

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY
OF
SOUTH CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT,
ROBIDOUX HILL,
AND
HALL STREET DISTRICT ANNEX,
SAINT JOSEPH, MISSOURI

Saint Joseph Landmarks Commission

Susan Ide Symington

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OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this survey was to make an intensive inventory of the 105 buildings in three survey areas contiguous to the Central Business District, which are as follows.

1. South Central Business District- This area is located directly south of the Central Business District. It contains 46 properties and 37.88 acres, and is bounded on the north by Edmond Street, on the east by Sixth Street, on the south by Angelique Street, and on the west by the Missouri River. This area was selected because of its fine 19th Century wholesale and commercial buildings and because of its recent designation as an Enterprise Zone, which is designed to promote redevelopment of the area.
2. Robidoux Hill- This area lies north of the Central Business District. It contains 49 properties and 13.77 acres, and is bounded on the north by Louis Street, on the east by Sixth Street, on the south by Robidoux Street, and on the west by Third Street. Robidoux Hill is among the city's most historic and architecturally significant residential areas. It was selected as a survey area for this reason and because of potential parking pressures created by new construction to the south and possible expansion of factory facilities to the northwest.
3. Hall Street Historic District Annex- This annex consists of 1.61 acres and 10 scattered survey sites along the boundaries of the local and National Register Hall Street Historic District, directly east of the Robidoux Hill area. On the survey map the local Hall Street District is outlined by a dotted red line and the National Register District is outlined in yellow. These sites were selected to round out the natural boundaries of the district and to protect them from developmental pressures from the hospital to the south.

Other important objectives for the documentation of the architectural and historical significance of the buildings within the survey areas were: to research the information necessary for National Register of Historic Places and Saint Joseph City Historic District designation 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 areas; and to heighten the awareness of survey residents and other citizens of Saint 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 national 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; 1877 Atlas of Buchanan County; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1883, 1888, 1897 and 1956; 19th and 20th Century histories and illustrated guides of Saint Joseph and Buchanan County; St. Joseph Newspress and Gazette; and the historical collections of the Saint Joseph Public Library; (sources used are cited at the bottom of each survey sheet)
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 THE SURVEY AREAS

- Red* 1. National Register of Historic Places or Saint Joseph Landmark Calibre
- Green* 2. Significant Contribution to a National Register or Saint Joseph Historical District
- Orange* 3. Contribution to National Register or Saint Joseph Historical District
- Purple* 4. Architectural Intrusion Detracting from the Cohesiveness of Historical District

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

HISTORIC CONTEXT AND PROPERTY TYPES

Theme: Purveyors of the Pioneers

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 during the 1840's and 1850's was near the 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; 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 frame or 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 after the first generation of building.

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 intact 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 the best example of this style. The Greek Revival style, with its characteristic Doric columns supporting the entry porch and uninterrupted roofline, is well represented in St. Joseph by such buildings as the Issac Miller farm house on Ashland Avenue.

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 example of this style is the Gustavus H. Koch House, built in 1866, at 1023 Main Street. This style was present during the next period as well, but in a more elaborate form as shown in the John S. Lemon House at 517 North Fifth Street.

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 connection in 1868, the same year 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. 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 later style.

The residential counterpart of this need to impress found expression in variations of the Queen Anne style. These Queen Anne 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. One grouping of them can be found in the Hall Street National Register District.

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 at 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.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SURVEY AREAS

South Central Business District

The South Central Business District is in the southern section of the "Original Town" plat of St. Joseph which was filed in 1843 by Joseph Robidoux. This plat was named after his patron saint and is bounded by the Missouri River on the west, Robidoux Street on the north, Sixth Street on the east and Messanie on the south. The streets were named for Robidoux's second wife, Angelique, and their children, Sylvania, Charles, Edmond, Francis, Felix, Jules, Faraon and Messanie. The main commercial site, Market Square, was designated the west half block bounded by Second, Third, Edmond and Felix Streets. Market Square was adjacent on the north to the South Central Business District Survey Area. The only site reserved originally within this survey area was the west half block bounded by Third, Fourth, Charles and Sylvania; the northern quarter was to be used for a public school and the southern one for a Catholic Church. C.D. Smith, a wholesale drug company is now located there.

An 1868 map of the city shows this area fully developed; however, none of the buildings from this period remain. Commercial development intermingled with residential, spilling over from the Market Square area during the 1860's and 1870's, as dry goods, hardware and wagon businesses (such as Studebaker Brothers which was built in 1875 at 205 South Fourth) established themselves side by side with dwellings.

1883 was clearly in the pre-zoning days. The survey area on the Sanborn Map of that year looked like a big stew of residential, commercial and industrial uses. There was something of a residential enclave around the newly appointed

St. Charles Hotel, but this was interrupted by a wood shop immediately behind it to the east. This mixed use was probably due to the difficulty in transportation that required people to live near work. After 1883, the area became progressively more commercial and industrial, until today there are no residences at all in the South Central Business District.

There are a few Italianate and Eclectic style commercial buildings of high quality remaining from the 1870's, but, unfortunately, most have been drastically altered, like the Gazette Building at 222 South Fourth. Please compare the survey photograph with the attached 1875 rendering.

The architectural high point of this district is undoubtedly the 300 block of South Third. This extremely well preserved and National Register calibre grouping of four-to five-story wholesale warehouses was built in 1882 and 1888 in the Victorian Eclectic and Richardsonian Romanesque styles. All three buildings in the grouping were designed by the same architectural firm, Eckel and Mann.

From the turn-of-the-Century, vernacular, utilitarian construction dominated the area.

SOUTH CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Construction During Decade Beginning	Number of Buildings Constructed	Vernacular	Eclectic	Italianate	Queen Anne	Richardsonian Romanesque	Beaux Arts	Moderne
1850								
1860								
1870	6		2	3	1			
1880	8		5	1		2		
1890	5	2	1			1		
1900	7	2	2				3	
1910	3	1					2	
1920	9	7					1	1
1930	1							1
1940								
1950	3	3						
1960	1	1						
1970	2	2						
1980	1	1						
Total	46							

Robidoux Hill

Robidoux Hill is a good descriptive name of this survey area because it is so closely associated with the Robidoux family and the center of it sits on top of a prominent hill overlooking the "Original Town" from the north.

Robidoux Hill falls entirely within Robidoux's First Addition platted in 1845, two years after the dedication of the "Original Town". The southern boundary of the addition is near Robidoux Street, and the other streets were named after Joseph Robidoux's brothers, Isadore, Antoine and Louis. Joseph Robidoux was reputed to live on the northeast corner of Fifth and Robidoux, although, I was unable to substantiate this. I was able, however, to establish through the city directories that as early as 1859 Robidoux's son, Edmund, a printer, lived on the southwest corner of Sixth and Antoine, and his daughter, Sylvanie, wife of Francis Beauvais, lived on the northeast corner of Fifth and Antoine.

A handfull of buildings on the edges of Robidoux Hill remain largely intact from the first generation of development in the area. Notably these are 513-15 North Third and 604-6 North Sixth, which are modest duplexes built to house early, unestablished settlers.

On an 1868 map, Robidoux Hill was shown as a well developed residential area, with modest houses at the base of the hill and impressive, two-story brick houses lining the crest of the hill which is North Fifth Street. Because the topography and location of North Fifth were so prominent to the "Original Town" commercial area, it was a fashionable street of long standing. Therefore, many of these 1868 buildings have been replaced or remodeled beyond recognition.

Remnants of two of these structures can be seen on the rear sections of 503 and 515 North Fifth. The rear section of 515 is a high quality example of the Italianate style; the front section was remodeled in the Queen Anne style circa 1890. The most intact North Fifth Street house from this period is at 602-4. Its original circa 1856 gable end, however, peaks out from behind a two-story front porch built in 1904. This house is famous as being the site of poet Eugene Field's wedding reception in 1873 when he married Julia Comstock whose family resided here.

There are several well preserved, moderately sized, two-story brick Italianate buildings, mostly concentrated on either side of the crest of Robidoux Hill on the 500 and 600 blocks of North Fourth and Sixth Streets. These streets were somewhat less fashionable than North Fifth, so they escaped constant updating.

The early phase of the "Golden Age" is best represented in the John S. Lemon House at 517 North Fifth, which is a textbook example of the elaborate Second Empire Style and is remarkably well preserved today.

The predilection for the Queen Anne style and Victorian Eclectic adaptations during the latter phase of the "Golden Age" is apparent in the many remodelings along North Fifth, as well as in the outstanding examples of the style constructed as a whole at 724 North Fifth and 624 North Sixth.

Robidoux Hill went into decline at the turn-of-the-Century, as indicated by the attached building chart, and then came to a dead stop during the decade beginning in 1910. Only six modest, vernacular buildings were erected between 1920 to 1960 as the city moved east, and not a single building has been constructed in the area since.

Construction During Decade Beginning	Number of Buildings Constructed	Vernacular	Eclectic	Greek or Gothic Revival	Italianate	Second Empire	Queen Anne	Beaux Arts
1850	5	5						
1860	2	1		1				
1870	8	3	1		3	1		
1880	18	1	5		4	1	7	
1890	7	1					6	
1900	3	2						1
1910								
1920	2	2						
1930	1	1						
1940								
1950	3	3						
1960								
1970								
1980								
Total	49							

ROBIDOUX HILL SURVEY AREA

Hall Street Historic District Annex

The Hall Street area was developed later than the two preceding areas and in several different additions. The earliest addition in the proposed annex to the National Register Hall Street District was Smith's Second Addition of 1847, including Sixth and Seventh Streets between Robidoux and Francis. This addition was platted by Frederick W. Smith, who designed the "Original Town" plat for the city of St. Joseph, and includes 402, 416-18 and 422 North Seventh Street of this survey. Though the date of this plat was early, the 1868 map of the city shows that only the core of 422 North Seventh had been built by that time. In 1878, the three attached houses at 402 North Seventh were built; in 1887, they became the headquarters of the prestigious Benton Club which is still located there. A co-founder and many prominent members of the Benton Club resided in the Hall Street and Robidoux Hill areas. 416-18 North Seventh was not constructed until the 20th Century and was drastically remodeled in 1975.

Chronologically, the next addition dedicated in the proposed annex area was Ege's First Addition of 1858, bounded by Sixth, Corby, Seventh and Hall Streets. 605 Hall was built soon after the dedication and 601-3 Hall appears to have an early core, circa 1868. These two buildings would be important additions to the established district, in that they tell the first chapter of the history of Hall Street. The 1868 map reflects this relatively modest, vernacular development of Hall Street at that time, which did not foretell the elaborate Victorian fantasies that would be built in the area during the last quarter of the 19th Century. A commercial intrusion built in 1933 on

on the corner of Sixth and Hall, is also in this addition. Due to its conspicuous location at the entry of the Hall Street District, it should be included formally in the district.

The last two properties in the proposed annex are 644-46 and 700-2 North Ninth Street. This section of North Ninth Street was not graded in 1868 according to the contemporary map, and the sites were not platted until 1880 as Ghio's Addition, including both sides of Ninth one block south of Hall Street. These two buildings were constructed soon after the plat and provide an important buffer today of the vast parking lots to the south.

SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. South Central Business District- This survey area, which is in the southern half of the "Original Town" plat, did not emerge as an entity distinct from that of the Central Business District, the remaining part of the "Original Town" plat. Therefore, National Register and local historical designation of this survey area should be postponed until the proposed survey of the Central Business District can be completed, which will enable a more complete historical view of the development of this commercial center.

Two possible approaches for the eventual designation of the "Original Town" plat would be: a) to prepare a "thematic" National Register nomination of the great wholesale buildings constructed between 1870 and 1915, which are located on the western side of the South Central and Central Business Districts; and b) to establish a more general historic district in the "Original Town" plat comprising the many significant retail, wholesale, manufacturing, residential and institutional buildings from the 19th and early 20th Centuries.

Documentation and historical designation of the Central Business District will be critical to revitalization efforts in this area in that it will provide the important tool of rehabilitation tax credits and will give the Central Business District the recognition it deserves of containing many nationally significant historic buildings.

2. Robidoux Hill- This survey area was planned originally as a possible annex to the Hall Street Historic District. However, after further research of Robidoux Hill, it became clear that this area has an identity and historical

development separate from that of Hall Street, although the two areas appear similar today with their fine Italianate and Queen Anne buildings and ridge-top positioning. The differences are notably that Robidoux Hill: was all part of Robidoux's First Addition to the "Original Town"; had a close association with the Robidoux family as indicated in the names of the addition and streets, and that members of the Robidoux family resided here; has buildings coeval with Joseph Robidoux from the first generation of building in St. Joseph; and contains North Fifth Street, which has been one of St. Joseph's finest streets from the early years of the city's development due to its prominent topography. Therefore, I recommend the separate local and National Register historic district designation of the entire Robidoux Hill survey area, defined by Louis Street on the north, Sixth Street on the east, Robidoux Street on the south and Third Street on the west. Also, I strongly recommend the preservation of 513-15 North Third which is contemporary with Robidoux Row as attested by the neighboring and enormous cottonwood from 130 to 160 years old. Due to its proximity to I229 and its spacious grounds, it would make a good tourist center. It is currently threatened by possible expansion by the Wire Rope Corporation.

3. Hall Street Historic District Annex- Three properties located on Hall Street (601 and 605 Hall, and 801 North Sixth) were omitted from the original historic district, although the first two mentioned are most worthy, because of one property owner's objection which no longer exists. This omission should be corrected. The two duplexes on North Ninth Street and the Beaux Arts style companion pieces at 601 and 611 Robidoux would be important

additions also to the district as they add a setting and a buffer to Hall Street from the encroaching hospital parking lots to the east and south. Another important addition to the Hall Street District would be the Benton Club, at 402 North Seventh, which was founded by Winslow Judson who lived at 605 Hall, and was supported by many other residents of the district during the 19th Century.

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