

2015 Thematic Survey of Flounder Houses in St. Louis City Survey Report

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Cultural Resources Office
Planning and Development Agency
City of St. Louis

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Flounder House

An urban house form called “flounder,” “half-house,” or “half flounder” appears to be an accidental form but is actually a deliberate one with numerous examples in Old St. Louis and Alexandria, Virginia.”

Steven Holl

Rural & Urban House Types in North America

1982

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Executive Summary

During 2015 the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office completed a survey of the vernacular house type known as a flounder throughout the City of Saint Louis. This survey had several objectives, including to quantify the number of flounders remaining standing in the City; identification of common characteristics and types; and the determination of how many examples of the building type were in locally designated and National Register-listed historic districts and how many were threatened by a deteriorated conditions and/or degraded and low-property value settings.

The origins of the vernacular house type remain obscure and research for the project did not reveal many studies of the building form. The survey supports the assertion that while flounders were built in other cities, most of which are east of the Mississippi River, St. Louis City is home to one of the largest collections of flounders. The number of flounders would be much larger but for the fact that they were built in the older portion of the city, some portions of which have been redeveloped. The survey recorded 277 flounders; while this number is impressive, it must be noted that it is only a partial sampling of the once common building type. As the sample is so small and relatively random, the report avoids firm statements about the extent and prevalence of flounder types and features.

The documented flounders demonstrate the adaptability of the flounder form and its frequent combination with other common building elements, such as the side gallery and small dormers. Flounders were built at various locations on the city's lots: at the alley, mid-lot, and at the building line near the street. They were built as one to two-and-a-half story buildings.

Most flounders were built prior to the issuance of building permits by the City and the documentation of the building project with the identity of the property owner and builder is not often possible. The dominance of German immigrants in St. Louis and the likelihood that a German builder or contractor erected the building means that the German connection is too ubiquitous to be truly informative, given that the same Germans erected many other building types as well, during the same time frame. Research done for the survey suggests that one posited scenario – that flounders built near the alleys might have been the first step in a larger residential construction project – was not supported by the evidence of the remaining flounders.

This survey provides a great deal of information about each flounder recorded on an inventory form. This report both explains the survey project and begins to identify character-defining characteristics of St. Louis flounders and what might have been common variations. One of the most important conclusions of this study is that there is no quintessential flounder form or articulation, as its adaptability as a basic building form no doubt was part of its widespread use. The flounder in St. Louis might best be understood as a form that was adapted to incorporate features of other common urban building types, from the small free-standing house to the alley house, flats and townhouses. Flounders were constructed in St. Louis primarily during three decades, the 1860s through the 1880s, side-by-side with other house types. The survey results

echo many of the conclusions made by Christopher Martin in his study of flounders in Alexandria, Virginia.

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Cultural Resources Office staff members Andrea Gagen and Robert Bettis were instrumental in the completion of the survey and report, which were managed by Jan Cameron. Intern Lorraine Nunley assisted in many facets of the project. Adona Buford kept the regular work moving forward as other staff members immersed themselves in this project.

Objectives

The City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office (CRO) undertook a thematic survey of extant flounder houses within the City boundaries (2015 Flounder Survey) with several objectives to support the understanding of the buildings and to assess the extent to which the building type is endangered. The flounder house – also called a “half-house” or “half-flounder” – is a distinct vernacular single-family property type that was built in St. Louis during the mid- and late 19th century. In addition to documenting the flounders that remain, the survey was designed to form the basis of a typology of the different flounder forms. It was intended to provide a framework whereby an individual flounder can be evaluated both in type and in terms of draft registration requirements that help assess the National Register eligibility.

In order to understand better the threats to individual flounders and the location and number of the building type in the city, the survey also assesses the structural condition of each property; notes the existing context and environment; and identifies its level of endangerment.

The survey is the first and most critical step towards a planning effort the City will undertake to protect and promote the rehabilitation and reuse of these important buildings. The larger project is a multi-year initiative to encourage the rehabilitation of these properties and their reuse as small single-family “starter” homes. The data on the condition of flounders and threats to them will support this planning effort and the prioritizing of planning and development efforts.

Methodology

The survey is designed to document all extant flounder buildings within the City of Saint Louis. The four professional architectural historians on the staff of the Cultural Resources Office and an intern undertook the fieldwork, property documentation and entries into the survey database. Architectural historians undertook the research and developed the content of the survey report.

Identification of the Flounder Property type.

One of the first steps of the project was to develop a base definition of a flounder to determine which properties to include in the survey. A flounder is defined as a residential building asymmetrical in form because one side wall is noticeably higher than the other to provide loft or attic space. In nearly all cases, the taller wall is blind, or windowless, and most of the roof has a single slope, or shed, form. For the purposes of this survey, rear ells that have the same form and are often referred to as a “flounder ell,” (See Appendix I) are not included, unless they were originally free-standing structures. Some readily identifiable flounder types and elements were used to add categories to the survey form. These included height, entrance location, front hipped roof, side gallery, corbelled cornice, bracketed wood cornice, dormer, and others. Some items proved to not be of particular interest, while others tracked important variants.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was undertaken by neighborhood boundaries and tailored to the probability of finding flounders in the area, based on the development history of the City. A Phase I portion of the city was identified based on a series of maps of city development (see Fig. 1); knowledge of flounders and the routes of historic routes through the City, including Manchester Road and Gravois Road leading southwest through the city. Staff drove streets and alleys and used the aerial photography of Google Maps and Bing Maps to verify the completeness of the driving in the Phase I Survey Area. The rest of the city was surveyed with a combination of driving and use of digital resources based on the probability of finding flounders. The pattern of development documented in the historic map resources identified areas to examine more carefully.

Fieldwork and digital photography was initiated during March 2015. Additional photographs were taken during the following months. Photography was often limited by the dense development in areas such as the Soulard neighborhood and due to the fact that many flounders are positioned mid-lot or at the alley, as well as by vegetation. The bird's-eye views of Bing Maps and aerial views of Google Maps were used to describe portions of the property not visible from public areas. Two photographs are inserted on each survey form unless site conditions provided limited views and others in the survey photograph collection document details and rear facades.

Documentation

Each of the 277 properties was entered into a Missouri State Historic Preservation Office Inventory Form in an Access database that was tailored for this survey. Flounder types and features were added to the form for use in tracking the presence of the important architectural elements.

As part of the documentation on the form, each property was located on three historic resources. Richard J. Compton and Camille N. Dry's 1875 *Pictorial Atlas of St. Louis* (referred to as *Compton & Dry Pictorial*) was the earliest of these and proved to be an invaluable aid to dating the construction of extant flounders.¹ The pictorial encompasses a significant portion of what is now the City of St. Louis in a bird's-eye view format that depicts the form of each building. The plates have a high degree of accuracy when the drawings are compared to existing buildings, and can be relied on to indicate number of stories, bays of windows, and roof shape. As the view is from an elevated position to the east of the city, primarily the east sides of buildings are drawn. The necessary foreshortening and overlapping buildings in areas of dense development obscure the detail of many buildings and sometimes only a building's presence or absence can be determined.

¹ Reprinted by McGraw-Young Publishing, 1997; *Pictorial St. Louis*, the great metropolis of the Mississippi valley; a topographical survey drawn in perspective A.D. 1875, by Camille N. Dry; designed & edited by Rich. J. Compton. This source, published as a book and also available at the David Rumsey Map Collection website, <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>.

Griffith Morgan Hopkins' 1883 *Atlas of the City of St. Louis, Missouri*² is available in a digital form and easily consulted. The plates in the atlas carry city block numbers that remain unchanged, and sometimes lot numbers as well. Building footprints are shown in pink for brick and yellow for wood, the convention used in Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps as well. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for St. Louis, Missouri were used in a digital format also.³ Most of the volumes consulted were dated 1908 or 1909. The portions of these sources that depict the property were inserted into the survey form with the property location indicated. These map images served as the basis of circa construction dates and in some cases confirmed the presence of gallery porches and the construction of additions. They also provided an understanding of the extent of the development of an area when the flounder was constructed.

Many of the properties – approximately 74 percent – are located in existing National Register Historic Districts. Some of the nomination forms are quite old and do not provide information specific to each property. Other nominations provided only an estimated date of construction based on the block's development pattern or in some instances, use the date supplied by the GEO St. Louis database that draws from unverified City Assessor's records. These dates were sometimes supported by the map documentation but more often were not. For this reason, dates in nominations were not used if they are not supported by the sources used in this survey. When the nominations provided information about a property, it was included in the Property History section.

The survey form was customized to include information about the endangerment and condition of the properties recorded. Several types of endangerment were provided as selections and notes were made about the overall condition, maintenance, and context of the properties.

The survey documented many more flounders than the 80 to 100 that were estimated would be the total. Initially, over 300 properties were recorded in the fieldwork. Upon further study, some of these properties were removed from the group documented on survey forms. Many of these have the form of a "gabled" with a short opposing roof slope and side gallery (See Appendix I). While these properties have many similar characteristics to those categorized as flounders, they seem to represent a related vernacular house type as opposed to what is considered to be a flounder. Other properties, when researched, were found to be ells or additions.

The Access database entries were queried to provide information about the recorded properties by various attributes, including estimated date of construction, number of stories, roof shape, exterior materials and endangerment conditions.

² Griffith Morgan Hopkins, *Atlas of the City of St. Louis, Missouri* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1883). Digital Date: 2010, State Historical Society of Missouri, available at the Society's website, <http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/mocoplats/id/3231>, accessed July 15, 2015.

³ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map for the City of St. Louis, 1903-1909*. Maps of Missouri Collection, University of Missouri Digital Library website, <http://digital.library.umsystem.edu/cgi/i/image/image-idx?page=index;c=umcscsanic>. accessed July 15, 2015.

Research

As most of the flounders were constructed before building permit records are available, the survey was designed to assess the possibilities for finding information about who built and initially occupied flounders by conducting research on a relatively small number of properties. Properties were selected for further research on the basis of location, estimated date of construction, relative architectural sophistication, and presence of common and unusual elements.

As a large percentage of the flounders were built prior to 1883, building permits as a source of original owner and builder were known not to be available. When building permits were researched for post 1883 buildings, they were not found, as many pre-1900 permits do not have street addresses and did not match any known owner of a flounder. Building permit research did not yield information for any flounders, although not all properties were researched in this way.

Newly available digital resources were used in this research, primarily digitized City Directories. The directories were searched in a manner similar to a reverse directory, via street name or number. This strategy was most effective with the 1890 City Directory available at the Washington University in St. Louis' Unreal City website. Earlier directories were searched by name associated with the property – both using the search function as well as reading the pages for variants on spelling. This research yielded firm results during the 1880s as addresses were in use by then, as opposed to descriptions such as “east side of Nebraska near Gasconade.” Also, by that time, most current street names had been adopted.

Census records available through the Ancestry.com website were also used. They were consulted primarily to identify occupations and country of origin. As this source is so easily searched, as compared to earlier versions of the census, references have been shortened to name and census year.

Searches of deed indexes at the City of St. Louis Assessor's Office yielded varying results. Sometimes the indexes did not indicate the next earlier conveyance and the search could not be continued. This research was particularly time-consuming as each property had to be traced from the most current transaction. The project did not include searching grantor/grantee indexes when the indexes did not further the search.

The concentration of flounders in the Soulard neighborhood and the desire to understand who built them prompted the scrutiny of one block in the neighborhood on which several extant flounders stand. These buildings are townhouse flounders thought to be single-family residences. Plat maps from the 1884-1886 period indicated that these blocks were part of a larger Allen family holding. Individuals holding leases, “lesees” were indicated for most lots and were posited to be likely occupants of the properties. However, City Directories indicated otherwise and that the properties during the 1870s and 1880s were not single-family residences and housed various working-class tenants.

The results of this research are summarized by property in Appendix II. Although few first occupants were documented, the evidence recorded in this initial research effort indicates that flounders were occupied during the late 19th century by skilled craftsmen in owner-occupied

situations. Many of the flounders in Soulard appear to have been used as rooming houses and occupants were more typically laborers who frequently changed residences.

In addition to research individual properties, CRO staff members attempted to address the “tax on windows” and building ordinance explanations for the form of the flounder. Digital full-text versions of St. Louis City ordinances for the years 1850, 1855-56 and 1860-61, during the era prior to and during when the first flounders were constructed. Neither searching indexes for references to taxation and building codes, nor searching the texts for keywords such as assessment, building, and construction yielded any pertinent ordinances. The appropriate pages did not make any references to half-houses (flounders) or assessments being based on factors other than the value of the property or the frontage of the lot. The search did not reveal any reference to anything in the building codes which would relate to the building of flounders, or an incentive for using the flounder form.⁴

Dating Construction

The documentation sources noted above were the primary means of estimating a construction date for a building. Some conventions were adopted based on the evidence of the pictorial and the maps.

If an area was densely developed in 1875, then a date of circa 1870 was likely to be used. If the area was just beginning to be developed, the likelihood of the building being more recent prompted the use of the circa 1875 date. The broad category of pre-1875 includes all buildings depicted on the *Compton & Dry Pictorial*.

Most buildings that were depicted on the 1883 Hopkins atlas and not on the *Compton & Dry Pictorial* were assigned a circa 1880 date. Buildings appearing for the first time on the 1909 Sanborn Map were assigned circa 1890 or 1900 dates, depending on location and the extent of nearby development.

Public Involvement

The first public meeting about the flounder survey project was held in conjunction with a Preservation Board meeting on February 23, 2015. Staff presented the survey project and provided examples of the properties noted to date.

The announcement of the meeting caught the public’s attention in several ways. Several owners of flounder houses contacted the Cultural Resources Office, reporting on that fact and expressing interest in the project. Stephanie Lecci, a reporter at the St. Louis Public Radio station, requested an interview; Jan Cameron was featured in the interview that was aired on February 23, 2015 and posted on the station’s web site (See Appendix III). Stephanie contacted Cultural Resources Office again about a more in-depth story on the survey. She visited some flounders with staff and interviewed the group extensively. This story has yet to be aired.

Three additional new articles have appeared. Local architectural observer and blogger Chris Naffziger wrote about flounders and the project for the website version of St. Louis Magazine in March, 2015 (See Appendix III). The National Trust for Historic Preservation contacted the

⁴ Andrea Gagen conducted this research using the digital library at the Hathi Trust website, www.hathitrust.org.

Cultural Resources Office about including a short report on the project in its periodical; that report appeared in Summer 2015 issue of *Preservation* (See Appendix III). The announcement of the second public meeting prompted another story on St. Louis Public Radio by Camille Phillips (See Appendix III). A story that aired on St. Louis Public Radio after the meeting emphasized the number of flounders that are endangered (See Appendix III).

The second public meeting to report the results of the project was held on July 27, 2015 at a Preservation Board meeting.

Geographical Description

The entire City was surveyed for the presence of flounder buildings.

The Phase I area of the City proved to be the location of the vast majority of the flounders identified in the survey (See Figures 6 and 7).

Historic Contexts

Residential Development in St. Louis, 1850-1900

The Pre-1870 Walking City

Most historians agree that the oldest residential buildings left in St. Louis were constructed about 1830 and few of those remain.⁵ Reconstruction of the riverfront during the heyday of riverboat commerce, changing use of the city center, as well as growth of industry and population have eliminated nearly all evidence of the City founded in 1764.

The early village of St. Louis on the west bank of the Mississippi River had a low density and residential parcels were large with small dwellings and outbuildings and gardens. By the second decade of the 19th century, St. Louis was beginning to take on the character of a city. The size of its population increased dramatically in the late territorial period, as had its manufacturing and marketing capacity. Immigrants from the east and south arrived, and brought with them additional house forms, which were combined with earlier French types. The town's founders began subdividing the original blocks into narrow lots, thus accommodating many more buildings. The physical size of St. Louis, however, remained small. This period of St. Louis history is referred to as "The Walking City" because the entire town could be traversed on foot in a short time.

The Rise of Density and Scale

St. Louis' physical development, like most cities, began with a compact urban core of residential, commercial and industrial buildings, with dependent rural farming activities in the surrounding countryside. Prominent city families had country estates in the outlying areas near the common fields, shared agricultural lands, in addition to their homes in the town. Urban and rural housing were distinct in form and character, and evolved from different architectural roots. Most of the City which today appears to be very urban, was farmland until the later 19th century. As St. Louis expanded, existing rural housing types were absorbed into denser urban fabric. Occasionally an older building would influence the alignment of a street or the setback of a block.

The village of Old North St. Louis was established in 1816 north of the present-day central business district of St. Louis. By the time that the village was absorbed into the City of St. Louis in 1841, some of the area had been subdivided for development. After that time, the neighborhood became densely developed with rowhouses and dwellings at both the street and alleys.⁶

⁵ This summary relies heavily on *A Preservation Plan for St. Louis*, Historic Contexts (Jeffrey E. Smith, Janus Applied History Group, 1995), Architecture section, available at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/planning/cultural-resources/preservation-plan/St-Louis-Preservation-Plan-TOC.cfm>. This document does not have reference notes.

⁶ Norbury L. Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods* (1978), Old North St. Louis, available at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/archive/neighborhood-histories-norbury-wayman/>.

Carondelet, founded as a separate village south of St. Louis, expanded significantly in size and population during the late 1850s. As industries located in the area during the 1860s, both the population and construction continued to increase. Even though the village was annexed into the City of St. Louis in 1870, Carondelet was not included in the *Compton & Dry Pictorial* of 1875 which extended only as far south as Gasconade Street. As an outlying area, many of the earlier houses were small and were of both frame and brick construction.⁷

In 1870, most of the land west of Grand Avenue was still not subdivided. The development that occurred along the historic roads extending out through the city such as Gravois Road (later Avenue), Manchester Road (later Avenue) and St. Charles Rock Road (later Easton Avenue; now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive). Industrial operations, from manufacturing to brick making, were interspersed with residential development. In the partially developed areas – particularly between Jefferson and Grand avenues – houses stood on solid ground near sink holes, quarries and ponds. Urban density, with virtually every lot occupied, extended from the Souldard neighborhood on the south, through downtown and north to Old North St. Louis. The Hyde Park neighborhood was the northern concentration of development. The N. Garrison - Jefferson avenues intersection area of midtown was the western concentration.

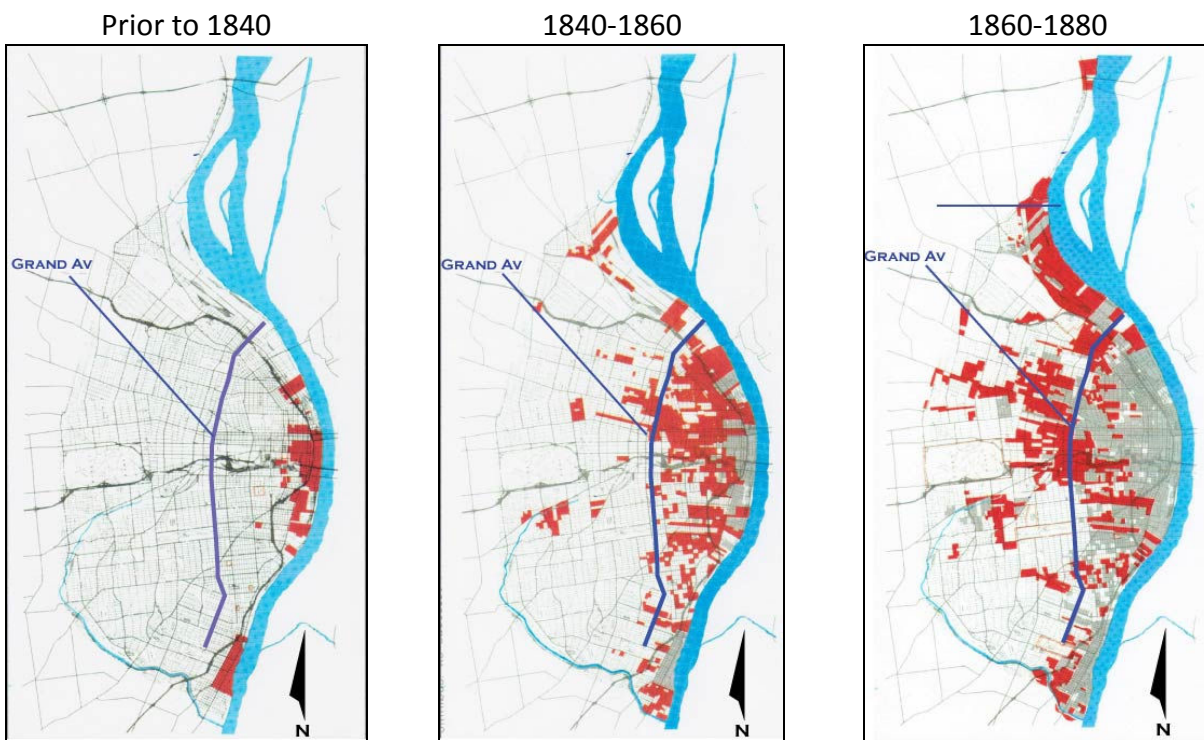


Figure 1. Mapped Development of the City of Saint Louis.

Source: St. Louis City Plan Commission, *Saint Louis Development Program* (1973), pp. 7-9.

⁷ *Central Carondelet Historic District Nomination*, Stacy Stone (Section 8); Landmarks Association of St. Louis, 2005.

During the 1880s, the area west of Grand Avenue experienced some development. Streetcar suburbs developed in both the north and south areas of the city east of Grand. Few flounders stand in the large area southwest of the intersection of Jefferson and Gravois avenues where multi-family buildings dominated in an area served by streetcars.⁸

By 1900, however, only the most western and southwestern portions of the city had yet to be platted. The expansion of the built environment in St. Louis during the decades prior to the turn of the century was intense and transforming. St. Louis' population rose from 160,773 in 1860 to 350,518 in 1880 and 575,238 in 1900.⁹ The growth of the built environment was commensurate with the rise in population. House construction patterns were marked by larger size, more sophisticated dwelling design and construction of groups of buildings by developers. The current city limits were set in 1876, and were assumed to be all the space it would ever need; but twenty-five years later, its population had expanded to such an extent that there were no longer any rural areas within the boundaries of St. Louis.

Previous Recognition of the Flounder as a Vernacular Dwelling Type

The presence of the flounder vernacular house type in Alexandria, Virginia and St. Louis, Missouri has fascinated many observers of residential buildings. The extant flounders in Alexandria have been studied, as noted below. The presence of flounders in other cities has been briefly noted, but are not known to be well documented.

Architects and architectural historians became interested in this vernacular building type by the mid-twentieth century. Initial research reveals that Steven Holl included the flounder as an urban house type in his *Rural & Urban House Types in North America* (1982).¹⁰ Holl's introduction pays homage to Fred Kniffen's typological approach to studying American vernacular buildings, adopting that approach conditioned by an interest in presenting those types having a "simplicity and integrity of construction and expression which link them to modern architecture" and as being thought provoking. Holl studied urban house forms in the context of "the individual building and the larger pattern of the city", mainly through attention to the definition of a public street or place, the use of public street façades, party or blind walls, and walls internal to the block in relation to overall city form and structure.¹¹ The brief text relies on images to convey many of these concepts. Holl's publication includes the flounder in a group that included the much more commonly known shotgun house and rowhouses.

Holl notes the intentionality of the flounder form and its known presence in "Old St. Louis" and Alexandria. He suggests that the use of the blind wall and positioning it at the property line, as a means to emphasize the dividing wall and that it might be a "variation on builder's row houses, intended for continuous repetition."¹² Holl quotes a St. Louis Heritage report that "the intent of the form was to shed rainwater to one side of the property" and reports the (unverified)

⁸ Gravois-Jefferson NRHP reference

⁹ Totals compiled from census reports, presented at <http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/stlouis.html>, accessed July 15, 2015.

¹⁰ Steven Holl, *Rural & Urban House Types in North America, Pamphlet Architecture No. 9* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

¹¹ Holl, Introduction and pp. 5-6

¹² Holl, p. 38

avoidance of taxes explanation for the form.¹³ Holl presents figure-ground studies of four blocks facing Geyer Avenue in the Souldard neighborhood, highlighting a house at the building line and one at the alley for which he presents floor plans. Holl provides front and rear views of an unidentified flounder.¹⁴

The Alexandria Study

Christopher Martin's examination of flounder houses in Alexandria, Virginia, summarized in the 1986 article, "'Hope Deferred': The Origins and Development of Alexandria's Flounder House," was a summary of a more extensive folklife-inspired study of 17 surviving buildings of the known 30 examples of the house type in that city.¹⁵ Martin's review of the three common folklore explanations of its form reflects the urge to understand the origins of these houses in Alexandria, which he dates to the 1830s. He reports on, but does not confirm, a building ordinance explanation for the buildings that required construction on a lot within a prescribed time to limit land speculation and that the easy-to-build flounder was erected inexpensively as a rear ell of a projected eventual larger residence. Martin notes that of the remaining examples of flounders in Alexandria, only seven are far enough from the front of the lot to support this theory. More of the remaining flounders stood at the street or in mid-block locations. An explanation of the form based on taxes, asserts that the absence of windows in the taller wall was a means to limit the amount of taxes paid on window glass; his study did not support this theory either.

Martin finds the "half-house" theory explains the windowless taller wall as a possible party wall if the construction of an adjacent building resulted in a semi-detached pair of dwellings to have some merit. His survey of the surviving examples notes that most of the taller, windowless walls were positioned at a side lot line and concludes that there were two intents in this placement: maximizing the other side yard's width and preparing for a semi-detached relationship with an adjacent building. However, Martin finds the most compelling support for the half-roof form in building construction methods; he suggests that the single-slope roof reflected ease of construction by eliminating rafter-to-rafter joinery, more so than a savings of roof-framing materials. This explanation, based on the assertion that flounders were inexpensive, small urban houses, correlates with evidence that they were erected by a builder for small business owners and skilled craftsmen.

Martin understands a flounder house to be traditional single-room-deep building plan rotated to present a short end to the street with several other adaptations, including replacing a gable end wall window with a door that faces the street. Martin concludes that the roof shape is an urban adaptation and characteristic. Nevertheless, after documenting non-extant flounders to the extent possible, Martin concludes that flounders, built during a 90-year period in Alexandria, constituted only a small percentage of the buildings in Alexandria.

¹³ Ibid. The report is not identified.

¹⁴ The houses analyzed by Holl could not be identified.

¹⁵ Christopher Martin, "'Hope Deferred': The Origin and Development of Alexandria's Flounder House," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Vol 2, 1986), pp. 111-119.

Martin notes the presence of flounders in other cities: Fredericksburg, VA; Newcastle, DE; Charleston, SC; Cincinnati, OH; Pittsburg, PA; Boston, MA, as well as St. Louis. He suggests this spread of the half-roof form confirms the form as an urban one that adapts local rural house plans for city use as a practical way of building. Consequently, rather than expressing deferred plans to erect a larger house, the flounder was a modest house type of its own, placed intentionally on a lot, and inexpensively constructed for working-class occupants.

Recognizing St. Louis Flounders

In St. Louis, the flounder was discussed in the Soulard Neighborhood National Register District nomination of 1972. The nomination noted the common occurrence of the “pre-Victorian” house type and noted how the “rear to front” sloping half-gable roof of 1812 S. Ninth Street suggested “that the home was intended to be twice the actual size” and had an “unfinished appearance.” The suggested reason for the form was “supposedly to elude the tax assessor.”¹⁶ The half-finished appearance is the case for both the rear to front sloping roof mentioned and the more common single side-sloping roof. The tax avoidance explanation for the flounder is as unsupported by evidence as it has remained in Alexandria.

The St. Louis Preservation Plan (Plan)¹⁷ identifies several vernacular house types. Those from the earliest period, when St. Louis was a “walking city,” include small houses with several features commonly found on flounders, in particular a side entrance and a side porch, or gallery (Fig. 2). The gallery, typically a two-story side porch with internal stairs to provide access to the upper level, is the dominant feature for the early vernacular house type that bears that name and also a defining feature for the “Charleston House” type. The Plan describes the typical Side Gallery House as a frame, one-and-a-half-story-building with a gallery extending along one side, where the door or doors are located. The Charleston House term is used for a brick dwelling where a brick “wing wall” extends by one bay to front a side gallery. The “wing wall” provides additional privacy for the gallery and adds to the street presence of the dwelling by making it appear to be a bay wider than it is. The entrances to these houses were typically through the



Figure 2. Gallery. This unidentified photograph taken in Soulard ca. 1870 is a Charleston House type with a side gallery (porch with internal steps) with a brick wing wall at the street end of the porch.

galleries, leaving the street façade as a public wall with windows only. Many of the two-story houses had staircases incorporated within the galleries to the second story, where there were

¹⁶ *Soulard Neighborhood Historic District Nomination*, p. 7.3.

¹⁷ *A Preservation Plan for St. Louis*, 1995.

one or more doors to access the gallery. Alternately, there is an entrance through the wing wall into the gallery.

The Plan also states that flounder houses are an important vernacular house type in St. Louis. The document situates the house type in the city's older working-class neighborhoods and notes a limited amount of decoration and variety in roof forms, as well as the potential for an alley location. The description holds particularly true for many of the smaller, plainer flounders documented by the 1875 *Compton & Dry Pictorial*.

As more townhouses were built in the city after 1870, flounders tended to share characteristics with both Federal-style townhouses and more vernacular ones. Flounders as townhouses at the building line – as opposed to mid-parcel or alley locations – are two or three bays wide and usually 2 ½ stories in height. The use of regular bays and openings with arched heads and prominent sills of stone or wood was a very common characteristic and similar to that of other townhouses.

As interest in vernacular house types increased during the late twentieth century, the St. Louis flounder received some attention. For example, the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office presented a description of the St. Louis flounder in a ca. 1993 issue of its publication, *Preservation Issues* (Fig. 3). The alley flounder at 2306 Hickory in the Lafayette Square neighborhood was included in the 2015 survey; it has been rehabilitated and is occupied.

During the first decades of the twenty-first century, historians, architects and preservationists, and bloggers have continued to draw attention to the house type. The flounder also has inspired modern house designs. The City's employees in its historic preservation program have encouraged rehabilitation of and discouraged demolition of flounders.¹⁸

¹⁸ Richard Callow, Jan Cameron, Susan Sheppard, Ryan Reed, Chris Naffziger, Michael Allen, (young architect) and UIC Architects are prominent among those who have demonstrated interested in and worked to save flounders in St. Louis.

MISSOURI

Historic Architecture

Flounder Houses ca 1830-80

Characteristics:

- The single-sloped roof is the main defining feature of this single-bay house.
- One room wide and one or two rooms deep are the most frequently found plans. One-and-one-half or two-and-one-half story versions are the most common height. The two-and-one-half story version will normally consist of a cellar, two full stories, and a loft.
- Flounders most often appear in urban areas, in working or middle class neighborhoods, on narrow lots with the gable end facing the street or alley. They are also found "attached" to more pretentious houses as a rear "ell" or "back house."
- The entry is most commonly found to the side along the lowest edge of the roof and is covered by a gallery porch. The porch roof is often a continuation of the building's roofline.
- Known free-standing examples of the house type are all located in St. Louis.
- The windows frequently diminish in height with each additional story.
- Although normally constructed of red brick, examples once existed in St. Louis that were constructed with stone, frame, and half-timbered bearing walls.

This two-and-one-half story flounder at 2306 Hickory St., St. Louis, is a free-standing example showing vestiges of a gallery porch.



PHOTO ILENE FELTLOWITZ

Figure 3. Flounder Article. Missouri Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program, *Preservation Issues* Vol. 3 (No. 5, ca. 1993), p. 3. Missouri Department of Natural Resources website: [http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/PI3-5\(9-10-93\).pdf](http://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/PI3-5(9-10-93).pdf), accessed July 15, 2015.

Visual Evidence of Flounders in St. Louis: The *Compton & Dry Pictorial*, 1875

The best evidence of the number and variety in flounder houses is the 1875 *Compton & Dry Pictorial*. Many flounders are easy to pick out because the single-slope roof was accurately depicted, either as a single-plane or with a triangular silhouette. The renderings in the pictorial include number of bays, and hence, convey relative scale of the buildings, as well as the presence of galleries (Fig. 4). Some blocks in Soulard and other older neighborhoods are so dense with buildings the individual forms cannot be differentiated.

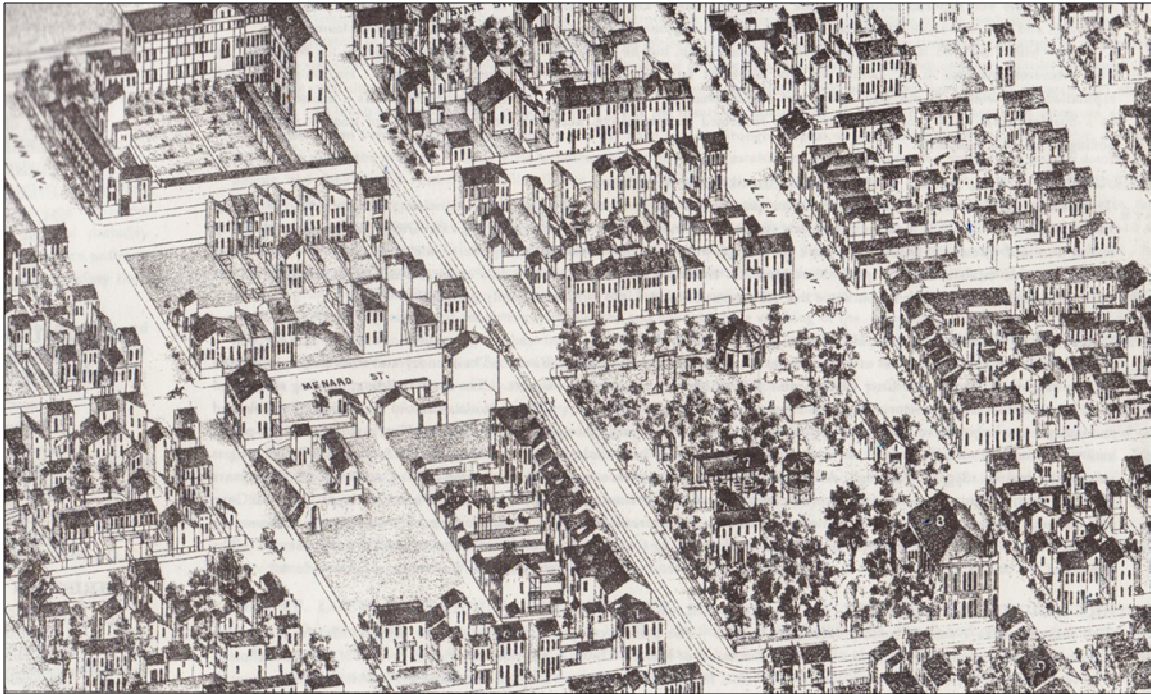


Figure 4. Portion of the Soulard neighborhood depicted in the *Compton & Dry Pictorial*, Plate 28. Flounders were particularly common in this densely developed neighborhood.

One pattern the *Compton & Dry Pictorial* confirms is that flounders were often included in the first development in an outlying area. These groups of buildings include several building types, not just flounders. Clusters of buildings along Gravois Road (now Avenue), including one at the intersection with Grand Avenue, depict a flounder that remains standing. This building is on the property acquired by John Abeln, a farmer, in 1871. The Abeln flounder, 3466 Grace Avenue, and others depicted in Figure 5 complicate the notion that flounders were an urban vernacular building type, as they show that the lines between rural and urban areas were not clearly drawn in rapidly expanding cities.

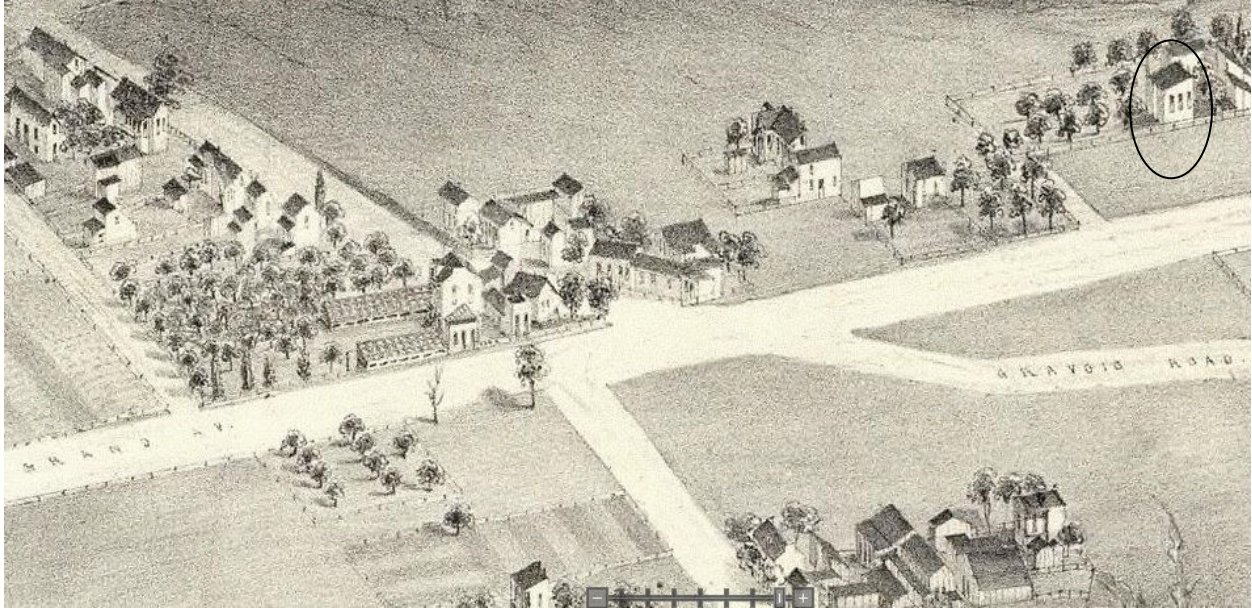
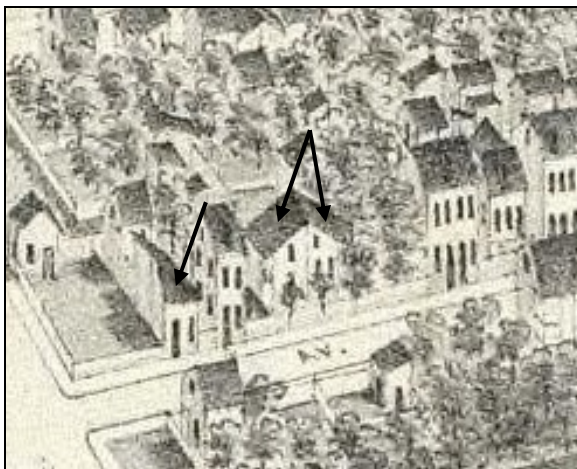
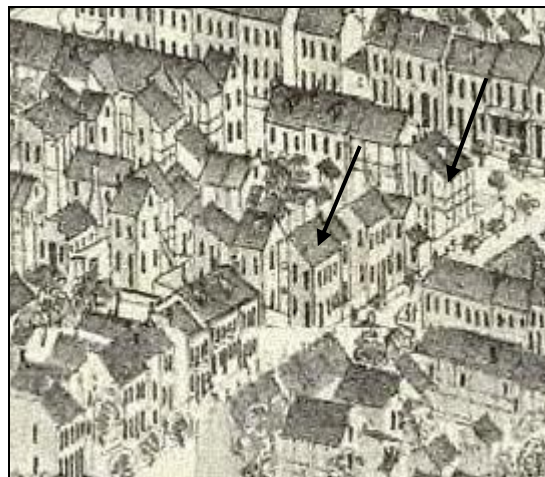


Figure 5. Portion of Compton & Dry pictorial showing intersection of Grand Avenue and Gravois Road. Several flounders appear, as well as buildings with other roof forms. The John Abeln flounder is circled. Source: David Rumsey Map Collection website, <http://www.davidrumsey.com/>, accessed July 28, 2015.

The Compton & Dry Pictorial clearly conveys that flounders were built amongst other building types. The view of Lemp Avenue in Benton Park (Plate 30) displays this variety as well as the number of bays of flounders included in the survey, which the arrows point to. A flounder with a gallery on the street side and one with a gallery on the yard side on N. 13th Street are shown in a view of the southern portion of the Old North St. Louis neighborhood (Plates 45 and 48). Several alley buildings on the block have a flounder form.



Flounders on Lemp Avenue in Benton Park



Flounders, some with galleries, on block west of North 13th Street

Results

Summary

The 277 flounders documented in the 2015 Flounder Survey indicate broad patterns in period of construction, concentrations within the city, and variety and adaptability of the building form. Nevertheless, the sources used for this project indicate that the extant flounders are only a sample of the flounders that were built in the city. Therefore, patterns are presented without accompanying quantification or claims for typical-ness or unusual-ness. Even so, the extant flounders recorded in the survey suggest that there is not a quintessential flounder type, as variations to the building form appear to have been quite common.

Geographical and Temporal Distribution

This survey documented 277 flounders in the City of St. Louis. The map in Figure 5 displays the geographic spread of the surveyed buildings. A vast majority of the flounders are located in the older portion of the City, east of Jefferson Avenue. However, a group of flounders was built west of Jefferson, in the vicinity of Cass and several others were built west of Jefferson on both sides of Gravois Avenue. Another cluster appears west of Jefferson, between Miami on the north and Meramec on the south. Another large cluster is located in the southernmost area of the city, in the Patch neighborhood. The outliers are sometimes representative of early development in an area, and in other cases seem to be atypical building choices for the area.

While the geographic distribution of flounders in the older portions of the city was broad, and included Carondelet at the far south, flounders are noticeably absent from a few areas. No flounders were found in Baden, which was a small town with a German population until it was included in the City's boundary in 1876.¹⁹ Residential construction during the following decades when flounders were built in many other areas of the city, did not include any buildings that are still standing. Like Carondelet to the far south, this area was not included in the *Compton & Dry Pictorial*.

Another area that might well have had more flounders is the area west of Jefferson Avenue extending to Compton Avenue, from the railroad through the east-west central corridor of the city south to Chippewa Street. This seems likely due to delayed development as in 1875 this area was a combination of forbidding topography with many sink holes and larger estates. The 1883 Hopkins atlas shows platted blocks and streets forming a grid through the large area, yet many blocks were entirely undeveloped.²⁰

¹⁹Norbury L. Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods* (1978), Baden-Riverview, available at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/archive/neighborhood-histories-norbury-wayman/>.

²⁰The 1875 Compton & Dry Pictorial plates 32-37 and 55-60 cover this area. See also the 1883 Hopkins Atlas of the City St. Louis plates 13-14, 18-19 and 25-26.

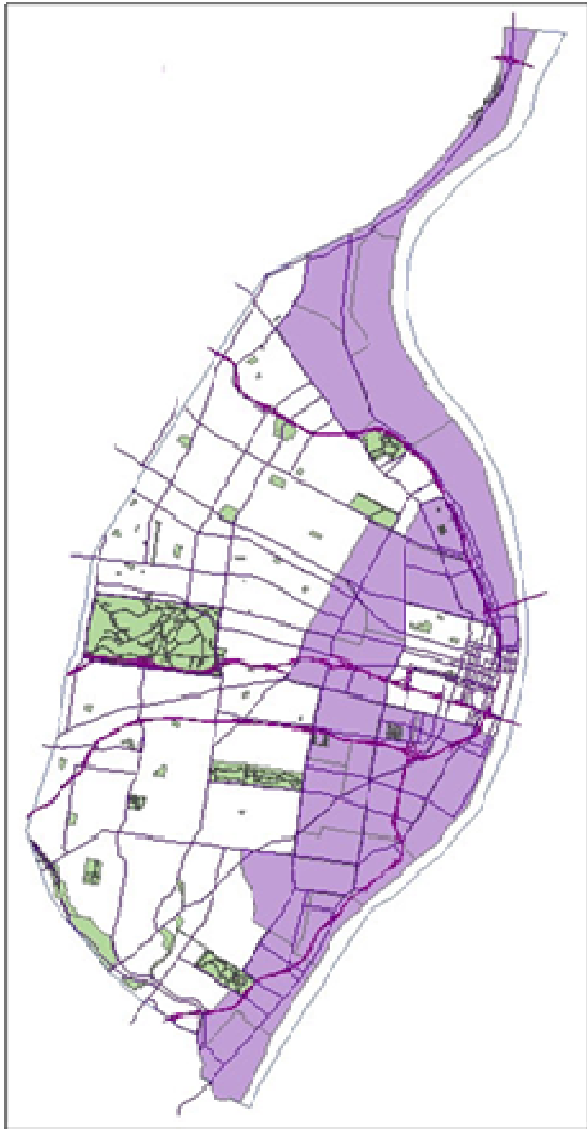


Figure 6. Phase 1 Survey Area.

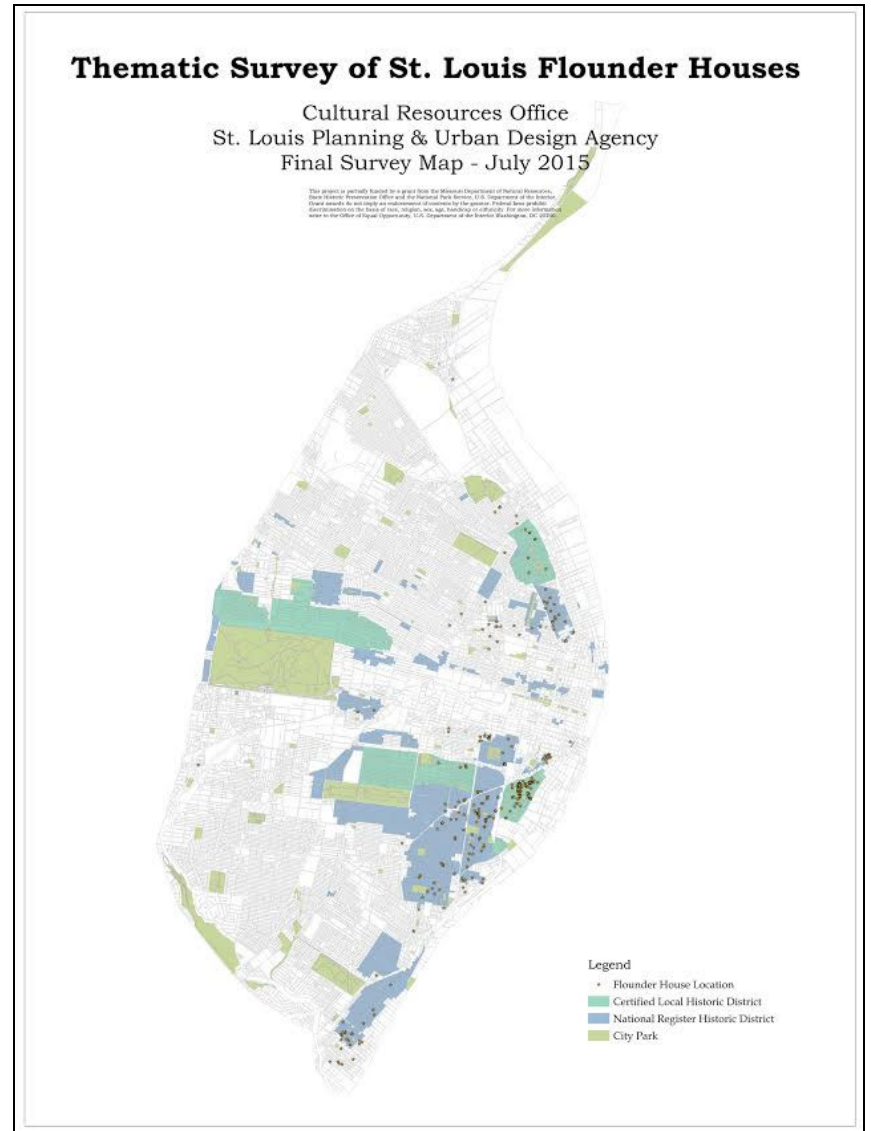


Figure 7. Map indicating location of all surveyed flounders.

Some flounders were built in the areas of what is now St. Louis City that were essentially rural in 1875, indicating that the sense of what were rural and urban house forms at that time was somewhat fluid. The exceptions to the sense that flounders are an urban vernacular house form are the Abeln flounder at 3466 Grace Avenue, noted above, and the house at 3919 Nebraska that is depicted in 1875 on a small agricultural property that includes grape vines.

Nevertheless, the survey of areas west of Grand Avenue that included buildings that pre-dated the general development of the area, including the Oak Hill neighborhood west of Grand Avenue and south of Arsenal Street, support the assertion that other small building types were built beyond the urban core. The survey revealed that the remaining early buildings were not flounders. A close study of the *Compton & Dry Pictorial* would likely reveal additional documentation of mid-nineteenth-century rural and edge-of-the city house forms.

As explained above, the dates of construction for the recorded flounders were estimated, based on historic maps of the city. Dates in National Register nominations were also used. Table 1 summarizes properties by eras of construction and some common characteristics that were tracked on the inventory sheets.

	1, ½ story	2, 2 ½ story	Hipped front Roof	Brick construction	Frame construction	Total per Period
1875 and earlier	60	92	42	139	12	152
1876-1883	37	58	51	23	5	28
1884-1909	7	21	15	23	5	28
Post 1909	0	2	1	0	0	2
Total	36% 104	64% 173	40% 109	291% 252	9% 23	277

Table 1. Summary of dates of construction and common features

89 percent of the extant flounders were built prior to 1883; 54 percent, some 150, were built prior to 1875. One of the two flounders built after 1909 is an outlier geographically, temporally and in materials, mixed-use, and scale. Despite all of these differences from the norms, the concrete-block flounder at 400 Blasé Avenue has the form of a pair of semi-detached flounders.

Temporal Trends

So many of the still-standing flounders were built during the 30 year period prior to 1883, there are few observations that can be made about changes over time in flounder form and elements. A review of the properties built later, however, indicates that full-length side galleries are less common and that roof slopes seem to be lower-pitched than those of many of the pre-1883 flounders.

Two flounders west of where most flounders were built demonstrate these trends. The circa 1888 flounder at 6857 Southwest Avenue was built as one of the first houses on “Old Manchester Road,” now Southwest Avenue, near the west boundary of the City. The 1909 Sanborn Map shows a row of five brick houses and four frame ones. As all of these buildings remain standing, the group demonstrates that one of the brick houses was a flounder, suggesting that in circa 1890 a modest flounder might still be built. The flounder, with a hipped-front roof, is quite similar to earlier one-story flounders except that it has a front entrance and has a small recessed rear corner porch rather than a full side gallery. 1127 Kentucky Avenue, built in what is now the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood (south of I-64 and east of S. Kingshighway, southeast of the city’s Forest Park), is also west of most of the flounders recorded in the city. This circa 1890 one-story flounder has a side entrance, no gallery, and a low-pitched hipped-front roof.



6857 Southwest Avenue



1127 Kentucky Avenue

Figure 8. Two circa 1890 flounders west of Grand Avenue

Dominant Characteristics of Extant Flounders

This survey documents that there is no quintessential flounder form or example with all of the expected flounder elements in the extant collection of flounders. Nevertheless, there are common elements that are character-defining features.

Form and Orientation

Nearly all flounders are rectangular in form with the short side facing the street – regardless of the location on the lot. A small number of flounders are positioned with their long side facing the street. These properties tend to be corner properties or lots on the short end of blocks adjacent to the alley. 2121 Crittenden is an example of this orientation.



2121 Crittenden

Roof Form

The shed-roofed flounder with its distinctive triangular silhouette is found in 47 percent of the surveyed flounders. Its common presence in the *Compton & Dry Pictorial* suggests that there were once more buildings with this roof form during the mid-19th century.

While the single-slope shed roof is a hallmark of the flounder form, it was often combined with another form. Forty percent of the flounders recorded in the survey have a hipped front on the shed roof and many of these buildings have a dormer projecting from that front slope (Fig. 9). The popularity of this form – in all areas where flounders were built and throughout the heyday period of construction – suggests that the presence of horizontal eaves was important in the streetfront presentation of the dwelling. This hipped front disguises the flounder roof form when one is close to the dwelling and provides the opportunity for the use of a cornice on the façade. As the hipped front actually reduces the space available in the loft or attic level, and dormers were also located on shed roof slopes, the hipped-front roof seems to be an aesthetic, rather than a functional, choice.

A few other architectural elements were less commonly used to conceal the flounder roof form. 3955 Missouri Avenue has a low parapet extension of the façade. 2819 Winnebago Street has a tall false front that adds overall height to the building. 1808 S. 10th Street has a false mansard front to the shed roof. Less common variants of the roof form include one with a gambrel roof, 3810 Kosciusko Street.

The three edges of the sloping shed roofs of flounders initially had brick coping. Parapet tiles, an improvement as they more water-resistant, appear on most flounders, as constructed or altered. These slightly projecting forms, as well as chimneys that rise where the shed roof meets the taller wall, add substance to the roofline.



Shed roof only, 1812 S. 8th Street



Shed roof with hipped front, 1935 College Street

Figure 9. Two main flounder roof forms, shed roof and shed roof with hipped front

Location on the Building Lot

Three locations on the city lot are common in addition to the nearly universal practice of positioning the flounder on a side lot line.

Side Lot Line.

Nearly all flounders recorded in the survey are positioned with the taller blind, or windowless, wall at the side lot line. As this wall typically had no openings, it could become a party wall. Alternatively, it offered privacy to the neighboring property on that side. This position also afforded a wider – yet still narrow – side yard on the other side of the property.

Building Line.

Many of the extant flounders are positioned at or near the building line – the distance from the sidewalk at which most of the buildings on the block are positioned – as the main or front residential building on a parcel. These flounders often have a street-front presence as a townhouse with a hipped roof and horizontal cornice.

Mid-Lot Location.

Some of the extant flounders were built near the middle of the lot. This location seems to have allowed for more than one possibility in the future – or for both front and rear yards. A mid-lot flounder could become a rear wing for a front house positioned at the building line, yet the survey did not document this as a common pattern except in the Patch area of Carondelet neighborhood. Most of the mid-lot flounders remain free-standing, not connected to front or rear structures. 2729 Howard Street is an example of a small mid-lot flounder that received a rear addition (see below). A Second Empire style building was built in front of the mid-lot flounder at 2340 Menard Street and a similar scenario took place at 1213 Monroe Street. 2719 James Cool Papa Bell Avenue, which had a mid-lot location, received a commercial front addition during the early 20th century. 3533 Missouri Avenue was expanded from a mid-lot flounder with a larger flounder with a basement constructed at the alley.

Alley Location.

Flounders stand at the edge of alleys in two conditions on the lot: as the only building on the property and as a rear building, behind another one. Flounders were commonly built at the alley with a side entrance through a gallery, leaving a public type of façade with only windows facing the alley. Rear flounders behind another residence are extant in several areas, although they are most common in the Soulard neighborhood. Flounders positioned at the alley as the only building were not limited to certain areas.

The possibility that an alley flounder was intended to be the rear wing for a larger house was not supported by the extant flounders. The survey documented a very limited sample of adding a larger front house to an alley flounder. The alley flounder at 4048 Nebraska Avenue was clearly the first of a two-stage building project. This 1½-story flounder has a side gallery with two entrances. A 2 ½-story dwelling was later constructed in front of the flounder. Foundations of different heights and appearance of the rear wing as a flounder rather than a flounder-shaped rear ell constructed at the same time as the front portion of the house, supports this progression of development that occurred before 1883. A two-stage construction project also took place at 1905 Obear Avenue.



4048 Nebraska Avenue



1905 Obear Avenue

Brick Construction

In a city where brick construction is dominant, it is not surprising that 91 percent of the extant flounders are load-bearing brick construction. The brick is usually a consistent red brick and the brick on the façade is the same as that on the side and rear walls, as opposed to being face brick. Brick flounders typically display two common methods of building in brick. Most openings have segmentally-arched heads. This form of arch is stronger than a round arch form and does not require a lintel, and thus is very common on brick buildings; it should be considered to be more of a functional than aesthetic choice. A corbelled or denticulated cornice of brick, a stepped out form and widens the brick wall to receive roof framing members, is also very common on brick buildings. 4408 Blair Avenue has a modest corbelled brick cornice with dentils; both the Blair flounder and 2511 Rear Benton Street have segmentally-arched openings.



4408 Blair Avenue



2511 Rear Benton Street

Frame Construction

Frame construction – used for only nine percent of the recorded flounders – ranges from small 1 ½-story flounders to larger and taller residences. 3533 Missouri Avenue is an example of the former and layers of later sheathing cover its original lapped wood siding. 1507 E. Gano Avenue is a later example, built circa 1895; here the flounder form is combined with amenities provided on other houses of the time, including a full front porch and a bay window on each side. Its original siding is also concealed under later materials.



3533 Missouri Avenue



1507 East Gano Avenue

Articulation

Regular bays

Most flounders present two or three bays to the street, as the rectangular forms usually are positioned with the short side to the street. If there is an attic window it is usually aligned with a bay below it. Many of the images in this section show this condition.

Eaves

The eaves, where the wall meets the roof, of any house, is a location where common building practices meet opportunities for embellishment – even in the relatively plain flounder. Most of the brick flounders have a minimal denticulated brick cornice where the eaves are horizontal, as a means to terminate the wall and provide additional thickness to support roof framing members. Others have a more developed corbelled cornice for the same reason. A few brick flounders that have a more fully articulated aesthetic have prominent wood cornices that may include brackets and dentils.



Brick cornice
7710 Water Street



Bracketed wood cornice
2307 S. 11th Street

Stone foundations

As with most brick buildings in St. Louis, extant flounders have foundations of limestone that extend above grade. The stone masonry ranges from roughly cut and coursed rubble walls to more carefully cut and coursed work. A small number of foundations have a band of smooth ashlar stone at the top edge. Another uncommon condition is a founder built with a minimal foundation of only a course or two above grade or without any stone above grade. Many of the founders have foundations tall enough to allow for some or all of the basement windows to be above grade. Exterior entrances to basements with pitched bulkhead doors above grade are not uncommon; like galleries, they position staircases on the exterior of the building. An uncommon variant is a brick building with no stone foundation above grade.



Typical foundation height
2308 S. 12th Street



No stone foundation above grade
2110 S. 11th Street

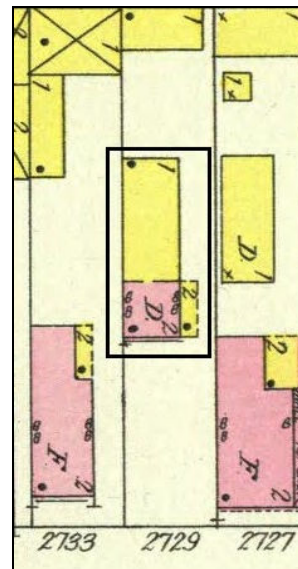
Galleries

Two types of galleries – side porches – are commonly combined with the flounder form: side galleries that project from the main building and galleries with masonry wing walls at the street end and sheltered by the main roof. Some galleries without wing walls are also sheltered by the main roof.

The wood-framed gallery attached to a small brick flounder served more than one purpose. For very small two-story flounders, the gallery enabled positioning the circulation system outside of the brick walls and access to various rooms of the upper story when the dwelling was occupied by more than one family. An example of this arrangement is 2729 Howard Street. A gallery also afforded outdoor space during the milder months of the year.



2729 Howard Street
The gallery roof remains



1909 Sanborn Map showing gallery
flanking the very small house

The gallery with brick wing wall(s) was often used in a two-story townhouse flounder. Its provision of both privacy and circulation outside of the brick walls seem to explain its popularity. A central bay variant of this form is the flanking of an open gallery with enclosed brick bays at both ends.

A rear gallery or porches were often amenities of a flounder when a full-length gallery was not provided. The rear gallery flanks a rear wing that is narrower than the main block of the house. The gallery often incorporated a staircase.



Typical brick wing wall in front of gallery,
2107 Menard Street



Central bay gallery variant,
2816 Indiana Avenue



Rear wing galleries at 2814 and 1826 Arsenal
Street



Central bay variant at 2711 Indiana Avenue

Entrances

Front entrances to flounders are typically modest. Steps leading right to the threshold, or a small stoop, are common. Many entrances are merely an elongation of a window opening with a door and transom set into it. Entrance porches are not common on flounders but do appear at front and side entrances. Side entrances, when not through a gallery, are often as unassuming as a flounder front entrance. Some flounders have small wood entrance porches at side entrances.



1222 S. 9th Street with front entrance



2824 Salena Street with side entrance



7113, 7115 Michigan Avenue with porches



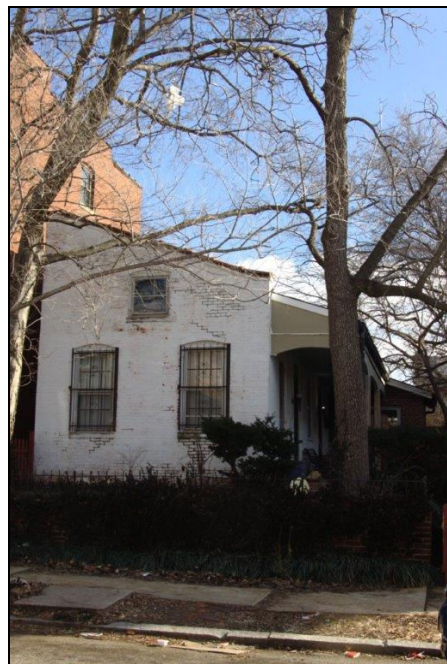
1207 Missouri Avenue with side porch

Lighting the loft or attic space.

Both lofts with little headroom and taller attic spaces are provided with light and ventilation. Many flounders have windows in one or both end walls. Small gabled dormers are common on the front slopes of hip-fronted shed roofs and less common on the side slopes of shed roofs. This provision of light and ventilation suggests that these small spaces were used for storage or occupancy. As wood dormers deteriorate without maintenance and it is assumed many have been removed when roof sheathing is replaced, it is difficult to determine the number of occupiable stories of some of the flounders. 2121 Menard Street has a typical small dormer that lights and ventilates the loft. The small window in the upper wall of 3154 Pennsylvania Avenue serves the same for the attic.



2121 Menard Street



3154 Pennsylvania Avenue

Additions

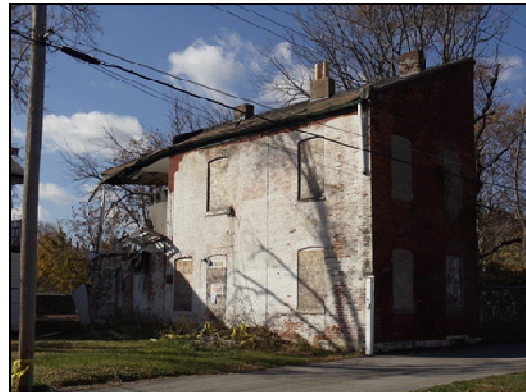
Most extant flounders appear to have been built at one time and do not have additions. Among these flounders are two-story houses built with rear wings that were usually narrower than the main block of the house. Not surprisingly, variants to this pattern exist. The rear flounder at 1901 Rear Dodier Street appears to have been built in three stages, all of which are of approximately the same size and maintain the flounder form. The flounder at 3533 Missouri Avenue consists of two flounders, the second of which is larger than the original building.

Flounders of all heights have received additions to the rear. These additions are usually secondary in scale as they have a shorter shed roof or a flat roof. Most additions do not obscure or envelope the flounder form. Some flounders have received small additions on the street side; some examples on alley flounders consist of a room-sized addition with an entrance that faces the street. A few older additions were for commercial space in front of the flounder.

Some of the smallest flounders have received several additions, as at 2206 Gaine Street demonstrates.



2206 Gaine Street



1901 Rear Dodier Street

Alterations

This survey indicates that strong identity as a flounder and integrity in form is very common and alterations tend to be minor. For almost all founders, the walls of two heights and roof-lines remain unaltered. Small additions to the front exist but are rare while additions to the rear are somewhat more common; both types of additions are typically smaller and shorter than the distinctive flounder form.

Other than form, flounders have experienced the alterations typical of other houses of their age. Brick flounders are the least altered, with the brick remaining unpainted and not covered by sheathing in most cases. Frame flounders have experienced the addition of often multiple layers of siding that is typical for buildings of that type of construction.

Changes to common features vary in impact. Windows have replacement sash of varying degrees of historic design and materials. Galleries and porches are perhaps the most altered elements of flounders. Wood galleries have been enclosed, partially enclosed, and rebuilt. Yet most of them retain the essential form and size of the original galleries, as well as associated staircases. A few flounders with galleries have been more noticeably altered when an enclosing wall with windows and doors that has no association with the gallery form has been installed; the examples below indicate how gallery enclosures that maintain a simple entrance are less of an impact than others that incorporate modern design elements. Porches, often side ones, have also been rebuilt. Alterations to the portions of flounders most exposed are most common. Certainly, both dormers and chimneys have been removed on some flounders with neither feature.



3466 Grace Avenue



2859 McNair Avenue

Flounder Types

While the extant flounders in St. Louis vary extensively, there are some types that represent common building practices. Some of the types are based on form, architectural features and overall presence; others by use of the building as well. It is impossible to know how common these types were initially, and therefore the current number of each type is an artificial indicator of relative popularity of the type. Also, many flounders won't fit exactly into one of these categories and certainly referring to them as a flounder is sufficient. The offering of types is offered more to establish a vocabulary than to strictly categorize the buildings.

The Freestanding Flounder

While this type of flounder has many variations, the important fact that the dwelling was initially free-standing is defining. These flounders are located at the building line, at mid-lot, and at alleys. Many of them have a hipped-front roof; many of them have a side entrance and a gallery would not be unusual. Despite the dense development in the city where most extant flounders were built, the free-standing house was clearly one of the preferred forms of housing.



2628 Ohio Avenue



4406 Blair Avenue

The No-longer Free-Standing Flounder

Flounders that have been incorporated into larger buildings are not as common as expected but some can be identified. Most of the examples noted are rear wings that clearly do not have the typical form of the rear flounder ell and can be documented to have been freestanding. The rear building at 736 S. Broadway has been connected to the front building with small wings, but was initially a free-standing building. Evidence on the building indicates that the flounder at the rear of 1231 Allen Market was built first. 4048 Nebraska Avenue and 1905 Obear Avenue (pictured on page 25) are additional examples of this type.



1231 Rear Allen Market Lane

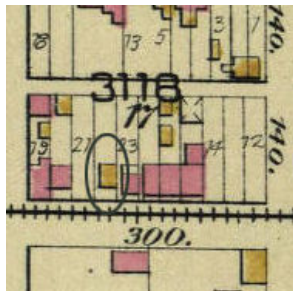


736 S. Broadway

In the Patch neighborhood at the extreme south of the many of the earliest extant flounders are now incorporated into larger buildings. A discernable pattern has been identified where the first building on the property is a small flounder — usually frame — sited on the parcel in such a way as to allow future construction of a front block at the street. A few years later, a 1 or 1-1/2 story, 2-room house was attached at the front. 215 E. Schirmer Street is an example. It appears on the Hopkins 1883 Atlas without its front addition, which was constructed c. 1890.



215 E. Schirmer Street (rear)



Hopkins, 1883



215 E. Schirmer Street (front)

The Townhouse Flounder

The 2 ½-story townhouse flounder is usually brick and positioned at the building line and may have a front or side entrance. These types of flounders share several qualities – in that they are closely spaced or abut other buildings, stand at the building line, and have a regular, public façade. The roof has a hipped front, providing the horizontal eaves for a corbelled brick or wood cornice. Many of these buildings have a single small gabled dormer above the bay near the taller windowless wall. With the regular bays and arched window heads and stone sills, these buildings have the overall presence of a townhouse and typically fill the entire width of the lot or are separated by narrow gangways. 1041 Allen Street is an example of a townhouse with an internal walkway in the lower story that provides access to the side entrance; other townhouses in Soulard have narrower passageways to the rear of the lot and buildings located there, known as “mouseholes.” A row of townhouses clearly identifiable on S. 11th on the *Compton & Dry Pictorial* plate shown below, most of which is intact, is an important example of the presence of the townhouse flounder in the Soulard neighborhood.

The history and use of these buildings has suggested that “townhouse” better describes their appearance than their use as dwellings, as a townhouse was typically occupied initially as a single-family dwelling. The common occurrence of this property type in the Soulard neighborhood prompted the study of one block on which several examples still stand. City directories indicate, that at least during the 1880s and later, this small sample of flounders was occupied by several individuals or families (see Appendix II). The rentals had occupants who changed locations of their residency frequently suggesting low-cost rental properties. The presence of galleries on many of these buildings, exterior stairs, and doors at both stories accessing the galleries, no doubt accommodated the occupants in access to various portions of the buildings .



Rear views of flounders on S. 11th Street
at top of view



2106 S. 11th Street, one of the
flounders depicted at left



907 Geyer Avenue



1041 Allen Street

The Raised Basement Flounder

A distinct type of flounder, yet one not particularly common in the extant group, is the flounder with a nearly full-height, or raised, basement. While it is common in St. Louis for the basement windows to be above grade, those windows are set high in basement walls. The raised basement flounder has a significantly taller basement above grade. Some of the raised basement flounders are quite small, suggesting that the basement needed to be more than an ancillary portion of the building. It is known that the raised basement of 2121 Crittenden Street (see above) was historically the kitchen,²¹ and that use likely occurred elsewhere as well.



2002 Rear Withnell Avenue



2723 Utah Street

²¹ Jan Cameron's personal inspection.

The Semi-Detached Flounder

There are enough extant pairs of flounders to identify the semi-detached flounder as a flounder type with two common variants that appear throughout the areas where flounders were commonly built. The pairs of attached nearly identical flounders generally have hipped fronts on shed roofs. The taller blind walls are the party walls that extend above the roofline with a curb-height fire wall. Some pairs were built at the same time, but are slightly different. Both the wood-framed pair on Gaine Street and the brick pair on Pennsylvania have the same variation in the attached flounders: one unit has a side gallery and the other does not. Other pairs do not appear to have been built at the same time but are quite similar, such as the alley houses at 915 and 917 Geyer Avenue.



2814, 2816 Arsenal Street



1822, 1824 Lafayette Avenue



2832 Pennsylvania Avenue



2234, 2236 Gaine Street

Other semi-detached flounders terminate rowhouses and abut other buildings. A group of four rowhouses at 1302 to 1310 Howard Street was documented in the Mullanphy Historic District nomination. While the houses have very similar facades, they differ in form; the two end houses have hipped front flounder forms.

The High Style Flounder

Few of the extant flounders recorded have the architectural presence to take them out of a vernacular building type with Federal style influences. Yet when a flounder exhibits a style, it is likely to be the Federal or Italianate style. The most intact extant example of this type is 2007 E. College Street. This flounder has a fully-developed Federal style five-bay façade facing the side yard, rather than the street, in typical flounder tradition. The entrance is located in the central bay; a replacement porch reveals the ghost lines of a gabled entrance porch. The prominent wood cornice is bracketed on the side façade only; an intersecting gable in the roofline allows space for an oculus window at the center bay. Hipped ends to the shed roof continue the horizontal eaves across the front and rear walls. Window openings have prominent flat stone lintels and sills.

A similar house at 2719 James Cool Papa Bell was almost as grand. Other flounders of this type have elements of Italianate and other late 19th century house types and styles, such as bay windows.



2007 E. College Street



1923 Compton Avenue

The Store and Loft Flounder

A small number of extant flounders were built for mixed use and otherwise have the common attributes of the store and loft buildings in St. Louis. Located at corners, they provide one or more storefronts on the ground story and residential space above. The flounder version of this common building type differs mainly in roof form. Examples of such flounders include 2300 Menard Street in the Soulard neighborhood and 2901 Salena in the Benton Park neighborhood.



2901 Salena Street



2300 Menard Street

The Outbuilding Flounder

The survey documented a few flounders that due to their size and location may be non-residential in function, or outbuildings, on a lot with a main building. A small brick flounder labeled as a smoke house on a 1909 Sanborn map, stands as part of a larger alley complex of buildings at the rear of a N. Florissant Avenue property. Some of these flounders have a door and windows, suggesting use that requires light and ventilation. The 1909 Sanborn map for 2203 Rear Menard Street notes that the small flounder was used as a cigar factory.



Smokehouse at 3712 Rear N. Florissant Avenue



2203 Rear Menard Street



2438 Rear McNair Avenue



1917 Rear S. 11th Street

The Complex Massing Flounder

This is a less common flounder type, but one that shows the popularity and adaptability of the flounder form. The flounder at 3919 Nebraska built with a narrow two-bay façade facing the street, was enlarged with a second flounder form positioned to form an L-plan dwelling and doubling the width of the façade. Map evidence suggests that 2907 Crittenden Street was built in its current form. The bays projecting from the flounder form at 4128 Michigan Avenue form another example of unusual massing.



2907 Crittenden Street



4128 Michigan Avenue

Assessment of Significance

Thinking about Flounders

The survey, despite the fact that it was a documentation of exterior form only and did not include the study of floor plans and roof framing, nevertheless indicates that the flounders in St. Louis are similar to those in Alexandria in many attributes. They may have well have been built for the same reason: ease of roof framing. Also, the explanations that have been offered, but not substantiated, concerning taxes and building ordinances as the reasons for the flounder form, flourished in St. Louis as well as in Alexandria. The flounder house type appears to be one that was built widely, with unknown frequency, at least in the eastern United States. Until other studies and surveys are completed, St. Louis does seem to have the largest collection of extant flounders.

One of the objectives of the survey is to determine the historic significance of the vernacular property type and to develop concepts to assist in determining the historic significance of each building within the larger set and its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). While assessing the eligibility of individual properties was not conceived as part of the city-wide survey, the project is sufficiently broad and deep to address character-defining features and to provide some guidance on the importance of the flounder building type in general.

As with any vernacular or other individual building, being eligible individually for listing in the National Register requires the property to have a documented history, be the subject of an argument that supports the assertion of historical and/or architectural significance and to retain sufficient historic integrity to convey the character-defining features of the property. Like other residential buildings, a flounder is most likely to be eligible as a contributing property in an historic district.

One of the particular challenges to establish the eligibility of an individual flounder is that it would be difficult to document it sufficiently to support an argument for historical or architectural significance. The similarity of most flounders, with an architectural presence somewhere between strictly utilitarian and high style expression, does not support the concept that the most fully-developed Federal style flounders are the most architecturally significant even as they are certainly of interest and document the range of expression and acceptance for the flounder form. And as this survey indicates, there is no “classic” or “quintessential” flounder to be recognized with National Register eligibility. On the other hand, the comments below assert that the building type is an important one in St. Louis and are intended to help shape the consideration of eligibility of individual flounders.

Due to the many National Register-listed Historic districts in St. Louis, most of the flounders in St. Louis have the status of contributing buildings in historic districts. Additional ones are in Certified Local Districts, a status that confers the benefits of National Register status along with review of exterior alterations and proposed demolitions under the individual historic district standards. Others are in local historic districts only. Consequently, the over 275 flounders in St.

Louis have been recognized as they are best understood – as one of the building types frequently erected prior ca. 1885 in residential neighborhoods.

19th Century Flounders as a Significant Vernacular Property Type

The 277 extant flounders in the City of St. Louis support the notion of the flounder being a significant local building type. The *Compton & Dry Pictorial* indicates that the form was an even more important component of streetscapes during the last half of the nineteenth century. The geographic distribution of flounders in relationship to the period of development supports the supposition that the number would be much higher if more of the older development of the city remained standing.

The survey supports the assertion that the flounder is a building type with a particular form: side walls of different heights spanned by a roof that is mainly a single slope, or shed, form. Yet, there is no “flounder style” and no readily identifiable “classic” or “quintessential” flounder, as the range of positions on lots, incorporation of common features, and use of both brick and frame construction demonstrate. The diversity within the parameter of the readily-identifiable form supports its significance, rather than dilutes it. The form was flexible in the placement of entrances and use of gallery porches and providing exterior access to the second floor. It was adaptable also in that it could be simply built or designed to have more of an architectural presence.

The flounder building form was one of the very common residential forms in pre-1900 St. Louis. It appeared not only in the free-standing houses addressed herein, but also as the very common form of rear ell. In a sense, it was a building block of the brick city prior to the common use of flat roofs. Every remaining flounder documents this important building type, particularly as variety and adaptability exemplify its character.

The understanding of vernacular buildings expands beyond that which can be firmly documented by tracing patterns of form, use, and geographic spread. The lack of consistent records on early buildings makes research challenging. The commonly-known actors who made the decisions to build a flounder – the original owner and/or builder – may not be known and therefore not available to lend structure to a narrative and argument. This survey has not revealed any designers or builders, patterns, timeframe, or architectural forms or elements that can be the basis for determining the architectural significance of an individual flounder, as is often the case for a vernacular building type. Nevertheless, it seems that every flounder that has character-defining features and meets the standards for integrity will be seen as architecturally significant in the context of St. Louis residential buildings, even if not officially determined eligible for listing in the National Register.

Historical Significance Factors

The geographical spread of flounders in St. Louis complicates the relationship between location, date of construction and significance. There are strong temporal and geographical patterns. Historic sources and the remaining flounders document a strong relationship between the portion of the City densely developed prior to 1883 and the presence of flounders. Yet the time period during which flounders were constructed has resulted in some of them being located in

what were not densely-developed areas at the time and hence are anomalies in neighborhoods developed primarily after 1885. As time of construction is a stronger pattern than location within the city, the pre-1883 flounders might be considered to have been built during the heyday of flounder construction in St. Louis, and therefore define a period of significance for the building type.

A similar question is whether some extant flounders are more representative of the building type than others due to their location in the city. The extant flounders demonstrate two patterns of development that reflect both time and place. The flounders remaining in areas where there were, and are, numerous document the pattern that the flounder was a common building type erected prior to 1883. The flounders in Soulard are particularly representative of this building pattern. Flounders built further from the dense urban development convey the pattern that the flounder was one of the building types erected at the outskirts of urban development. Both groups conform to the heyday period of flounder construction before 1883 and document the range of their use geographically. As both patterns of development can be documented, geographic location alone is not seen as determinant of historical significance.

A strong link between German builders, property owners and occupants was posited before the survey. The involvement of German ethnic builders and owners is supported by the information in existing National Register nominations and in the research completed on sample properties. While the German ethnic link is strong, it is both too common and yet not sufficiently understood to suggest that the construction of flounders is grounded in German ethnic building practice and history.

The builders and occupants of flounder houses appear to include all types of St. Louis residents except for the upper classes. Therefore flounders were both working- and middle-class housing in St. Louis. The small businessman and the skilled tradesmen have been identified as the first owners and occupants of flounders. A group of building tradesmen built and occupied the Howard Street group of houses. A plasterer and carpenter erected the semi-detached flounders on Gaine Street. These skilled craftsmen reflect a broader group of city residents. City directories indicate that there was a shift in residents in some flounders by the later 1870s and 1880s as more flounders appear to have become rental properties with tenants that did not stay for many years. By the end of the first decade of the 20th Century, many of the flounders were “flats” buildings, likely with two rental units, one on each floor. This use suggests they were used as small, rental properties for working-class tenants. The sample research results suggest that, as with other factors, the builders and occupants of flounders were too varied to support a strong link with a discreet segment of the city’s population.

Looking Ahead: Further Documentation

Historic district

As noted above, the presence of most of the recorded flounders in existing historic districts means that many of them have contributing property status in a National Register-listed district. See Appendix IV for a list of National Register Districts in which flounders stand.

No concentrations of flounders were identified that are considered to be sufficient to be the basis for a new historic district. The pattern of flounders being intermingled with other building types is perhaps one of the strongest that the survey documents.

A Multiple Property Documentation Approach

The assessment of the need for assistance with the listing of individual flounders to the National Register was one of the goals of the survey project. A few factors have become clear with regards to such an approach: existing status and protection, the challenges of the individual listing of a residential property; and the compromised condition and integrity of buildings not already in a National Register District. As 74 percent of the documented flounders are located in National Register districts, and more are in Certified Local Districts, the need for a Multiple Property Documentation project is not particularly strong.

The discussion of architectural and historical significance, as well as the following comments on the evaluation of integrity of flounders, is provided in this survey report, as the development of a Multiple Property Documentation is not recommended. The information in this survey report will assist the development of a National Register nomination for an individual flounder.

The challenges of listing those flounders not in historic district are several. Some are located in residential areas that have lost integrity of setting, feeling and association and therefore would not be included in future historic districts. Some flounders in these settings, when considered individually for National Register eligibility, may also have reduced integrity due to alterations and the deterioration of exterior materials. Other flounders may have integrity, and a recoverable history that supports National Register listing.

Evaluation of the Integrity of Flounders in St. Louis

The aspects of historic integrity identified in the National Register program provide the foundation for assessing the historic integrity of flounders. Yet certain aspects of a flounder's integrity are more important than others. The term "significant loss of integrity" refers to a condition that, taken alone, would reduce integrity to the extent that the flounder did not have sufficient integrity to meet the expectations for National Register listing.

This survey indicates that dominant in the perception of integrity is the continuing perception of the flounder's form on which the definition of a flounder is based. Historic integrity in terms of design, materials and workmanship should be weighted somewhat with the character-defining features of flounders. The most important aspect in the design of a flounder is its asymmetry in form with a taller windowless wall and original roof configuration. The original placement of the entrance and presence of a gallery – if one existed – are also important design features to preserve. This survey actually demonstrates that identity as a flounder and integrity in form is very common. For almost all founders, the walls of two heights and roof-lines remain unaltered. This perception of form is possible even with additions to the flounder and consequently the presence of an addition alone should not be considered to be a significant loss of integrity. Small additions to the front exist but are rare while additions to the rear are more common; both types of additions are typically smaller and shorter than the distinctive flounder form.

Other than form, flounders have experienced the alterations typical of other houses of their age. Brick flounders are the least altered, with the brick remaining unpainted and not covered by sheathing in most cases. Frame flounders have experienced the addition of often multiple layers of siding that is typical for buildings of that type of construction. The replacement of or concealment of the original siding material in itself is not considered to be a significant loss of integrity.

Changes to common features vary in impact on integrity. Windows have replacement sash of varying degrees of historic design and materials, but replacement sash is too common to be considered by itself a significant loss of integrity. When window openings have been altered in size, integrity of design has been compromised to a greater extent. Galleries and porches are perhaps the most altered elements of flounders. Wood galleries have been enclosed, partially enclosed, and rebuilt. Galleries and porches that have been rebuilt in historic materials and to historic designs do not diminish the identification of the vernacular flounder building type, document the presence of a common feature, and therefore must be considered in the larger context of integrity of design and materials.

The continued presence of historic materials, or replacement in kind, are the ideal for historic integrity of flounders. However, the commonness of the wood gallery, and the frequency with which this element has been replaced, means that replacements in-kind are the normal condition. A gallery that remains at least partially open as a porch-like feature and that continues to incorporate a staircase, if that was the original configuration, shall be considered to support the historic integrity of the building. The replacement of roofing materials is also too common to be considered to be a significant loss of integrity. The residing of frame flounders is common and can result in the loss of historic window framing elements; residing must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Historic integrity in terms of location, setting, feeling and association are not different for flounders as for other residential property types. Original location in a residential neighborhood meets the basic standards for location and setting and furthers the feeling and association of the property as well. Those that are isolated in residential neighborhoods with significant loss of buildings have been subject to historical forces of the last half of the 20th century. While the feeling and association with a dense and thriving neighborhood has been diminished, it is not considered to be a significant loss of integrity if a flounder has very good integrity of design, materials and workmanship.

Workmanship is revealed in flounders mainly in brickwork and in the craftsmanship of wood cornices. These original features should remain extant and intact.

Endangered Flounders

This survey was intended to document conditions that endanger the occupancy and long-term existence of flounders. The fact that 205 of the recorded flounders – 74 percent – are located within historic districts is reassuring for their long-term survival.

Almost 200 of the flounders were noted as not endangered, or were in good, stable condition. Yet 12 flounders were found to be vacant but boarded and another 9 were abandoned. Nearly 30 of them were noted to be in need of maintenance and 7 had some structural collapse. Loss of context was a concern for a handful of the buildings.

Recommendations

The recommendations for further work based on this survey come under two broad categories. The first are for the continuation of the flounder documentation and promotion project in St. Louis. The others are for further study of the vernacular house type within the broader context of the eastern half of the United States.

Flounders in St. Louis

The posting of the results of this survey on the Cultural Resources Office website will disseminate information about flounders in St. Louis and be an important reference point when decisions about flounders need to be made. The report will likely be expanded to include lists of endangered flounders, in hopes of attracting new property owners. The response to the report and interest in flounders will be fostered as the Cultural Resources Office considers what next step in the flounder project is appropriate.

Further study of flounders, particularly their historic floor plans and roof framing, would add to the understanding of the vernacular building type. This level of detail is likely beyond that to be undertaken by the City's Cultural Resources Office. A fuller documentation of the distinctive "gablet" roof houses would add to the understanding of vernacular housing types in the city. A cluster of buildings of this type on Mallinckrodt Street in the Hyde Park neighborhood warrants investigation.

Of course, building on the understanding of this survey through further researching of property owners at the time the buildings were erected is recommended.

Flounders in a Broader Context

This survey raised the question of why flounders were less often built during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. An investigation of the demise of the flounder and the more common use of nearly flat roofs edged with parapets may be warranted. Small brick houses erected in the city eventually became nearly flat roofed buildings edged with a parapet. The introduction of tarred felt and later bituminous materials for built-up roofing for those types of roofs appears to have some relationship to the abandonment of the flounder and its pitched roof. A further study of the dominance of roof types in St. Louis might confirm this relationship and explain the abandonment of the form for a small, relatively inexpensive dwelling.

While Martin's study of flounders in Alexandria noted the presence of flounders in other cities, no evidence of a widespread documentation of flounders has been found. Since the St. Louis survey was initiated, the presence of flounders similar to those in St. Louis have been noted in Belleville, an Illinois community in the St. Louis metro region; the communities of Cincinnati, Ohio and Covington, Kentucky, which had notable German populations; and in Pottstown and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Figure 10 is a map showing these cities and others noted by Chris Martin. This evidence reinforces the already strongly-positing relationship between German builders and residents, and the flounder house type. The exchange of information with these other communities and expanding the identification of flounders in German communities

would add understanding of an important ethnic significance. Another contextual element would be to identify German building types or roof-framing practices that have relationships with the flounder form built in the United States.

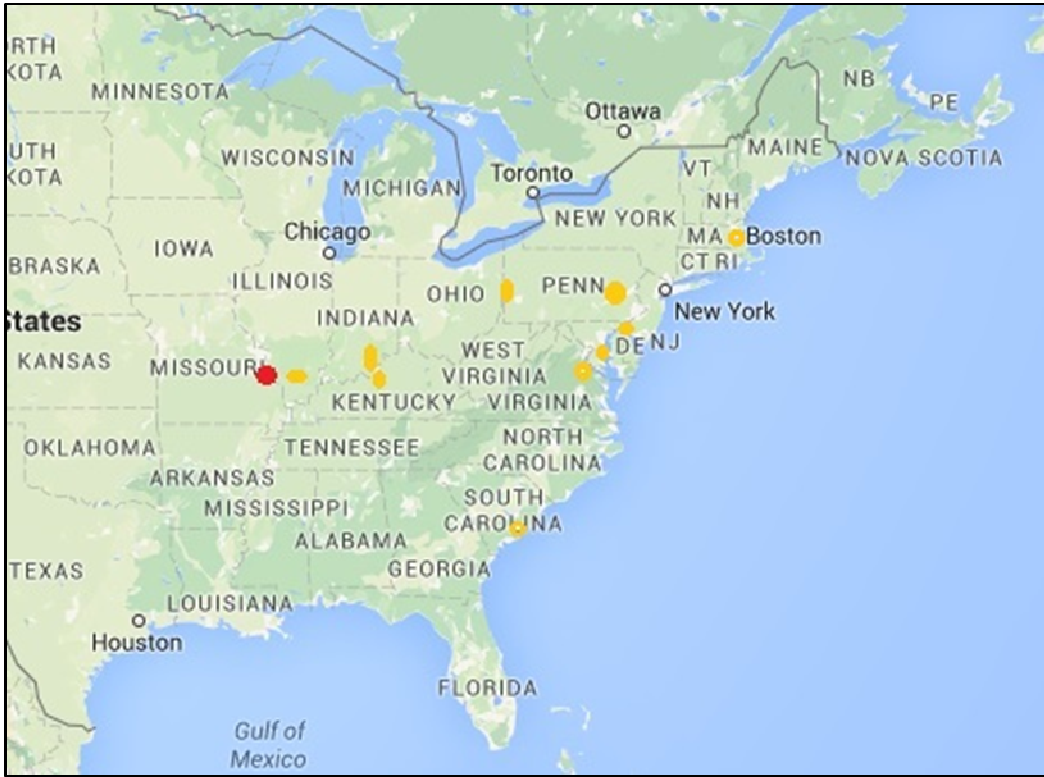


Figure 10. Map showing cities known to have some flounder buildings.

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1870 United States Federal Census

1880 United States Federal Census

1900 United States Federal Census

1910 United States Federal Census

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APPENDIX I

Examples of related building forms not included in the definition of flounder for this survey.

The Rear Flounder Ell

Flounder ell wings that are common in St. Louis but appear to have built at the same time as the main house and are not considered to be flounders.



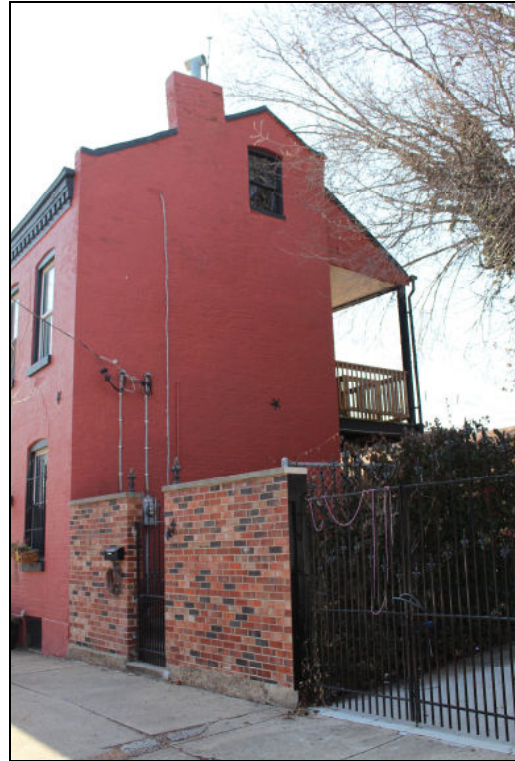
Photo: Post-Dispatch Archive Photo, Album ID: 810355; Photo ID: 24975742, STL Today website: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture>, accessed July 15, 2015.

Caption: Looking northwest from Leonard Avenue ca. 1948.

The House with “Gablet” Roof



1921 S. 11th Street



2111 S. 9th Street



4254 Blair Avenue



1916 Mallinckrodt Street

This “gablet” roof form occurs on several houses that would otherwise have many characteristics of a flounder. The addition of an opposing slope to the roof of the main block of the house.

The House with Complex Roof Forms



2306 S. 12th Street is an example of a house with a taller side wall on one side and from certain vantage points appears to be a flounder. The depth of the side-gabled front portion of the roof was used to exclude houses with such complex roofs from the definition of a flounder for this survey.

APPENDIX II.

Flounder Address	Summary of Research
Properties beyond the edge of urban development	
3466 Grace Avenue	House constructed ca. 1872 Deed research disclosed a reference conveying the property to John G. Abeln in 1871. Abeln first appears in the City Directories in 1873, occupation farmer, and residing on the west side of Grand Avenue north of Gravois Road.
3919 Nebraska	Constructed prior to 1875. The Compton & Dry pictorial depicts a vineyard surrounding the residence and some outbuildings as well. The Pfeffer family, who were in the organ business, resided at 3919 Nebraska from circa 1886 through 1890.
6907 Southwest Avenue	House constructed circa 1888. 1889 is the first year Evi (Evi Robertson is listed as living at 1905 Old Manchester, a property he owned (although there seems to be an address change).
The College Avenue pair exhibits different Degree of architectural stylishness	
1935 E. College Avenue	House constructed ca. 1884. In the 1880 Census Henry Averbeck, a driver for the Oriental Powder Co., is listed as living on College Ave. 1881 is the first year that City Directories place him in a residence on the north side of College Avenue near 14 th Street. In 1884 Averbeck (Averbrick) purchased the property, which he owned until 1916. Averbeck could have rented the house before acquiring it, or built it soon after 1884 after residing at another property on College Avenue.
2007 E. College Avenue	House constructed ca. 1873. 1874 is the first year that City Directories

	<p>indicate that Michael Hayes, a cattle trader, resided on the north side of College Avenue near 14th Street. Mr. Hayes and family are listed in the 1880 Census as living on College Ave. The property went into probate in 1896 and indexes do not indicate conveyances prior to that time. The Hayes family owned the property for some years after 1900.</p>
North Side Examples	
1901 Rear Dodier	<p>Rear flounder building constructed by 1876, as it appears on the 1876 Whipple Fire Insurance map. John W. Mohrmann, a grocer, had a business at Dodier, at the northwest corner of 16th Street from 1871 on. In 1888 John W. Mohrmann resided at the rear of 1903 Dodier, another address this property had. August Buren, a clerk, and fireman Frederick Luebke resided in the rear flounder in 1890.</p>
1420 Hebert Street	<p>House constructed ca. 1866. The flounder is one of two houses on the lot; one of the dwellings was constructed ca. 1866. Joseph Dickneite is listed in the 1867 as living on the south side of Hebert between 14th and 15th streets. His wife Anna is listed as living at 1420 through 1889. In 1890 Henry Storck, a carpenter resided at 1420 Hebert and George Peitz, a laborer, resided in the rear house. Charles Stokes' purchase of the property in 1907 is the last conveyance indexed. The 1876 Whipple Fire Insurance map indicates that both buildings on the lot had been built by that date.</p>
1115 Tyler Street	<p>House constructed ca. 1870 Charles Grote, a mill foreman at Schylenbury & Boeckeler, acquired the property in 1868, and very likely had the house built. Grote owned and occupied the property through at least 1885.</p>

1455 Rear Clinton Street	House constructed by 1874. John Henry Drees acquired this property in 1872. Rear building constructed by 1876 as it appears on the 1876 Whipple Fire Insurance map. August Gehner occupied the front building in 1886 and 1890; Henry C. Bruenger, cigars, and Henry Peifuss, a laborer, occupied the rear building in 1890 but lived elsewhere in 1886.
2619 Dickson (now James Cool Papa Bell) Avenue	House constructed ca. 1880 John Crouch, a drug salesman, resided at 2719 from 1881 through at least 1890.
South Side examples	
8109 Pennsylvania Avenue	House constructed ca. 1885. Margaret Davidson, of Scottish descent, conveyed the property to her son, William Davidson, and his wife in 1817. Davidson sold the property between 1886 and 1890 to William Slater. City Directories indicate that John Kammerling, who worked in the iron business, resided at 8109 in 1885. Casper Siebert, a laborer resided at 8109 in 1888 and 1890.
1902 LaSalle Street	House constructed circa 1874. Deed indexes show that Samuel T. Hyde and his wife sold the property at 1902 LaSalle to John Sieg in May 1874 for a price of \$1277.82. John Sieg is listed in the 1876 City Directory as a bartender living at 1902 LaSalle. His son Gustav G., a clerk for J.H. Wear, Boogher & Co., is also listed at the address in 1876 and 1878. The property stayed in the Sieg family until 1917.
2711 Indiana Avenue	House constructed ca. 1875. The Fust family occupied this house during the 1880s. Christian Fust, a teamster, resided on the west side of Indiana near Lynch in 1883 and at 2711 Indiana in 1886; Hugo Fust, an upholsterer, resided there in 1886 as well. Newspaper searches reveal that a child, Nettie

	Lamb, lived there in 1888 and that Charles Margot resided there in 1892. City directories place Alexander Gabler, a tailor, at 2711 in 1890.
1923 Compton Avenue	House constructed after 1883. Deed indexes indicate that Sargo Onsta acquired the parcel from Jonathan W. Potter in 1877 and sold it in 1879. August Nedderhut, a merchant, owned the property briefly, from 1879 to 1882. Adolph Sobeck, a tinner, and Emma Sobeck, a teacher, acquired the property in 1882.
Raised Basement Examples	
2723 Utah Avenue	House constructed by 1875. The 1890 City Directory places Emil A. Handschug, a clerk at H. T. Simon, Gregory & Co., and Martin C. Handschug as residing at 2725.
2002 Rear Withnell Avenue	House constructed ca. 1870 Upon the death of Emanuel Bender, a shoemaker, in 1876, the property was acquired by Charles Seitz. Fredricka Fischer of German descent, owned the property during the 1880s, and shared it with family members, including milk delivery man Fred Fischer. Neighbors Henerriette and Frank Eynatten owned the property from 1886 to 1906; Eynatten was also a milkman.
Semi-Detached Flounders	
2832 Pennsylvania Avenue	The south portion of this pair of semi-detached flounders was built by 1875. The North side was built between 1884 and 1903. Deed indexes indicate that Jacob B. Decker, a saloon owner, was the owner of the property in 1874. A Decker family member sold it to Barbara Klein in 1885. Construction of the north side could have taken place after this sale. City Directories place Matthias Boll, a dairyman, on the east side of Pennsylvania between Rappahannock (Magnolia) and

	Pestalozzi, from 1870 to 1880. In 1881 the address 2524 Pennsylvania is used; in 1886 the address 2832 is used. By that time Henry and Charles Boll also resided there. The Boll family remained at the property through at least 1890.
Front House added to Alley Flounder	
4048 Nebraska Avenue	Rear flounder constructed ca. 1875 Leo Lager, of Lager Brothers & Co., gentlemen's furnishings retail store, resided at this property from 1876 through 1890.
Alley Flounder	
3158 Texas Avenue	House constructed circa 1870. The Reuter family likely occupied 3158 by 1870 and remained there through 1919. Jacob Reuter was a laborer, William, born in Germany, was a fireman in 1890.
3533 Missouri Avenue	Martin Eckrich, who worked in the dairy business, resided at 3533 in 1887. Bernhard Bender, a laborer, lived at 3533 in 1890. The deed indexes stopped circa 1900.

Flounder and Address	Summary of Research
Soulard Properties	
1917 S. 11th Street	The two-story outbuilding flounder was constructed circa 1880. From 1881 through 1890 Paul Guerke, a tailor, and other members of the Guerke family resided at 1917.
2008 S. 11 th Street	Heinrich Sellies (or Silies) appears to have been the builder of the house, in 1870 or 1871. In November of 1868, the original leaseholder, John Meise, who had not lived on the property, conveyed it Heinrich Silies. The 1871 City Directory lists Sellies' residence as 2008 Rosatti, which became S. 11th Street, and he was a cooper for Page & Krausse. In the 1880 Census, Sellies was living there with

	his wife, Rosina (or Casina) and their children. Heinrich was still working as a cooper and he and his wife are listed as being born in Germany/Prussia.
City Block 781	
2103 Menard Street	Constructed by 1875 Charles Fillinger, in iron, and Jacob Hammellsen, a painter, resided at 2103. August Engelke, not found to have lived at the property, was the lessee during the 1884-1886 period and appears to have used the property as a rental one. In 1884, there are two August Engelkes listed in the City directory, one a clerk at Samuel C. Davis & Co and residing at 2309 N. 19 th Street and one a baker residing at 1030 Russell; the baker was living at the Russell address in 1886.
2105 Menard Street	Constructed by 1875 John Neimeier was the lessee beginning in 1870, as noted on the 1884-1886 plat map. Andrew Niemeier, a cooper, resided at 2015 from at least from 1872 through 1890. Henry Niemeier and John Niemeier, both coopers, also resided on the property.
2107 Menard Street	Constructed by 1875 Herman Alfes (Alfers), a cooper, resided at 2107 from ca. 1875 through 1890. He is identified as the lessee during the 1884-1886 period. He lived on Allen prior to that time. Three others lived on the property in 1890, Henry Nankmann, widow Mary Nebel, and Albert Nebel, who all lived elsewhere in 1888. Philip Rabenau, a salesman, resided at 2107 in 1888 next door to where Philip Rabenau, a cooper, lived at 2109 in 1890.
2109 Menard Street	Constructed by 1875 Joseph Halada, a porter, resided at 2109 from 1886 through 1890; Mary Halada, was noted as one of two lessees of 2109 during the 1884-1886 period. A painter, a porter and a cooper

	resided at 2019 in 1890, but lived elsewhere in 1888.
2104 S. 11 th Street	Constructed by 1875 Wenzel Sokol is noted as the lessee of the property from 1880 on the 1884-1886 plat map. William Sokol, a peddler, resided at 2104 in 1886 and 1890. A printer and a laborer also resided at 2104 in 1890.
2106 S. 11 th Street	Constructed by 1875 John Dvorak is identified as the lessee on the 1884-1886 period plat map; in 1886 John Dvorak, a laborer, is first indicated as living at 2106. Frank Kratky, a blacksmith, resided at 2016 in 1882 and after; his widow, Mary, resided there in 1890. That year three other men lived at 2016, two laborers and a painter.
2110 S. 11 Street	Constructed by 1870 Johann H. Scherpen is identified as the lessee on the 1884-1886 period plat map. He has not been found to be residing on S. 11 th Street during that time. A cooper, a carpenter and a blacksmith resided there in 1890 but lived elsewhere in 1888.
2114 S. 11 Street	Constructed by 1870 Henry Scherpen is identified as the lessee on the 1884-1886 period plat map. He has not been found to be residing on S. 11 th Street during that time. Josephine Brosch also appears as a lessee. About 1874 John Brosch, a shoemaker, moved his family to 2114. In 1890, two males of the Brosch family lived there, along with two porters and a laborer.

APPENDIX III.

Press Coverage of the Flounder Survey

St. Louis to document city's plethora of 19th-century triangular 'flounder' houses

By STEPHANIE LECCI • FEB 23, 2015

St. Louis Public Radio

A rare, mid-19th century, triangular type of house known as a "flounder" is the subject of a survey being conducted by the city of St. Louis.

The Cultural Resources Office, part of the city's planning and urban design agency, is photographing each of the city's flounder houses and documenting their conditions over the course of the coming months. The project was introduced to the public during the Office's preservation board meeting Monday.

Preservation administrator Jan Cameron said St. Louis is one of very few cities with this special type of historic housing.

"It is essentially a very small, single-family building, built probably in the mid-19th century, which will have one wall higher than the others, so it has a very distinctive triangular shape," she said.

According to the city's description of urban housing forms, flounder houses were "exclusively working class homes ... especially appropriate for dense neighborhoods, where space was at a premium. They were often constructed as alley buildings, sharing a lot with as many as two larger tenement buildings."

In St. Louis, Cameron said flounder houses mostly are found in the oldest parts of the city, such as the Soulard and Benton Park neighborhoods. But intriguingly, Cameron said flounders have been found as far west as McCausland Avenue.

This unlikely discovery of flounders on the western edge of the city is just one of their curiosities. Cameron said she hopes the survey will help answer other historical questions. For example, most of the other cities where flounder houses are found, including Alexandria and Philadelphia, are located on the East Coast — so how did the style come to St. Louis?

"We have what's turned out to be a plethora of these," Cameron said. "There are not that many in the Midwest. One of the things we'd like to discover in the survey is its connection with the East Coast and why it appears in St. Louis and nowhere else."

Moreover, St. Louis has a lot of flounders in a "wide variety" of forms, Cameron said. Initially, the city thought it had only about 100 such homes.

"We are not finished with most of the survey and we've identified 260," she said. "So there are a lot out there, a lot more than anyone was aware of. There's one story, two story, framed brick, all kinds. It's amazing."

That's part of why Cameron said the Cultural Resources Office wants to keep the public informed about the survey. Many flounder houses are occupied, some may already be part of historic districts, but others may require some preservation help. Cameron said one possibility is to get the city's flounder homes on the National Register of Historic Places as a "thematic nomination."

"What we hope to do is bring a lot of publicity and attention to these resources ... and they really need some attention, particularly the ones that are not in an established district," she said. "But primarily what we hope to do is come up with viable reuse idea for them, and that would be a second phase that's not within our current scope of work."

Right now, Cameron said the city is focusing on finishing the survey by the end of the summer, at which point it will issue a findings report.

The survey project is funded in part by a historic preservation grant through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the State Historic Preservation Office, which will ultimately house the survey data.

Source: St. Louis Public radio website, <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/st-louis-document-citys-plethora-19th-century-triangular-flounder-houses>, accessed July 16, 2015.

Finding St. Louis' Famous Flounder Houses

Chris Naffziger March 4, 2015

Let's first get something straight: the famous flounder house style in St. Louis did not originate out of an attempt to trick the tax man into thinking a house was incomplete, therefore lowering a homeowner's bill. But what the distinctive, fish-shaped housing style does represent is a unique moment in the 19th century in St. Louis when vernacular architecture thrived in the city.

Originating in the period during and in the decades after the Civil War, the flounder style house took its name from the profile of the building when observed from the street or alley. In some people's eyes, the tall, right triangle roof line took on the shape of a flounder, a species of fish with a similar profile. In more technical terms, flounder houses possess shed roofs, in which a roof angles down from a taller exterior wall to a parallel, shorter wall. Unlike more complicated roof types, like a gabled or hipped roof, the shed roof common to a flounder simply required carpenters to lay roof rafters from one wall to the other, eliminating the need for a more complicated ridge or hip structure. Likewise, the shed roof allowed for a house to be built right on the property line without worrying about issues of drainage affecting a neighbor.

But of course in St. Louis architecture, nothing is ever that simple, and the flounder style of construction developed numerous, fascinating variants around the city. Consequently, the Cultural Resources Office, a department of the St. Louis Planning and Urban Development Agency, has begun the process of documenting all of the flounder houses in the city. Leading the effort is Jan Cameron, Preservation Administrator; so far she and her staff have identified at least 260 flounder houses and variants throughout the city. Logically, most are located within the heart of 19th-century St. Louis, east of Grand, but the style has also been found in what would have been the rural outskirts of the city back then.

Besides the traditional flounder house, Cultural Resources has identified variations on the original simple shed roof. Some flounders have a gabled roof, but then mysteriously, only one side of the gable is complete and the other side is only constructed half way to its logical completion. Originally, on many examples of this style, there was an open gallery (now filled in on many houses) that completed the gable roof. Likewise, and arguing against simplicity being the sole reason for flounders, some houses of this style have a gambrel or hipped roof.

Why does this matter? For a city such as St. Louis that constantly emphasizes its prosperity and influence during the 19th century, surprisingly little of the built environment from the 1800s as a percentage of the total building stock of the city survives. Swept away primarily by urban renewal or replacement by early Twentieth Century construction, the buildings remaining from the decades around the Civil War are treasured reminders of what St. Louis used to be.

Unfortunately, because of their age, abandoned flounders often suffer from severe neglect and deterioration, placing their fate in jeopardy. Just recently, a flounder in the Gravois Park neighborhood was lost due its ostensibly advanced disrepair. Likewise, muddling with inappropriate siding, such as a well-preserved but abandoned flounder on Utah in the Benton Park West neighborhood, makes preservation more difficult. After all, who would want to save such an “ugly” building? But fire insurance maps reveal that under the white asphalt siding is a brick flounder, certainly worth saving.

Perhaps another motivation for saving these 19th century houses (and this author has covered other endangered houses from the 1800s before) revolves around the relative simplicity of these houses. Not particularly large, and frequently placed right along the property line, the flounder opens up significant space for gardens and other outdoor activities on a relatively small city lot. Their small, efficient design, often with a party wall, should prove desirable to those looking to save money on utilities. Ultimately, Cameron and Cultural Resources hope to submit the flounder style to the National Register, opening up the possibility of tax credits for owners who renovate these distinctive houses. And more importantly, this unique and rare housing style will receive the respect it has long deserved.

Source: St Louis Magazine website: <http://www.stlmag.com/arts/history/finding-st.-louis'-famous-flounder-houses/>, accessed July 15, 2015.

NEWS BRIEF

Fish Out Of Water

FLOUNDER HOUSES, LIKE THEIR NAMESAKE FISH, have a blind side, typically facing an alley or another building. These modest, vernacular dwellings with sloping roofs pepper the streets of St. Louis, and by the end of this summer, for the first time in the city's history, every single one of them will be documented and photographed.

"We expected to identify about 80 to 100," says Jan Cameron, preservation administrator of St. Louis' Cultural Resources Office, which is spearheading the effort through a preservation grant from the state of Missouri. "We're not entirely through yet, and we have about 230."

Almost all of St. Louis' flounder houses, with the exception of a few that have been abandoned and acquired by the city, are still privately owned. Cameron speculates that most of these buildings, which date from the late 19th century and also appear in cities such as Philadelphia and Alexandria, Virginia, were built by working-class immigrants who could construct them quickly and cheaply.

Cameron and her colleagues plan to finish the survey by August 30, when their grant ends. They hope to pursue a second phase that would allow them to explore viable reuse options for the houses and show examples in which minor additions have made them more livable. A thematic nomination to the National Register of Historic Places could be another way to help protect potentially endangered flounder houses in the city.

"We'll go street by street and alley by alley," says Betsy Bradley, director of the Cultural Resources Office. "By the end, we will know where every extant flounder is." —Katherine Flynn

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A flounder house in St. Louis demonstrates this building type's distinctive roofline.

Source: "Fish Out of Water," *Preservation* (Summer 2015), p. 10.

Historic architecture up for review by St. Louis Preservation Board

Camille Philips July 27, 2015

St. Louis Public Radio

Several architecturally-significant proposals are up for discussion Monday in St. Louis at the city's preservation board meeting.

A review of four nominations for national register listings, a proposal to build a seven-story apartment building in the Central West End, and the results of a survey of the city's "flounder" houses are all on the agenda.

Flounder houses were built in the mid-nineteenth-century with one wall higher than the other, giving the building a distinctive triangular shape.

"We are at 275 buildings and counting. They seem to pop up even as we try to wrap up our work," said Betsy Bradley, director of the city's cultural resource office.

Her office received a grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and the State Historic Preservation Office to conduct the survey.

Flounder houses have been found in a few Eastern cities, but nowhere further west than St. Louis. And the architecture is more common here than any other location known to Bradley.

“We have by far the largest collection. We can’t claim uniqueness but boy have we got the ultimate collection. I think if another city had nearly as many we’d know about it. But that’s a bit of a speculation,” Bradley said.

The survey was conducted in part to see if the Flounder houses needed to be protected through a national register nomination, but Bradley said that her office found that the majority of St. Louis’ Flounders were already in local or nationally-registered districts, with most lying east of Grand Ave.

“Many of them are already eligible for those (historic tax) credits; that’s why we thought maybe more of them could be. But if they’re not in a district they’re likely not going to be in a district,” Bradley said. “And surprisingly a lot of them are in use and seem to be well-loved, with care and outdoor living spaces (that) just sort of model how you can enjoy a small house in the city.”

The study was also conducted in part to discover the origins of the architectural style, but Bradley said that remains a mystery.

“No one can find any support for the idea that they were taxed less because they had no windows on one side or they had a smaller roof area,” Bradley said. “There are no building code requirements that we can find to suggest why they were built that way ... I think they were small, relatively quickly and cheaply built buildings that everybody thought looked just fine.”

The final step of the survey will be to put a list of the city’s Flounder houses on the Cultural Resources Office website, along with suggestions for how to remodel a Flounder.

Source: St. Louis Public radio website, <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/historic-architecture-review-st-louis-preservation-board>, accessed July 27, 2015.

St. Louis survey finds dozens of historic, triangular 'flounder' houses are endangered

By CAMILLE PHILLIPS & STEPHANIE LECCI

St. Louis Public Radio July 28, 2015

Most of St. Louis' 277 historic triangular-shaped houses known as "flounders" are in good shape, but dozens are considered endangered, according to a months-long survey performed by the city's Cultural Resources Office.

Flounder houses are a mainly 19th-century building style featuring a prominent asymmetrical roof that were built throughout St. Louis' older neighborhoods. Many of these historic structures still stand, but until the survey, the city didn't know just how still existed.

The total revealed in the survey backs up St. Louis' claim of having the most so-called flounder houses of any city in the country. According to Cultural Resources Office director Betsy Bradley, while they all boast the unique triangular shape, they came in a variety of styles.

"There is no quintessential or classic flounder," she said. "The shape was adaptable to the adding of a gallery [a porch] or dormer windows. It could be placed at the front of the lot or the back of the lot. It could be a one-story or two-stories in height."

Dozens of these flounders are considered endangered, some needing extensive repairs or are vacant.

"Twelve are vacant and boarded and another nine were just abandoned," she said. "We found 30 that need maintenance, and seven that suffered some structural collapse, so we do have a fair number of flounders to keep our eye on."

Bradley said her office is working on a plan to promote ways to repurpose these structures, such as renting them out as apartments or using them as businesses. She said she hopes this convinces people to buy them from the city's land bank or private owners in order to save them.

While the report has offered a lot of information, Bradley says one mystery remains: why so many of these oddly shaped houses were built at all.

Source: St. Louis Public radio website, <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/st-louis-survey-finds-dozens-historic-triangular-flounder-houses-are-endangered>, accessed July 29, 2015.

APPENDIX IV.

National Register Historic Districts in St. Louis that include flounders

Benton Park District

Central Carondelet Historic District

Clemens House-Columbia Brewery District

Forest Park Southeast Historic District

Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District

Hickory Street Historic District

Lafayette Square Historic District

Marine Villa Historic District

McKinley Fox District

Mullanphy Historic District

Murphy-Blair District

SS Cyril and Methodius Historic District

St. Boniface Neighborhood Historic District

St. Francis de Sales Historic District

Soulard Neighborhood Historic District

Soulard-Page District

Yeatman Square Historic District