservative Beaux Arts Revival styles dominant in the city around the turn-of-the-century. Edmund J. Eckel, one of St. Joseph's most prominent architects at that time, was actually trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Eckel and his proteges designed many of the Beaux Arts style residential, institutional and commercial buildings in the city, such as the Classical Revival Tootle, Lacy Bank Building at Sixth and Francis Streets. The Beaux Arts style

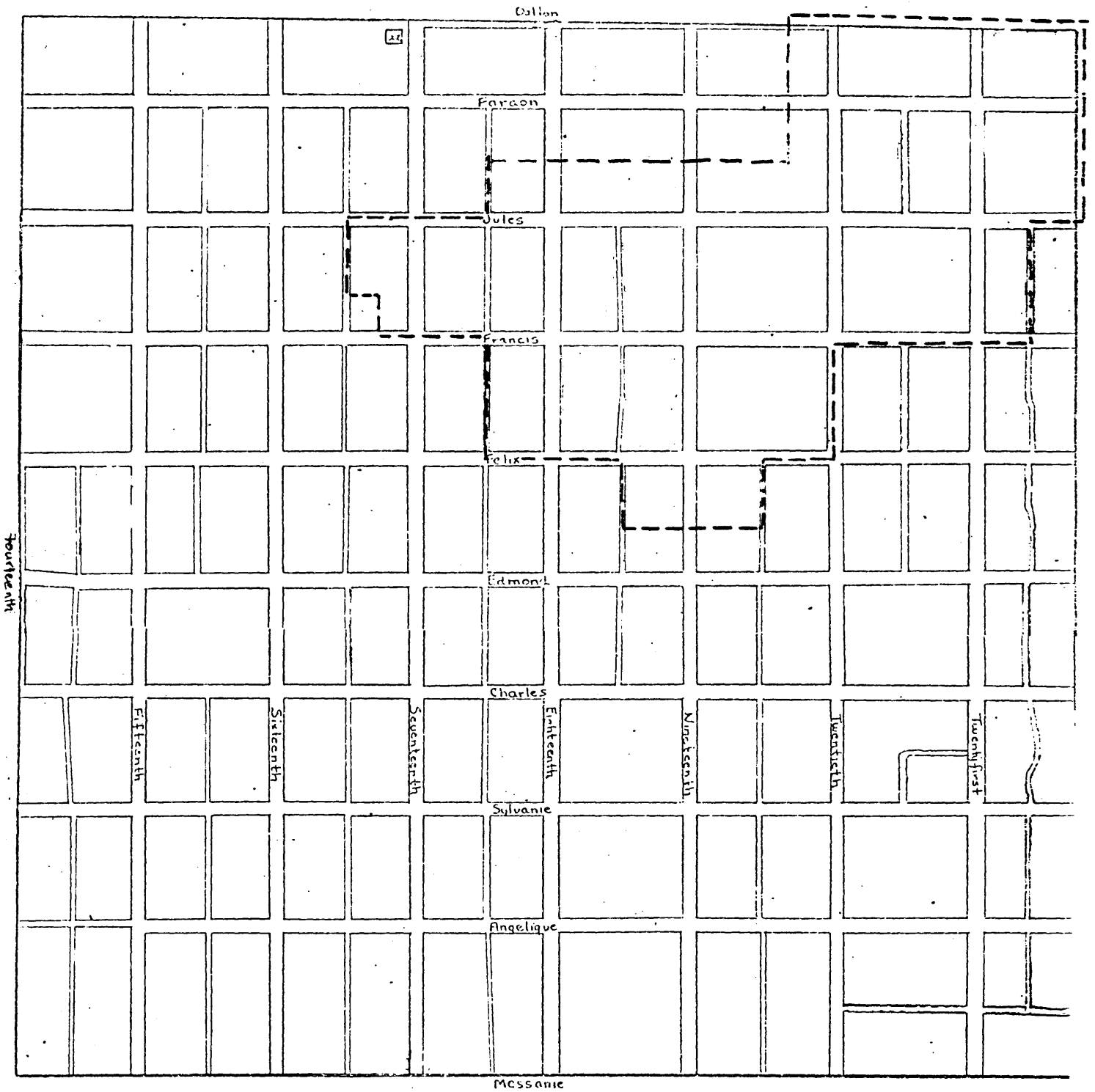
is handsomely illustrated in the Harris survey area by Walter Boschen's Tudor Revival Westminster Presbyterian Church built in 1895 at 2101 Jule Street. The Beaux Arts influence was reflected residentially within the survey area with the generous use of Classical Revival detailing on such houses as that of A. P. Clayton, built at 208 North 19th Street in 1902.

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SURVEY AREA

In 1846, William T. Harris, one of the first settlers in the Platte Purchase and a successful land speculator, preempted the Southwest Quarter of Section 9, Township 57, Range 35. (Please refer to the attached map of the Quarter Section and the survey area.) Mr. Harris's homestead house is at 119 North 19th Street, the centerpiece of the Harris Historic Area. He died soon after in 1851 while building an octagonal house at 15th and Francis Streets.

In 1857, an estate partition was filed by Mr. Harris's widow, Jane Scott. The partition settlement designated that the west half from 18th Street of the tract be sold. This part of the land was purchased by William M. Carter for \$79,500 and platted in 1858 as Carter's Addition. In 1865, Carter's Addition reverted through default back to Mrs. Scott and the four Harris children: John J., Mary T., Margaret J., and Willie J. The same year, the eastern half of the original tract was platted as the Harris Addition. Two of the four Harris children built high quality Italianate residences two stories high which are still standing in the Harris Addition. John J. Harris was first listed at 1801 Jule in the 1868 City Directory. His sister Margaret J. and her husband, Mark B. Chapman, a minister, attorney and real estate businessman, lived at 209 North 18th Street, built in 1874. These three Harris residences are the oldest buildings in the area. The other two Harris siblings sold property to Henry E. Barnard, an attorney, who built an elaborate late Italianate villa at 1716 Francis in 1878. Today it is beautifully preserved.

WILLIAM T. HARRIS HISTORIC AREA



Southwest Quarter - Section 9 Township 57 Range 35

William T. Harris Pre-emption

Scale - 1" = 200'

Survey Area - - - - -



Major development of this area did not take off until the 1880's as indicated on the attached chart. This is further substantiated by the lack of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map documentation until 1897. Sanborn Maps tended to be made on the heels of the development of an area.

St. Joseph's "Golden Age" was well represented architecturally in the Harris Historic Area by many fine residences built for prominent merchants. The Queen Anne style was highly favored by this group. The style became established in the 1880's, flourished in the 1890's and wound down in a late stage during the early years of the 20th Century. A truly outstanding example of the Queen Anne style is the R. T. Davis house built at 319 North 20th Street in 1890. This massive Queen Anne residence retains its rich ornamentation of terra cotta and stained glass. Also, many modest residences were built in the Queen Anne style, particularly in the 1890's along Jule and 17th Streets.

By 1888, the Richardsonian Romanesque style also became popular for more ambitious residences. A handsome pair of well preserved Richardsonian Romanesque houses were built in that year at 2101 and 2117 Faraon. Two of the crowning jewels of the district were built in this style, as well. The first of these is the J. W. McAlister house at 105 North 19th Street, which is linked with designer Harvey Ellis then in the employ of Eckel and Mann architects. The other is the Louis C. Burnes house at 1923 Francis. Each was built in 1889 and retains magnificent stained glass stairway landing panels.

Around the turn of the century, Faraon Street between 20th and 22nd Streets became a premier area for high quality residences. Faraon Street backs onto the



WILLIAM J. HARRIS HISTORIC AREA

Construction During Decade Beginning	Number of Buildings Constructed	Vernacular	Greek Revival	Italianate	Second Empire	Queen Anne	Eclectic	Richardsonian Romanesque	Beaux Arts Revival
1840	1		1						
1850									
1860	1			1					
1870	6	1		5					
1880	20	7		4	1	5	1	2	
1890	15	1				11	1	1	1
1900	24	17				3	1		3
1910	6	6							
1920	6	5							1
1930	4	4							
1940	1	1							
1950	3	3							
1960	1	1							
1970									
1980									
Total	88								

fine Beaux Arts Tudor Revival Westminster Presbyterian Church built at 2102 Jule in 1895. The continued influence of the Beau~~x~~ Arts style is evident in the Classical Revival detailing and the further use of the Tudor Revival style in new building and rebuilding on this street.

As reflected on the chart of the preceding page, the largest number of extant buildings in the Harris Historic Area were built during the first decade of this century. The majority of these are two-story, solidly built, brick houses with hipped roofs, leaded glass, and Classical Revival detailing. The development of this type of housing primarily was concentrated on 20th Street between Faraon and Francis, and along and on either side of Francis Street. This was the last high quality major building period in the Harris district.

The commercialization of Jule Street did not begin until after the turn of the century. It was initiated in 1906 by the construction of a combination ground-floor shop with residential apartment above at 1901 Jule. It was joined in 1908 by a similar structure next door at 1903 Jule.

In 1932, the Garfield School, which had served since 1882 as an important anchor for the neighborhood, was demolished and replaced by a grocery store and modest houses lining Francis Street.

The demolition of the school had a major impact on the neighborhood. No "high style" building took place after this when only five vernacular buildings were constructed between 1940 and 1963. Since 1963, there have been no new buildings in the survey area.

Despite the lack of new construction, the neighborhood has remained fairly stable when compared with other inner city areas. Only one of the

buildings included in the 1979 National Register nomination of the area has been demolished and it was not a major contributor architecturally to the district. Also, the area has a relatively high rate of owner-occupied residences of over 50 percent, and several of the rental properties are owned by people residing within the district. The area is threatened, however, by the severe urban decay spreading along the south and west sides of the survey boundaries.

SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Designation of the Harris Historic Area as a St. Joseph Historic District by the St. Joseph Landmarks Commission is a top priority for preservation of the area. Designation would provide the area with essential legal protection of its architectural resources; make available to property owners valuable rehabilitation tax credits; and greatly enhance the neighborhood's self-image and the general public's perception of the area's high architectural and historical worth, as happen in the Museum Hill District after designation.
2. Continued Efforts to Nominate the District to the National Register of Historic Places must be pursued until its acceptance which would give the neighborhood the national recognition it deserves as an important architectural resource, as well as provide the attractive rehabilitation tax credits.
3. Cooperative Work with the Recently Established Neighborhood Association is key to the maintenance and revitalization efforts in the Harris Historic Area. Unlike some of the inner city neighborhoods, the Harris area has a strong core of long-time and involved residents whose support would be critical to the passage of City Historic Designation in the area and to the subsequent monitoring of the Historic District.
4. Demolition or Adaptive Reuse of the Firestation Abandoned by the City at 18th and Felix Streets would help alleviate further deterioration along the southern boundary of this area. This abandoned architectural intrusion has clearly contributed to urban decay in the immediate area shown on the survey map as an isolated ring of five demolished building sites circling the firestation along the south and west and giving the appearance of a bomb having been dropped.

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