

VALLEY PARK
INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
1992

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RESEARCH METHODS

This survey of Valley Park has had the great advantage of an active historical organization, the Meramec Station Historical Society, which has already done much to identify and research potentially significant buildings throughout the community. Their work was invaluable. Eileen Sherrill, a teacher at Valley Park High School, has also done considerable research on the community, a portion of which has been published in four booklets:

Valley Park in 1909 (1981)

Valley Park....100 Years Ago and More (1982)

Recreation in Valley Park, Missouri (1991)

Valley Park....Flood of 1915 (undated).

Primary sources were limited primarily to deeds, probate records, and the county atlases of 1878 and 1909. Although other county atlases were published in 1862, 1870, and 1893, they did not depict buildings. Even in the more complete atlases, many names of property owners in Valley Park were omitted because lots were so small. St. Louis County directories were of limited use, because they started listing Valley Park streets only in 1930. On several of the most important streets, particularly Meramec Station Road, house numbers were not consistently employed until well after World War II. Building permits, difficult to use in the best of circumstances, were hardly relevant, because almost all the significant structures in Valley Park were built before St. Louis County began to issue them in 1907.

Another feature of Valley Park's history which made dating of buildings difficult was the propensity of Valley Park investors to build houses and commercial buildings for rent years before they sold them. The portion of Valley Park that was laid out as a company town was built up with rows of company-owned houses, and these have been treated in special groups in this survey. But several individual investors, notably Gerhard Timmerman, Louis Kurth, and Olivia Schlueter, also built houses in the old business section of Valley Park and in the hills of the Quinette Subdivision which they sold months or years later, and many of these houses were not built to matching designs.

The following inventory forms have been arranged according to the street addresses of the properties, alphabetically and numerically. An exception to this is a group of seven forms describing groups of houses that were originally matching, all located in the lower portion of Valley Park that was laid out as a company town. These are placed at the end of the alphabetical list. Copies of inventory forms for three Valley Park churches that were included in an earlier thematic survey have been added to this survey for convenience of reference.

Maps for most of the properties are taken from the records of the St. Louis County Department of Revenue. They show property lines and subdivision outlines as well as building outlines. Where these maps have not been available, aerial maps have been used.

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 for the time being, prior to being forwarded to the Historic Preservation Program of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. 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.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Valley Park is the nexus of the bridge across the Meramec River, the road to Manchester, and stations of the Missouri Pacific and Frisco Railroads. The eastern part of the city is a flat, low-lying stretch of land which is essentially the delta of the Grand Glaize Creek, a water course that winds south through the county from a point near the Missouri River in Chesterfield. The lower end of this area has long been a recreational spot and has recently been relandscaped as Henry Simpson Park by the County Department of Parks and Recreation. A short distance east is Greentree Park, a city park of Kirkwood. To the west, another low-lying area formed by the mouth of Fish Pot Creek gives way to higher ground forming picturesque bluffs along the Meramec. Between these areas and forming the central spine of the city, the ground rises more irregularly, with the rising ridge being occupied by Meramec Station Road. The winding patterns of the roads in this portion of the city reflect the topography, most graphically where the southwest terminus of Crescent Avenue has never been completed because of the steep drop.

The town is also bisected by railroad lines. The Missouri Pacific parallels the older Dougherty Ferry Road and crosses Meramec Station Road on an overpass. The Frisco line, which came later, is generally only a short distance east of the older one, but it crosses the Meramec on a bridge east of the highway bridge. The railroad lines cut off most of the east-west streets and even cause Dougherty Ferry Road, once the most important road in the town, to terminate in a byway.

Almost all the land east of Meramec Station Road was replatted in 1902 as a grid with numbered north-south streets. Most of the wedge between Meramec Station Road and the tracks was replatted at the same time, but in a curvilinear pattern adjusted to the topography. An earlier subdivision west of the road was never fully realized, so that the rectilinear streets are fragmentary, serving mainly to connect with the curving ones on the hills. Newer subdivisions have been added within this older pattern, so that old and new houses are intermingled in the northwestern portion of the city.

The biggest recent change in the topography has been the widening and relocation of Meramec Station Road which is now state highway 141. This has already eliminated many buildings on the east side of the old road, and where the broad sweep of concrete terminates against the hill just north of the tracks, one can anticipate many more properties being altered or eliminated as the new construction moves north and away from the existing right-of-way. A second change involves the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, which is experiencing unprecedented growth as its large parish becomes more suburbanized. The parish has bought many properties in the vicinity of the church and has demolished a number of houses in anticipation of the construction of new parish buildings and, possibly, a new church.

HISTORY

The present location of Valley Park first gained attention as the location of John Dougherty's ferry. It did not become a community, however, until the Missouri Pacific Railroad built its depot here as the line proceeded west from Kirkwood on the way to Jefferson City. This depot was called Meramec Station. The location of the depot triggered construction of a road from Manchester, the much older farm community to the north. The road, originally called Meramec Station Road, was soon taken over by the State of Missouri, and for a time it was called the Valley Park and Manchester Rock Road.

The new road prompted an ambitious real estate developer named Oliver Quinette to lay out a town on the hills above the depot. The heading of the plat he filed in 1859 is "Quinette; This town is situated at the second depot of the Pacific Railroad." He included picturesque names for the neighborhoods of the new town, including Rose Hill, Fairview, Prospect Hill, and Pheasant Grove. One lot was set aside for a seminary. In addition to the access from the river and the railroad, Quinette promoted a road along the high ground at the crest of the bluffs to pick up where Big Bend Road left off to the east, where it neared the big bend of the Meramec River. Quinette Road is now subsumed for the most part by a widened and straightened Big Bend Road, but a few old portions still survive. Like the failed town of Melrose farther west, Quinette was probably too ambitious for its time, requiring extensive road construction that was beyond the owner's means. Development also slowed to halt with the outbreak of the Civil War.

After the war, however, optimism returned, and the railroad company laid out a subdivision on the land it had purchased around its depot. Platted in 1866 as the Meramec Pacific Railroad Subdivision, it was called simply Meramec. It consisted of a series of narrow lots lined up on both sides of the railroad right-of-way, with larger "out-lots" arranged parallel to the river. A local couple, Henry and Ann Milks, laid out a smaller addition leading north into the hills on Ann and Henry Avenues. In 1870 Oliver Quinette redesigned his subdivision to correspond more realistically to the topography, changing many of the identifying numbers of the unsold lots.

The town continued to grow slowly, even after these efforts. The 1878 atlas published by Julius Pitzman shows a scattering of buildings on the streets already named, plus a few on an unnamed street that eventually was extended along the river toward Kirkwood as Marshall Road. The centerpiece of the town was the mill, the predecessor of the present Valley Park Elevator. It changed hands many times and was rebuilt frequently after damage by fire and storm.

Another boost occurred in the 1880's, when the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad was separated from the Missouri Pacific. The new road, popularly called the Frisco, required its own right-of-way from Pacific to St. Louis, and its new line came through Valley Park east of the older route in 1883.

This rural crossroads, comparable to many others in the state, took on an entirely different life as the result of the efforts of eastern businessmen, who in 1902 bought up all the available land in the Meramec Station settlement and its surroundings and who in the following year replatted this as Valley Park. Within a matter of months, nearly seventy new city blocks had been laid out and dozens of new houses and commercial buildings had been erected on them. Between the town and the river an enormous factory was built, the largest in the county, for the St. Louis Plate Glass Company. Other factories followed, as did immigrant workers from many parts of eastern Europe. As the new town developed on the flats east of the tracks, the old one took on new life, too, with many new houses constructed in the hills.

In August of 1915, the inevitable happened: the Meramec River flooded the city. The St. Louis Republic reported, "The plants of the large glass factories in Valley park were inundated. When the waters swept over them, extinguishing the fires in the furnaces and reaching the great crucibles in which the molten glass is contained, there followed a series of terrific explosions." The glassworks never reopened, although several consecutive efforts were made to refinance it. The first company was dissolved in 1917, and its successor, the Universal Plate and Window Glass Company, finally sold all its remaining assets on the courthouse steps in 1925. Valley Park never recovered.

Valley Park is currently undergoing its greatest growth. Several annexations have taken place in recent years, and voters rejected a proposal to merge the Valley Park school system, organized in 1908, with the larger Parkway system. On the other hand, many of the buildings in the "new town" are in only fair condition at best, while the relocation of State 141 away from Meramec Station Road promises further ravagement of the historic fabric of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It almost seems superfluous to say that the City of Valley Park needs an historic preservation ordinance that would enable the community to identify and protect its historic resources. Many of the former company houses in the new town, for example, could probably be brought back to a semblance of their original appearance, given appropriate design reviews that could head off the well-intentioned but misguided alterations that their present owners are inclined to inflict on them. In fact, historic preservation and design review could be an important component of a long-range community development plan.

Valley Park's status as a comparatively intact company town may give it significance on a state level. Comparative research should be done on this point. The most significant individual buildings in Valley Park are the elevator and the Sacred Heart Church, which evoke this image from John Freivalds' 1976 book, Grain Trade: "Grain elevators are located in almost every farm community and often compete with the local church steeple as the highest structure." The Valley Park Church is the third oldest Catholic church in the county and also the last of its historic Catholic churches to have a substantial spire. The elevator, successor of the mills which have formed the focus of the community since its earliest days, is the last surviving one in St. Louis County, and possibly one of the oldest in the state. The State Highway Department should be held responsible for the disgraceful way in which the elevator was truncated as part of the relocation of Meramec Station Road.

Among the more significant individual residences are 545 Meramec Station Road and 695 Meramec Station Road, both unusually well-preserved nineteenth-century houses, and both potentially impacted by the road project.

Valley Park's good fortune in having an active historical society should benefit in further research and preservation of its historic resources. This survey may serve as the basis for a new publication in the community's continuing series, a document which would be useful in encouraging preservation both privately and at the municipal level. It could include several additional properties that could not be included in the present survey. The old factory complex of the Wilson Stove Company at 301 Marshall Avenue, which has been the Absorbant Cotton Company since the 1930's, may retain some of the old buildings among the many new ones. The two brick houses at 208 Ann Avenue and 409 Meramec Station Road, originally matching, seem to be remnants of a failed turn-of-the-century subdivision called Mary Place. The old store at 20 Marshall Avenue may date to the early years of the century. Interesting old houses include 214 Meramec Station Road and 1106 Dougherty Ferry Road. The Sacred Heart Cemetery off Vance Road is old, and a second, unmarked cemetery has also been mentioned.

VALLEY PARK SURVEY

	ADDRESS	HISTORIC NAME	DATE
1.	10 Ann Avenue	Sacred Heart Catholic Church	1907
2.	17 Ann Avenue	Union Congregational Church	1896
3.	26 Ann Avenue	John Reddinger House	c. 1910
4.	114 Ann Avenue	Knabb House	c. 1905
5.	118 Ann Avenue	Halbach-Vance House	c. 1906
6.	220 Benton Street	St. Louis Boat and Canoe	1904-09
7.	237 Benton Street	Telephone Building	c. 1904
8.	318 Benton	Benton School (City Hall)	c. 1908
9.	336 Benton Street	W. Vance House	c. 1903
10.	47 Crescent Avenue	Kurth-Lowe House	c. 1900
11.	800 Forest Avenue	The Beehive, Nelson House	c. 1921
12.	14 Front Street	House	c. 1880
13.	16 Front Street	House	c. 1880
14.	18 Front Street	House	c. 1880
15.	24-26 Front Street	Frisco Inn	c. 1880
16.	14 Highland Avenue	Joseph Babka House	c. 1922
17.	229 Jefferson Avenue	Kurth-Doering House	c. 1900
18.	407 Jefferson Avenue	Schlueter-Pfotenhauer House	c. 1900
19.	409 Jefferson Avenue	Schlueter-Hubacek House	c. 1900
20.	15 Lookout Avenue	Nellie Donnewald House	c. 1907
21.	229 Lookout Avenue	Frank Susek House	c. 1923
22.	46 Marshall Avenue	Meramec Valley Bank Building	c. 1915
23.	269 Marshall Avenue	old Gem Theater	c. 1909
24.	340 Marshall Avenue	House	c. 1911
25.	342 Marshall Avenue	House	c. 1911
26.	1000 Marshall Avenue	Lions Club	c. 1945
27.	26 Meramec Station Road	Steigerwald Garage	c. 1920
28.	107 Meramec Station Road	Valley Park Elevator	c. 1895
29.	216 Meramec Station Road	House	c. 1880
30.	300 Meramec Station Road	Valley Park Bottling Company	c. 1926
31.	356 Meramec Station Road	Valley Park High School	1937
32.	505 Meramec Station Road	House	c. 1911
33.	516 Meramec Station Road	Charles B. Fischer House	c. 1902
34.	517 Meramec Station Road	House	c. 1912
35.	531 Meramec Station Road	Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church	1913
36.	539 Meramec Station Road	Lawrence Weggenmann House	c. 1935
37.	544 Meramec Station Road	William M. Woods House	c. 1906
38.	545 Meramec Station Road	Milks-Burton House	c. 1898
39.	610 Meramec Station Road	William A. Koons House	c. 1906
40.	632 Meramec Station Road	"Mary Welling House"	1866-70
41.	641 Meramec Station Road	John O. Sturdy House	c. 1900
42.	646 Meramec Station Road	Pape-Sanders House	c. 1880
43.	695 Meramec Station Road	Olivia Schlueter House	c. 1890
44.	704 Meramec Station Road	Alexander Bolte House	c. 1910
45.	707 Meramec Station Road	Schlueter-Marcus House	c. 1900
46.	716 Meramec Station Road	Kurth-Hildebrandt House	c. 1908
47.	718 Meramec Station Road	Kurth-Stephens House	c. 1906
48.	809 Meramec Station Road	Warner-Hartje House	c. 1906

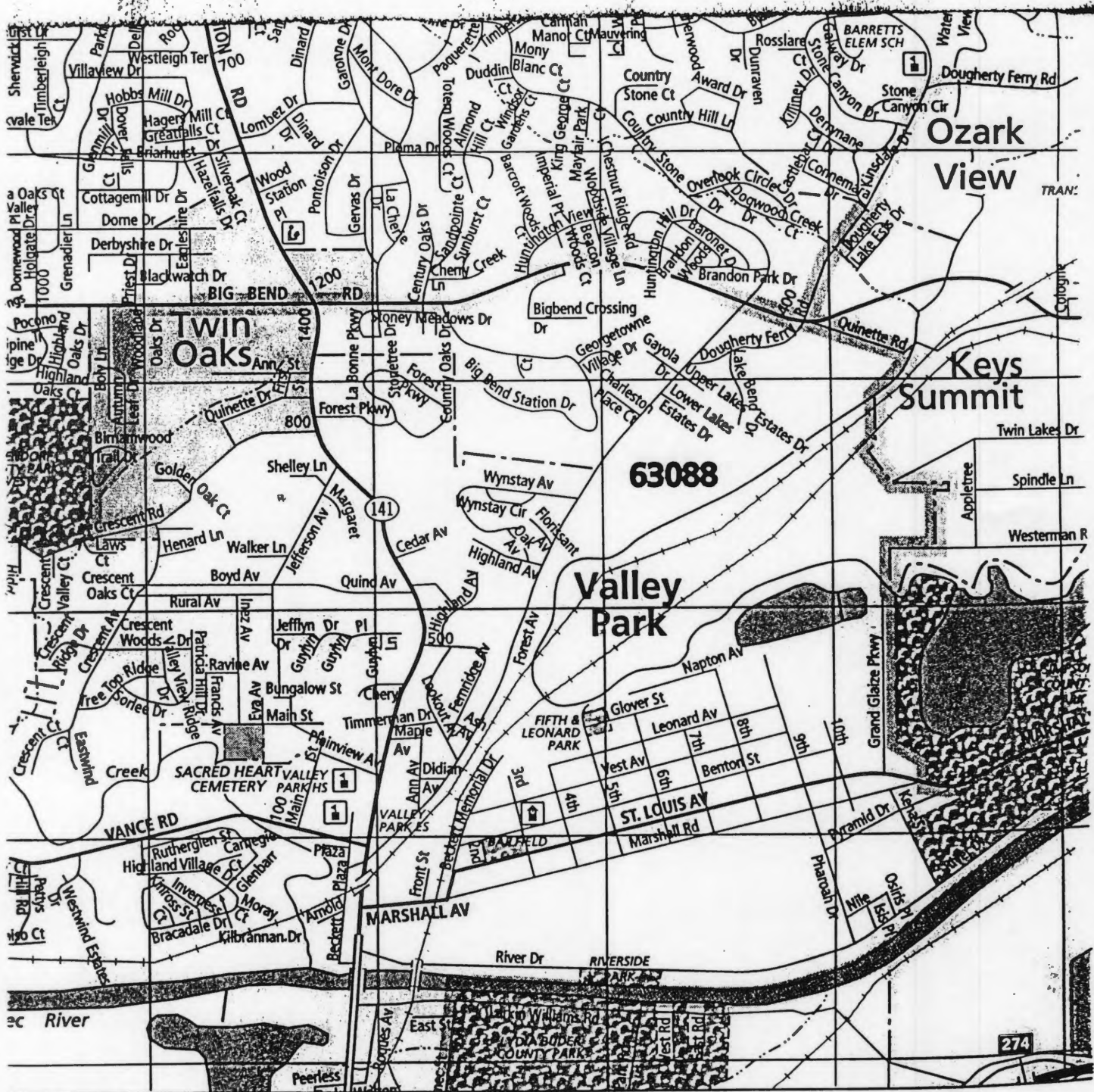
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49.	3310 Quinette Road	George W. Baumhoff House	c. 1924
50.	238 St. Louis Avenue	Valley Park Trust Company Building	1903
51.	300 St. Louis Avenue	Dietrich Building	c. 1903
52.	309 St. Louis Avenue	Wichmann's Hotel and Restaurant	1907-09
53.	601 St. Louis Avenue	James Mercantile Company	c. 1905
54.	401 Vest Avenue	Meramec Valley Baptist Church	1904

COMPANY HOUSES

1. Brick Duplex Company Houses
2. Bungaloid Company Houses
3. Executive Brick Company Houses
4. Executive Frame Company Houses
5. Peaked Roof Four-Bay Company Houses
6. Pyramidal Roof Brick Company House
7. Shingle Style Company Houses
8. Two-Bay Frame Company Houses

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