

NORTHSIDE UNIVERSITY CITY

Inventory of Historic Buildings

1993

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RESEARCH METHODS

The properties in this inventory were identified by the Historic Preservation Commission of University City shortly after that body was established in 1981. These properties were part of a citywide list of potentially significant ones throughout the community that the Commission agreed to monitor and to further research and protect as needed. Over the subsequent decade, many other properties on the list had been the subjects of historic inventories and National Register nominations, but nearly all of those except the Sutter–Meyer House had been located in the south half of the city. The present study attempts to rectify the balance by focusing on the resources of the north half of the city.

In researching these previously identified properties, an effort was made to go back to primary documents wherever possible, including deeds and building permits. University City's building permits no longer exist, but a microfilm of them is available in the public library, and the permit numbers are indexed by street number in a card file located in the city's building department. Renumbering and renaming of streets has created some inaccuracies in this index. The permits in many cases do not include the name of the architect. That can usually be found by looking in the Daily Record, a legal newspaper that reported building permits. The Daily Record is available on microfilm at the St. Louis Public Library. It has some limitations, however; it began to report University City permits separately only after 1920, and in the 1930s, its reporters seem to have missed many permits. Another problem in the record of permits is that much of the north half of University City was not annexed to the municipality until after the earliest buildings were erected. A map of annexations, included here, illustrates the problem. Prior to annexation, building permits would have been issued by St. Louis County, but no permits or indexes exist for those records, only the unindexed daily listings in the Daily Record.

Usually it is possible to create a chain of title for any property in St. Louis County, given enough time in the office of the Recorder of Deeds in the county government center. Near the conclusion of this inventory, however, a problem was uncovered which may have affected the dating of a number of houses in the Bartmer–Chamberlain District. The microfilm reel identified as the indirect index for 1928, that is, the index of buyers, turned out to be a second copy of the direct index of sellers for that year. New photographs of the 1928 indirect index (kept in a distant storage building) were not created until after this inventory was completed, and it may be some time before the full effect of this problem can be assessed.

Secondary documentation for University City centers on the 75th anniversary history by NiNi Harris, Legacy of Lions, published by the Historical Society of University City in 1981. Several of the institutional buildings and cemeteries surveyed had good histories of their own; one unusual feature of this survey was that two of them were translated from the original Hebrew.

In some cases, the stylistic appearance of the building contributed to the estimate of its construction date. Such estimates should be taken with caution, as styles originating on the East Coast of this country moved slowly to the Midwest and even more slowly from city to county.

The following inventory forms have been arranged according to the street addresses of the properties, alphabetically and numerically. Maps for most of these properties are taken from the records of the St. Louis County Department of Revenue. These show property lines and subdivision outlines as well as building outlines and often have other data about dimensions and ownership. Where non-taxable institutions were omitted from these records, aerial photographs have been substituted for maps.

Inventory forms have been numbered according to St. Louis County's locator system. This nine-digit system is based on a coordinated grid that covers the entire county and gives each parcel of land a unique identification. Most county records are keyed to this system, and it is hoped that inclusion of it on these inventory forms will facilitate further research. All photographic negatives are in the files of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation. Roll and frame numbers have been included on the inventory forms under item three. The roll numbers are assigned by the photo processing companies. Roll and frame numbers have also been marked on the backs of the inventory photos.

Copies of inventory forms have been included for several properties that were originally surveyed as part of earlier studies:

6501 Bartmer Avenue	Sutter Avenue Presbyterian Church	Church Survey
6605-07 Bartmer Avenue	Bartmer Temporary School	School Survey
6761 Bartmer Avenue	Pershing School	School Survey
6826 Chamberlain Court	Sutter-Meyer House	National Register
7315 Olive	Gable Tea Room	NR nomination
7700 Olive	Former A & P Grocery	Art Deco Survey
7740 Olive	Fine Arts Theater	Art Deco Survey

These properties have also been included in the analysis of significance and recommendations for preservation included in the last section of this report.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The planners of University City are fond of saying that it is a completely developed community, meaning that its potential for new development that can produce additional tax revenue is limited. From the point of view of the resident or the casual visitor, however, University City still has an open and spacious appearance because of the well-placed parks, parkways, pedestrian walkways, cemeteries and other open spaces. This appearance has been enhanced in recent years by many flowerbeds planted by a civic organization entitled "U. City in Bloom."

University City's green is particularly notable in the north half of the city. The two largest parks are here: Heman Park straddles the River Des Peres, and Ruth Park marks the western highlands. Three parks are adjacent to public schools: Millar Park at Nathaniel Hawthorne School, Fogerty Park at Daniel Boone School, and Greensfelder Park at the former Greensfelder School. The grounds of Pershing School also form a parklike setting. Tiny Kingsland Park marks the west end of the Bartmer-Chamberlain District. Rabe Park expands the already spacious greenway of Midland Boulevard. The westernmost block of Blackberry Lane also forms a parkway, and Kaufman Park, formerly a private estate, forms a second length of green in that neighborhood. The last private estate in the area, the former Theodore Salorgne property at 1340 Partridge, also forms a green oasis in its neighborhood and is currently being studied as a potential park. The cemeteries of University City form a complimentary chain of green stretching generally along North and South Road. All are Jewish in affiliation and date back as far as 1855, a half century earlier than the city itself.

The River Des Peres, best known as a treacherous channel emptying into the Mississippi at Lemay, has its origins in this part of University City, whence it wends its largely underground way through Forest Park to its broad lower reaches, which mark the boundary between St. Louis City and County. In University City, the river has several channels. The easternmost one runs north paralleling and partly beneath Kingsland Avenue. The main channel runs through the foot of the high school grounds, then parallels Wilson Avenue and follows the diagonal shape of Heman Park to parallel Vernon Avenue. The waters of this branch come from several directions, one running north past the eastern edge of B'nai Amoona Cemetery, another starting north of Olive, and a third starting south of Olive along the foot of Ruth Park, to join west of the intersection of Shaftesbury Avenue and North and South Road. These waterways have been known to create problems of flooding, but they also add to the greenery of the neighborhoods and to the general sense of definition that characterizes the residential neighborhoods of University City.

The topographical map included here, a segment of the U.S.G.S. Clayton Quadrangle, shows that the northern part of University City has a complex topography of rolling hills, with the lowest portions being along the River Des Peres and its tributaries, and the highest generally to the west. The map also shows that Olive Street Road generally follows low ground, in contrast to Old Bonhomme Road, its historic predecessor leading toward the west, which was on high ground farther south. Midland Boulevard, too, follows the easiest grade to the north.

The map showing the sequence of annexations in University City suggests the general growth of the city from southeast to northwest, but the actual development was more protracted than the dates on the map indicate. The easternmost neighborhoods north of Olive are the oldest, but except for the handful of buildings indicated in this survey, all are after 1900. These first developments were aimed the lowest, with houses small enough for a semiskilled worker to afford. As development progressed west, houses were generally more spacious, with the finest being on the highest ground, the Musick Subdivision located north of Olive and just west of Midland. The west half of the area, generally west of Hanley Road, was scarcely built up until after World War II, and the post-war development there reflects the popularity of the Cape Cod and the Ranch House. With the exception of a few scattered neighborhood commercial properties along Ferguson Avenue, retail activities are entirely concentrated along Olive Boulevard. Some industrial activities are along the line of the Terminal Railroad, which forms part of the northern and western boundary of the city.

