

City of Joplin Historic Survey

Stage Five: Research Design

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Introduction

Throughout history man has always had a desire to preserve what once was. In so doing, civilization creates its own heritage. Having a heritage can provide us with a sense of our origin, the knowledge of what past generations have accomplished, and it can give present and future generations a logical and definite course of direction. Having a heritage can generate pride in an individual, a community or a country. Having pride in our past is the basis we need for our involvement in the future. Pride is also a major factor in our need to leave our own legacy and to portray our own generation's accomplishments.

A very good example of a community which has pride in its past and thus the desire to preserve its heritage is Boston with its Quincy Marketplace. This city analyzed its existing attributes and then set out upon a definite and logical course to make those attributes focal points for community growth and economic development. They took what was special and unique to their community and provided a "sense of place", a focal point, a community core. Their desire to save and preserve their past resulted in the ultimate betterment of their entire community, both culturally and economically.

Joplin is now at that point in time where it needs to examine its heritage, to take the pride it has in its past and then plan its course of action for the future -- a course of action that is both logical and beneficial to the community as a whole. What once was a booming commercial center in the midst of the world's largest lead and zinc mines can begin preparing itself for a future era -- a future of economic and cultural growth.

While the Joplin of today looks much different than the Joplin of 60 years ago, there is still much to be found which reflects on the city's past. Its downtown has been left with gaps and empty lots caused by broad urban renewal projects which razed many of the city's historic landmarks. Yet from these pieces another, newer Joplin may be rebuilt.

The purpose of this survey is to take a closer look at Joplin's remaining historic attributes, and to identify the structures that could become a focal point for community development. The area included in Phase I of the three phase project is located in the downtown area from First to Tenth Streets and from Wall to Pennsylvania Streets (Map A). From this 33 block area, 242 building inventories were recorded. There are many more commercial buildings beyond the survey boundaries, but the majority of historical and intact structures are in this area. After reviewing the information gathered from each property, both the historic and the architectural contexts for the area were established. The historic context is a reference to the development of the community and those events and places which made it what it is. The architectural context refers to the development of a style of buildings or concentration of a style which is common. As the contexts were identified, it became possible to identify potential district boundaries as well as individual nominations both in and outside the potential district.

The ultimate use of this report is to aid city planners and preservationists in making long and short range goals concerning Joplin's historic resources. In order to do this, the community should identify what is special or unique to their city, evaluate how those aspects can be utilized, and then establish ways to protect, preserve and reuse those attributes for their economic and cultural growth. Without the involvement of the community as a whole, it will be more difficult to obtain the goals established by the city leaders.

Due to Joplin's major role in the mining industry and development of southwest Missouri, preservation planning should be an important element of the city's master plan for economic development and promotion of the city to both its residents and visitors. It is just as important that the citizens of Joplin feel proud of their community and have a "sense of place", as it is for visitors to realize its historic significance.

Even though few buildings that could be considered Joplin's most historic landmarks, such as the Conner Hotel and the House of Lords, have been removed from the skyline, there are still many other buildings which represent the Joplin which once was.

A Brief History of Joplin

The county where Joplin was settled was not considered an ideal area in which to live in the 1800's. Not until early 1830, approximately 30 years after the Louisiana Purchase, did new Missourians begin to move into the area. While most settlements in Missouri grew around major waterways, southwest Missouri had no major or connecting methods of river travel which would promote growth. However, being located on the Ozark Plateau and Osage Plain offered abundant wild game and rich farmland, thus the area soon began to attract a small number of settlers.

In 1836 lead and zinc were discovered, and in 1849 it began to be mined in small amounts. Due to the lack of adequate transportation, however, major mining efforts did not begin until after the Civil War.

The effects of the Civil War were felt strongly in Southwest Missouri. There were many skirmishes and battles between the federal soldiers and southern sympathizers. Many of those who had made their homes in this area either left during the war because of the secessionists and their lawlessness, or after the war because of the unionists and their lawlessness. It was not long after the war that the mines began opening and many more people began moving into the area. In 1871, Joplin City was plotted on the East side of Joplin Creek by John C. Cox, one of Joplin's founding fathers. The name Joplin was taken from the Reverend Harris G. Joplin who settled the area in 1839. Patrick Murphy, a newcomer to the area, settled another town west across the creek valley and named it Murphysburg. Both towns grew equally in size with a collective population of 2000, and in 1872, it was decided to consolidate the settlements into what was called Union City. It was soon after this that the town split again due to jealousy, but it was reestablished in 1873 and named Joplin. Thus ended the long-standing dissent between the two cities.

This was the beginning of the boom for Joplin and it soon became more than just a mining

town. It was now also a commercial center. In 1877 the first rail line was taken directly to the city. Soon to follow were gas lights, electricity, water systems and sewer lines as well as other municipal services. In 1900 the population was 26,023, and Joplin was now the fastest growing city in Missouri. It is from this time that most of Joplin's remaining historic structures were built. Many of them maintain their original integrity of typical 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture. Some have had their storefronts covered and some have been altered completely, but there is still a good representation of the past. From this time, rail traffic was the most important mode of travel, but the automobile and major highways also became important factors in the growth of Joplin as it is today. The three contextual areas which therefore comprise Joplin's historic character in this phase of the city survey are mining, commerce, and transportation.

Survey

The area designated in this study contains a variety of buildings in use and style. Many of the structures were financed and built by the mining barons of the era. Some of these buildings have changed very little since their construction. It could be said that every building downtown has had some direct or indirect contact with the mining industry. (Map B)

The majority of the buildings within the survey boundaries have been built as shops, restaurants, hotels, apartments, saloons, banks, department stores and offices. These commercial buildings range in size and detail. Many have renaissance revival type detailing and the taller buildings are reminiscent of the Chicago style. Though much of the area has buildings which are chronologically within the correct era, many have been altered beyond major renovation. There are many gaps in the historic streetscape where buildings have been torn down and new buildings put in their places, or where lots have remained vacant or used as parking lots. Even though the area is not historically intact, the point can be made that the buildings along Main Street represent the growth of a city from its basic roots to its modern future. The streetscape can be as important with the new as well as the old as it represents over 100 years of commercial architecture. (Map C)

Throughout the history of Joplin, transportation has been, and probably will always be, an important part of the city. A town rich from mining and commerce provided the latest and best transportation for its time. Some buildings which were livery stables during the first form of transportation - covered wagon - are still standing. The town once had at least eight rail lines and four major railroad stations, three of which are still remaining. Many of the production shops, garages and dealerships still remain, especially along old Route 66, which date back to that time when automobiles became a more important mode of transportation prior to 1930. (Map D)

This area has a small representation of vernacular residences and civic buildings. Although some of these represent a style or an era, they are so removed from the commercial district

that they may warrant an individual designation rather than being a part of a larger district.
(Map E)

From this initial survey, it is apparent that there is much more to Joplin's history than just the downtown area. In every direction there are more commercial style buildings, private residences, churches, civic buildings, cultural centers, and historic sites ranging in time and elegance which are beyond the survey boundaries. Consideration could be given to establishing an overall district, encouraging commercial, residential, cultural and governmental elements of the community to form an established historical block tied together with the underlying impact of mining at its influence on all the above. Before this concept could be developed, the survey should continue outside the present boundaries to the city limits, perhaps as they were 50 years ago.

Preservation Planning

Preservation planning consists of three major activities: identification, evaluation, and protection.

Identification

Through the process of surveying the downtown commercial district, a number of buildings have been identified as having the integrity of a building constructed over 50 years ago. What is meant by integrity? The National Register Criteria for Evaluation establishes seven ways integrity applies to Historic resources:

- Location - "the place where the historic resource was constructed or the place where the historic event took place."
- Design - "the composition of elements that comprise the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property...based upon the needs, technologies, aesthetic preferences, attitudes and assumptions of a people or culture in each period of history."
- Setting - "the physical environment of a historic property...the character of the place in which the resource played its historical role."
- Materials - "the physical elements that were combined or deposited in a particular pattern or configuration to form a district, site, building, structure, or object in a particular period in the past. The integrity of materials determines whether or not an authentic historic resource still exists."
- Workmanship - "the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory."
- Feeling - "the quality a historic resource has in evoking the aesthetic or historic sense of a past period of time."
- Association - "the direct link between a property and an event, or person, and so on, for which the property is significant."

If the building maintains its same size, shape and detailing it had when it was first constructed, it is then considered to maintain its integrity. Even though the building may have been changed after its original construction, if the time it was rebuilt is more than 50 years ago and the style it represented at that time is intact, the building can still be considered as maintaining its integrity. Many of the buildings in the survey area have been covered with

metal siding. After some investigation, it was found that a number of those buildings still maintain their integrity behind their modern exteriors. (Map F)

The portion of the survey area which appears to be the most intact is the section of Main Street from 4th to 7th Streets. Almost all of these buildings are either intact or have a clear potential for being restored. Although this strip may not be the most architecturally significant commercial street, and does not meet the National Register Criteria for Historic Districts, it does represent commercial architecture from the 1890's to the 1930's. In establishing the area as a local district, it would be desirable to keep a restrictive eye on any future developments around the buildings which are historic.

Another portion of the survey area which grouped together is located at the northwest corner. Most of these particular building have some association with automobiles, many of which were the first of their kind in this part of the country. One shop even assembled cars on the second floor. Route 66 passed through the survey area and all of the major railroad stations are either within the survey bounaries or on the fringe of them. Since transportation played a major role in Joplin's growth, these buildings also become a contributor to the historic context fo the area.

The southeast corner of the survey area consists of a cluster of vernacular houses and duplexes built around 1900. Due to this study's emphasis on commercial structures, this area will be set aside for future studies of residential buildings.

There are a number of individual buildings which have been isolated by random demolition. The post office, Carnegie Library, Memorial Hall, the old high school, etc. still maintain their integrity and contribute to the overall sense of history.

In identifying which structures are remaining, the city planner should also identify what the needs are of the community and how the buildings in this area might satisfy those needs. Establishing a master plan with needs and goals can identify which direction the city should

take when considering preservation and how reusing the existing buildings can enhance and benefit owners and patrons alike.

After looking closely at the buildings in this survey area, it is obvious that Joplin has buildings which are special and unique to this community. The details used and the styles represented may be represented in other cities in the country, but their integrity and contribution to Joplin's history makes them special. Not every community has a Carnegie Library, a Newman Building, a Fox Theatre, a Renaissance Revival Post Office, a First National Bank Building, or a Romanque Revival Train Depot. These are the parts that make downtown and all of Joplin a whole city. Identifying these things and their importance to the people in the community will establish what is significant to the heritage of Joplin.

Evaluations

From the initial investigation in Phase I of the downtown area, there appears to be places within the survey boundaries where the buildings fall into a natural grouping such as Main Street from 4th to 7th Streets. The other contributing buildings are removed from the concentration of buildings because of demolition or, as in the Joplin Street situation, the streetscape has been destroyed because the entire east side has been demolished and made into parking lots. This does not enhance or benefit Joplin Street, however, it does benefit Main Street because it provides convenient parking to the businesses located there.

While evaluating a building for its Integrity, it should also be evaluated according to its potential use. Needs that are identified during the community planning process can be implemented in an existing building or on a vacant lot which would complete a streetscape and fill in gaps.

During the building evaluation process, observations were made of frequently asked questions or comments. One of the most frequent comments concerned parking. In most downtown areas, parking is either non-existent, it is difficult to get to, or it costs money. Joplin has

abundant free parking at the back door of many businesses because of urban renewal. The walk from the lot to the store is perhaps the same as it is in a shopping mall situation. Another question which was asked concerned the structural stability of the buildings. Most of what appears to be unsound is merely a lack of maintenance. Cracks in brick and falling ornaments can be a hazard to people on the street, and also to the life of the building. Without looking at the buildings in depth, there appears to be no structural problems.

The citizens of Joplin, as a whole, need to look at how a district, or perhaps just the thought of preservation, would benefit the community. It would boost tourism, which is one of the top three pastimes in America, and in turn that can bring new businesses to the city. It could boost civic pride and maintain the heritage which is so prevalent in Joplin.

Protection

There are a number of ways to protect an area which is historic. Perhaps one of the best known methods is nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. However, this avenue won't keep a building from being torn down. It is the local ordinances which enforce regulations as to how a building is restored or renovated and provides for whether or not a building can or should be demolished. Local ordinances do not necessarily mean that the property owner will be restricted unreasonably, such as dictating what color to paint a house. Ordinances which are too strict become a source for negative attitudes in lieu of positive actions. On the other hand, if ordinances are too lax, they will not be able to protect the buildings. Therefore it is important to evaluate ordinances which are already in place in other cities and by looking closely at Joplin's own objectives, provide ordinances which not only protect but also enhances the city's short and long range goals.

Along with the National Register nomination is a tax incentive which benefits an owner who wishes to pursue preservation seriously. There is also a smaller tax incentive for buildings built before 1936 which the owner might wish to renovate. Other economic considerations are

already in place in Joplin such as the Enterprise Zone and Community Development Funds. Some communities have convinced their financial institutions to provide low interest loans to promote revitalizing their downtowns.

After evaluating the needs of the community and establishing where and how those needs can best be served, implementation of adaptive re-use can help in the maintaining and revitalizing of the downtown area. Using an existing building or site in an existing developed area can promote not only that business, but also the businesses around it as well. Again, the city planners must establish a master plan which includes the historic parts of the city. Businesses should be encouraged to locate downtown because of its positive aspects. The downtown area can offer many of the same rewards as a strip mall or shopping mall, and from a historic viewpoint, it may offer more advantages.

The biggest problem when protection is an issue is the interest of the general population. The citizens of Joplin need to support an issue such as restoration and revitalization of the downtown, or this type of project will not work. It took people to make Joplin what it is, and it will take the community as a whole to rebuild a part of the city which often appears to have little hope. To protect, preserve and re-use that part of the city can boost community pride and promote economic and cultural growth.

Conclusion

To protect what is left of Joplin's heritage will take the support of all of Joplin. From the city government, the financial system, business owner, developers, and individual citizens. They all may or may not agree on whether or not preservation is important, however, there is a larger, more important issue on which most will hopefully agree. That issue is the need to maintain a strong downtown and its impact on the vitality of the entire city. A strong center city shows a potential business owner or investor a strong economy and a feeling of growth. It shows out-of-towners and tourists what pride a city has in itself and it shows everyone what this great city has to offer - educationally, culturally, economically, and historically. Just as importantly, it builds pride in the people who call Joplin their home.

Joplin is unique because its original business center is still intact and still moderately active. There are many special buildings which possess unique detailing and provide a link with the past. It is important that these structures be maintained in order to keep the heritage of this important city alive. It is also important to remember, however, that the buildings themselves are not what makes a commercial center thrive and flourish -- it is people. The people who own and operate the businesses and the people who patronize those businesses help to establish the strength of the community. The buildings are important in their role of providing that linkage between the people and their feeling of pride in their community.

Appendix

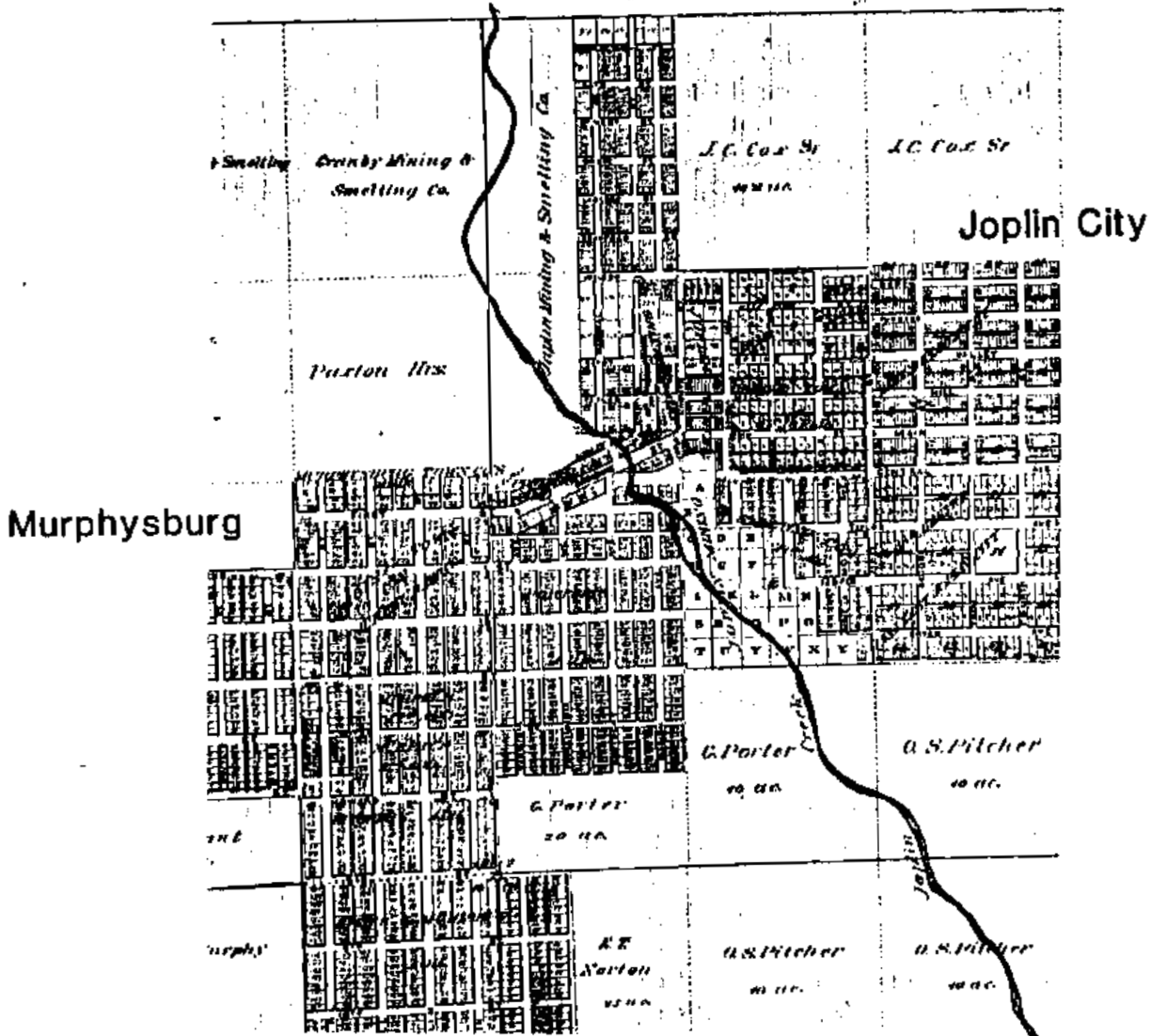
Joplin in 1876

J O P L I N

FORMERLY CALLED

MURPHYSBURG

Leid out in July 1871. Scale 6000 ft. to in.
Located in Section 2, 2, R. 13, T. 33, S. 21, W. 10, E. 21, M.
Compiled from official records by
E. J. Chamberlain C. M.

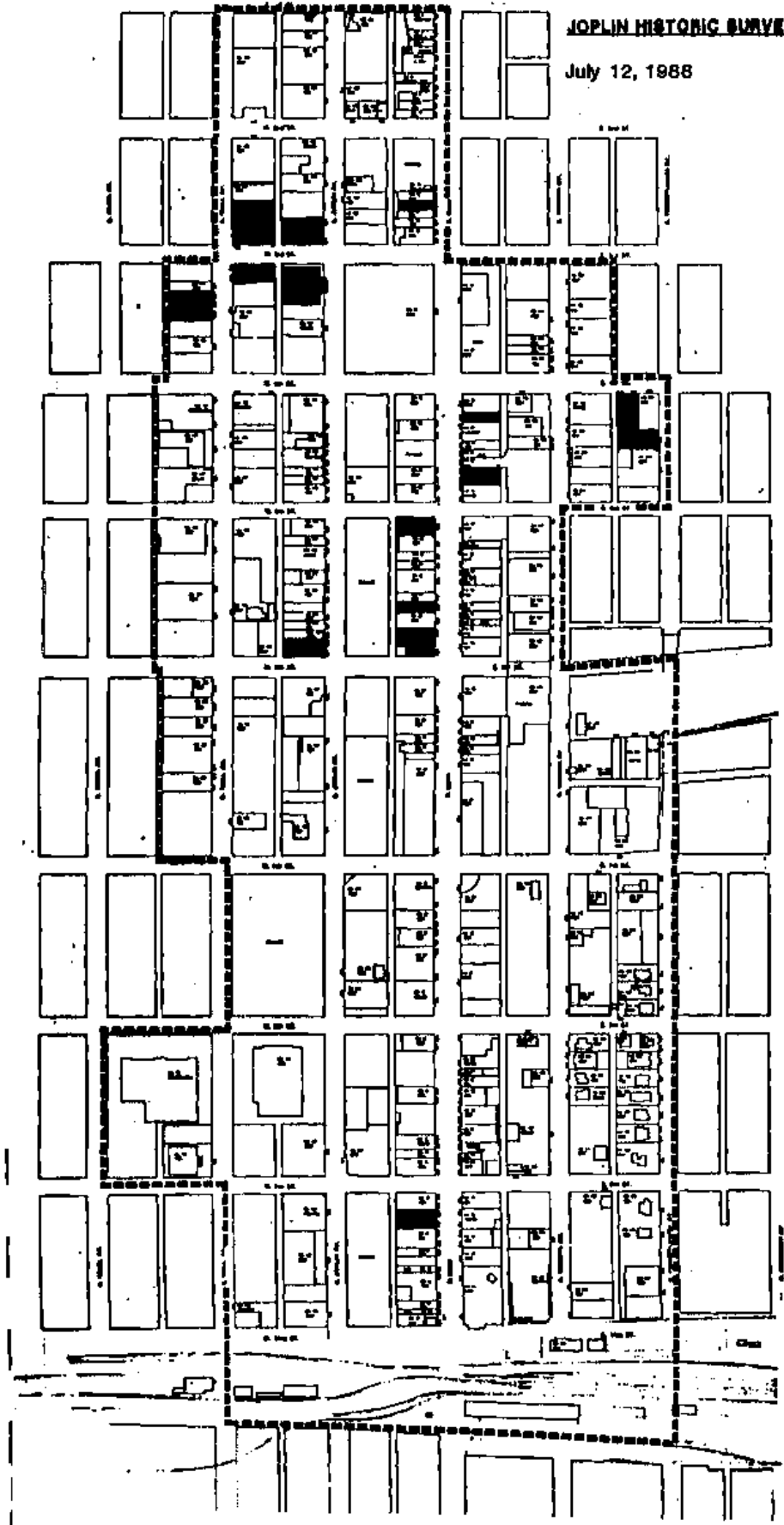


Buildings With Direct Mine Influence

JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY

July 12, 1988

 Mining

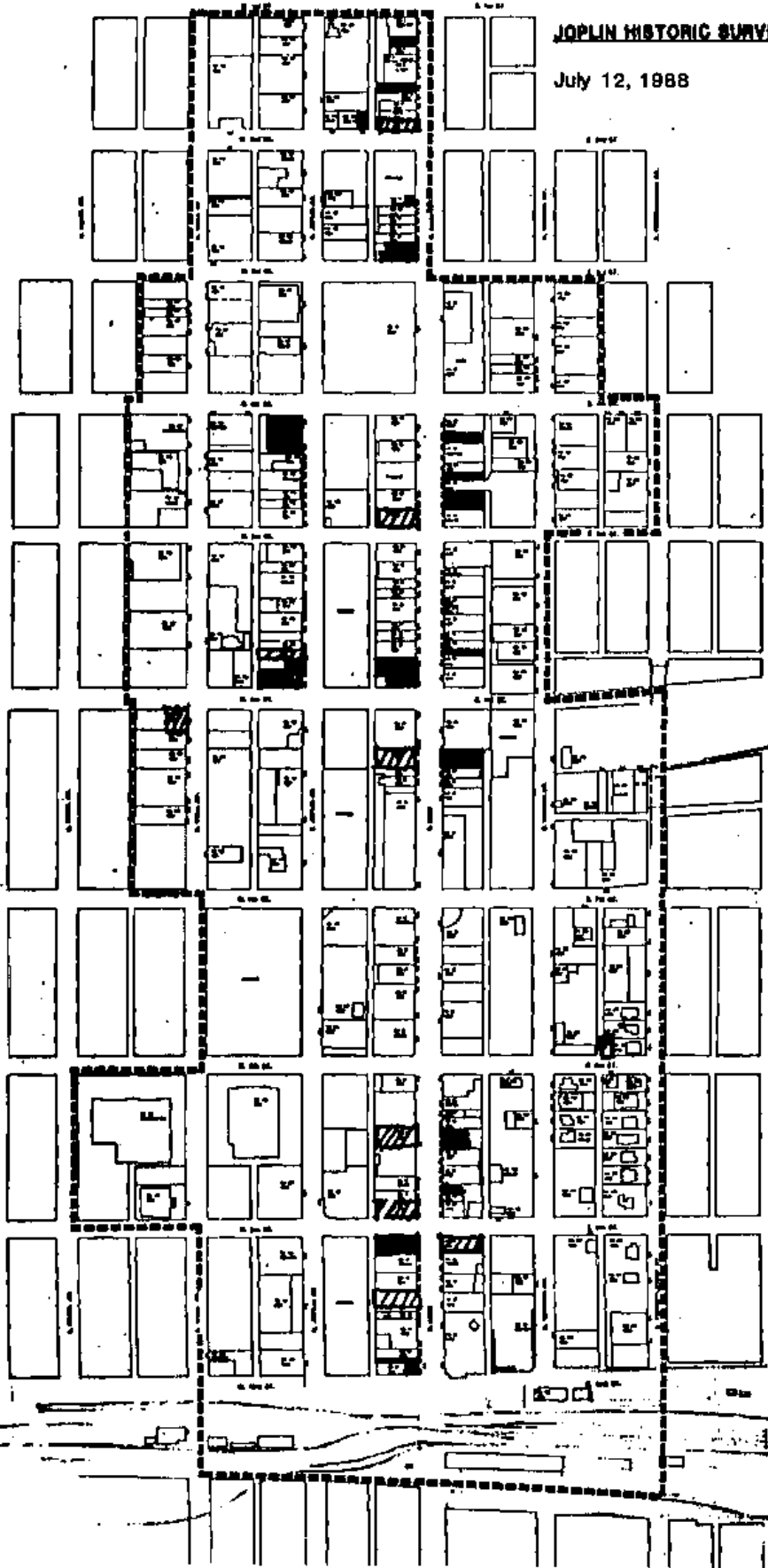




MAP B

Saloon, Restaurants & Grocery

JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY

July 12, 1888

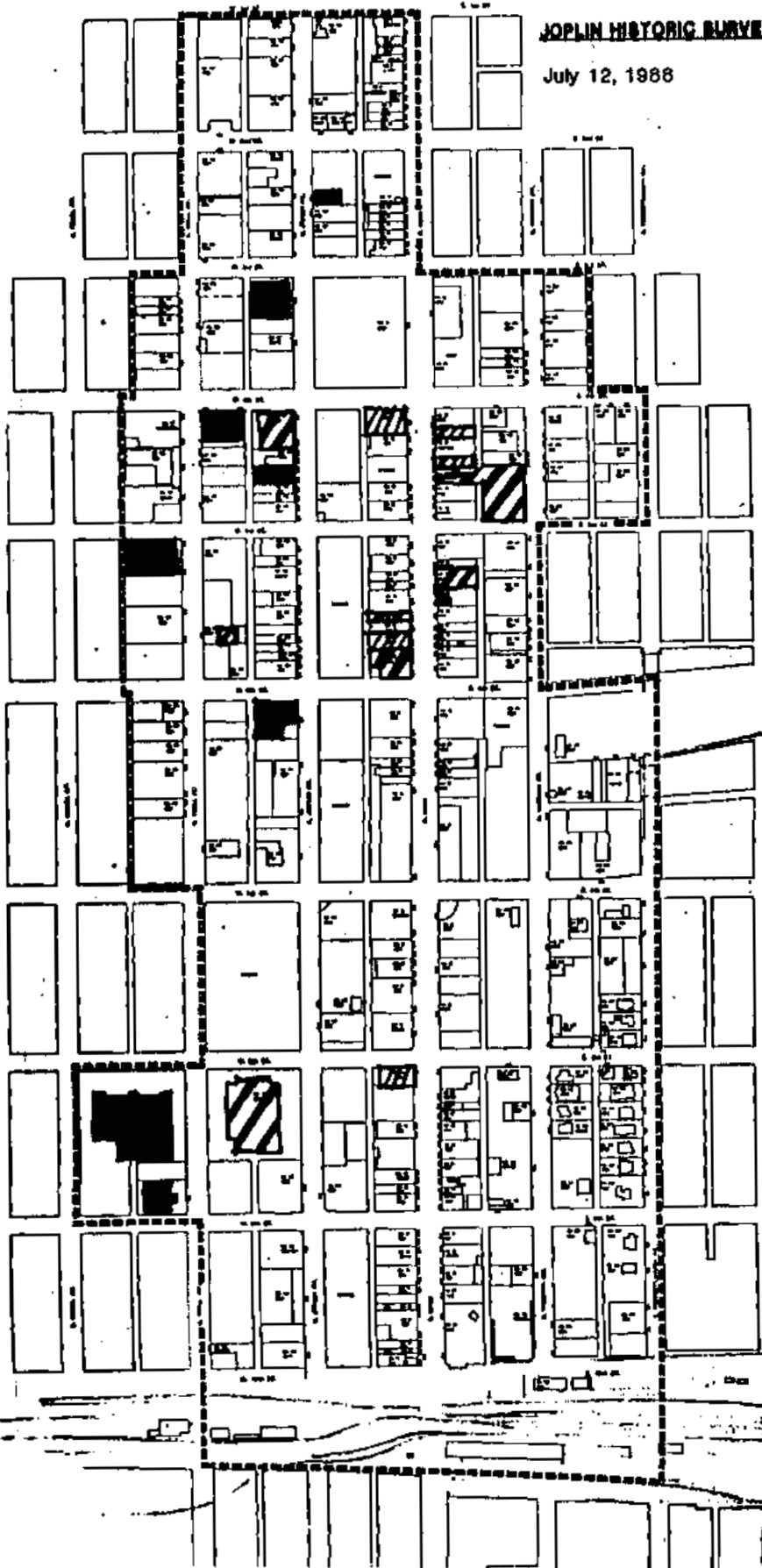


-  Saloon/Restaurant
-  Grocery

Civic, Entertainment & Financial

JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY

July 12, 1988





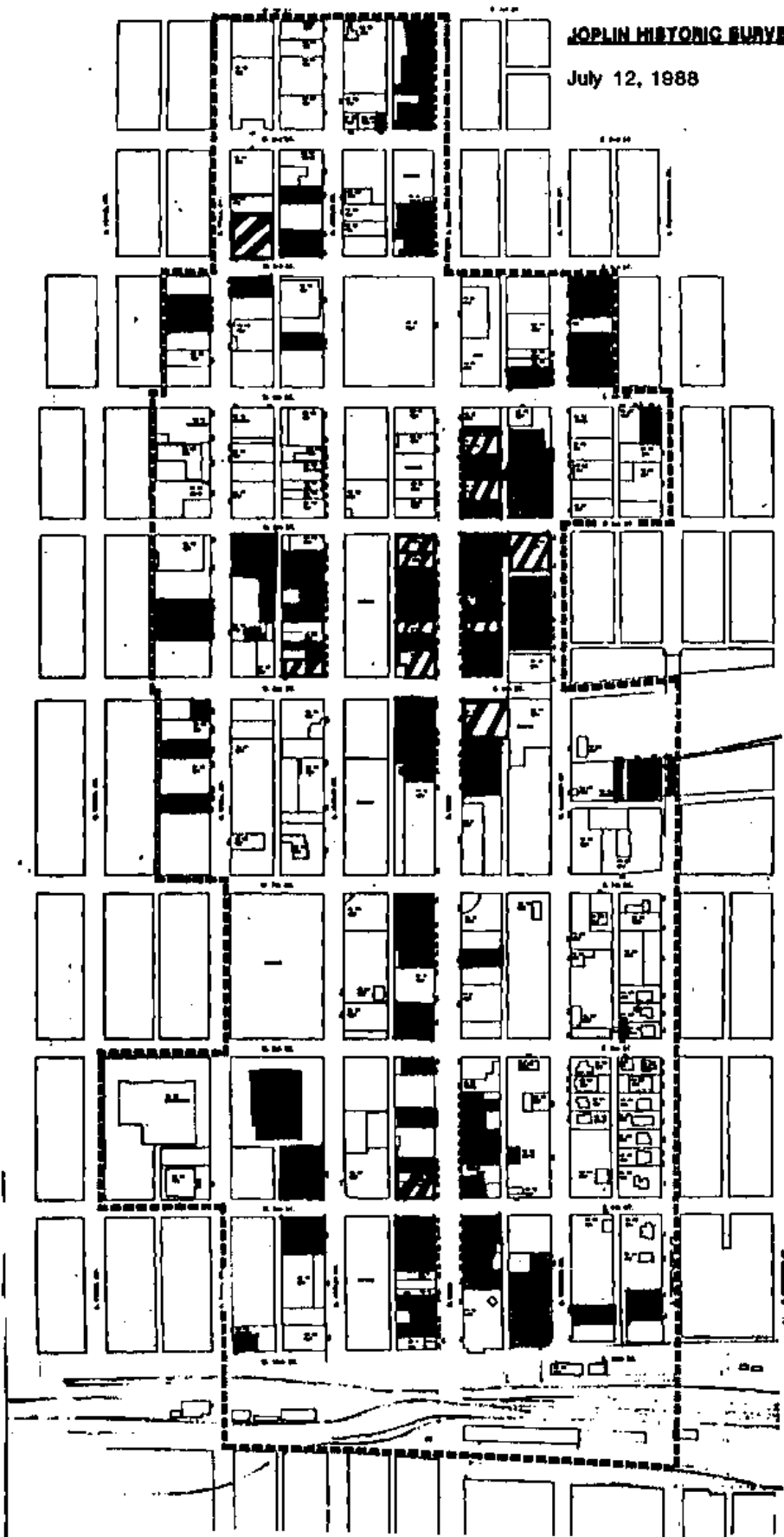
-  Civic
-  Entertainment
-  Financial

Commercial & Office

JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY

July 12, 1888

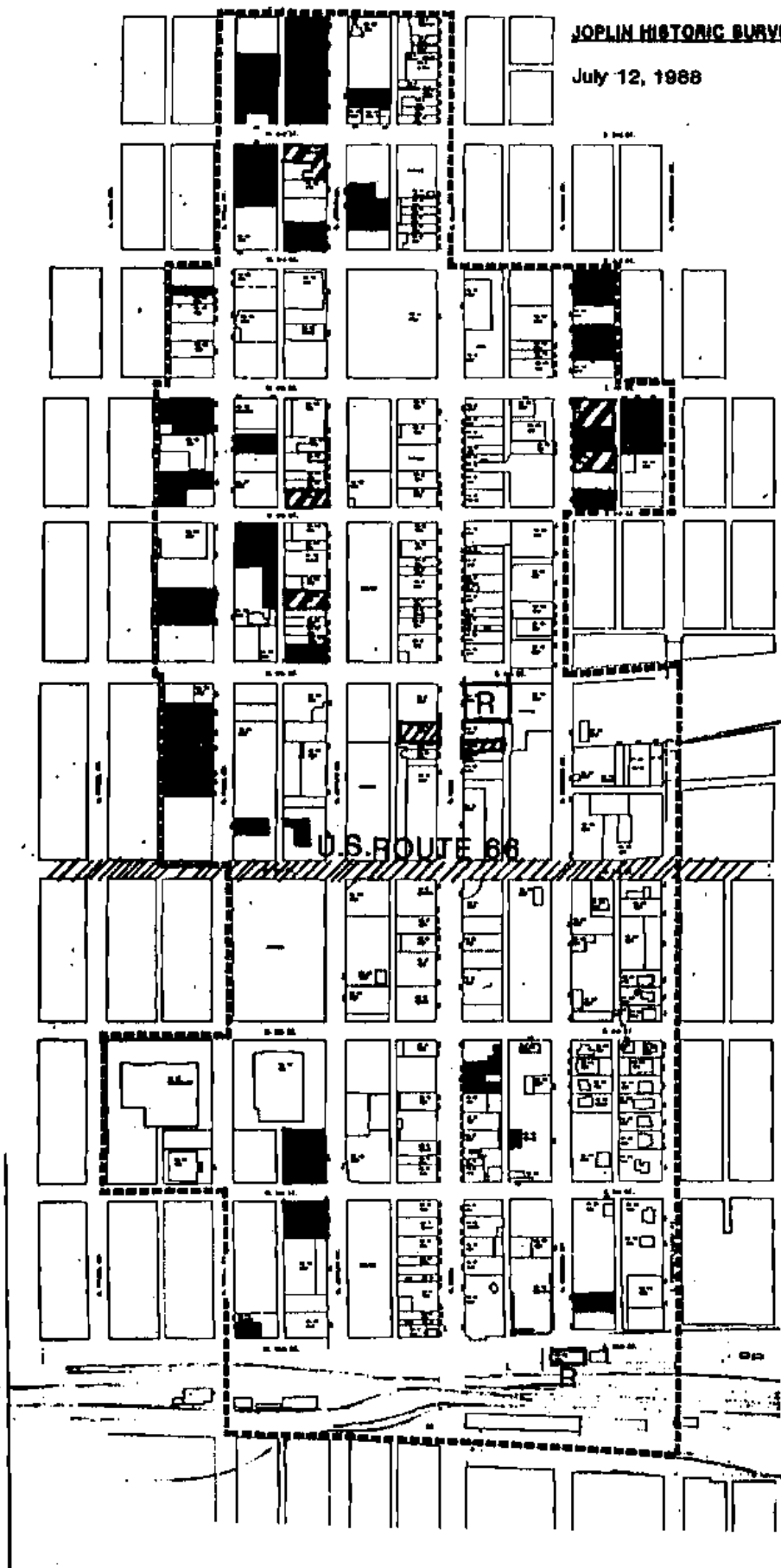
-  Commercial
-  Commercial/Office






Transportation

JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY

July 12, 1968



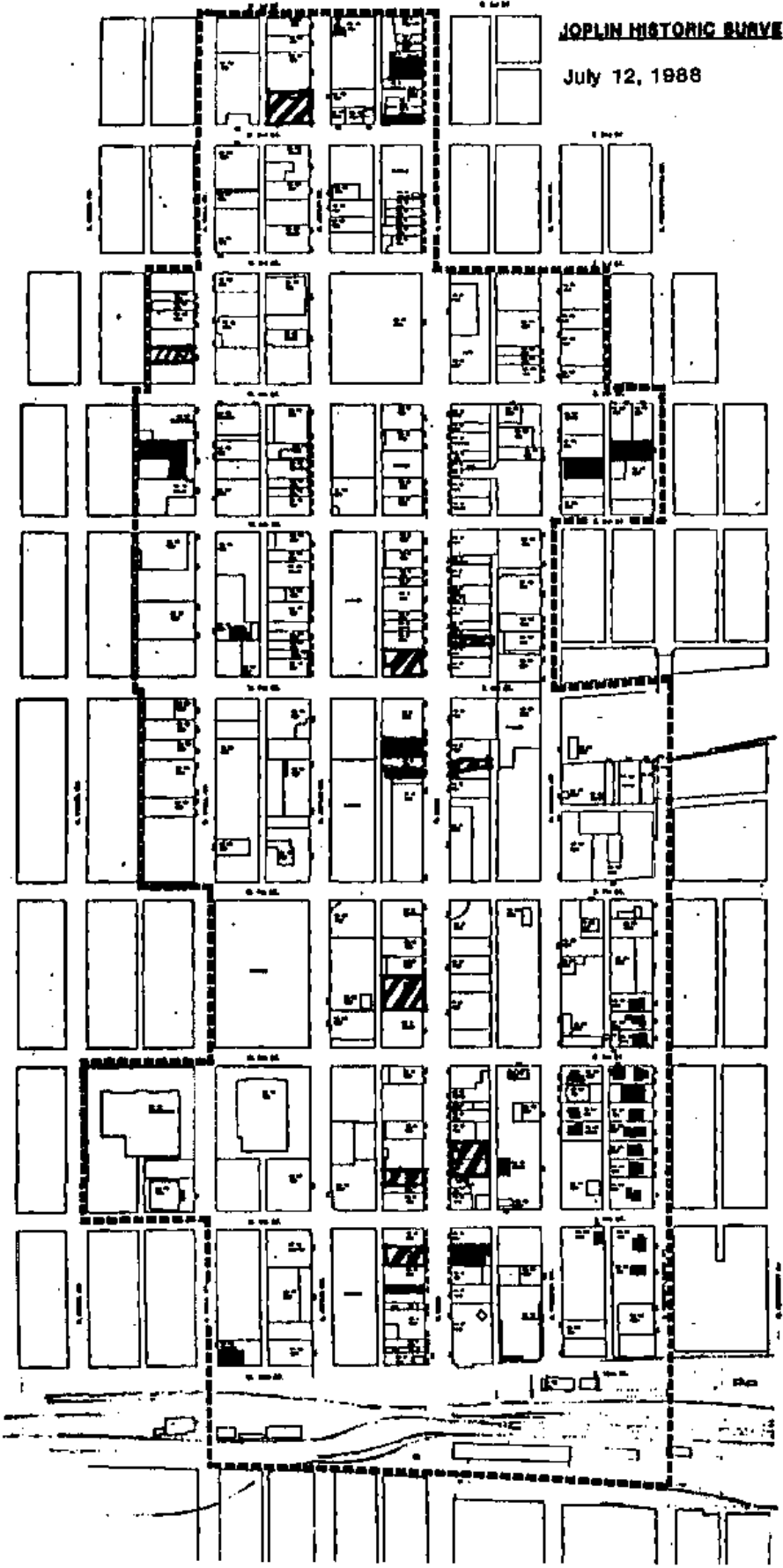
-  Auto
-  Livery
-  Auto/Livery
-  Railroad




MAP D

Residential & Hotel

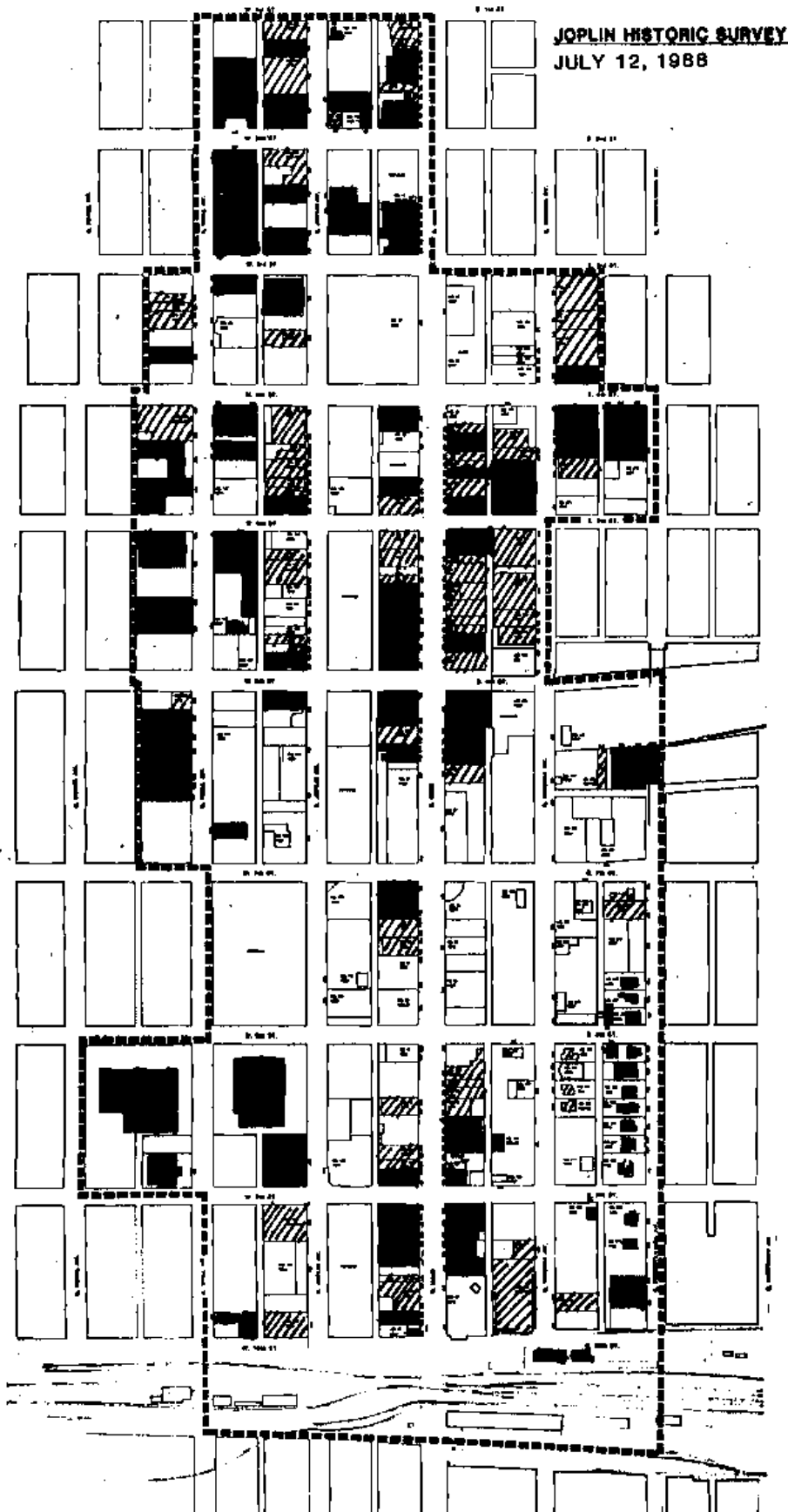
JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY

July 12, 1988



-  Residential
-  Hotel
-  Residential/Hotel

Buildings Meeting National Register Criteria For Correct Date and Integrity

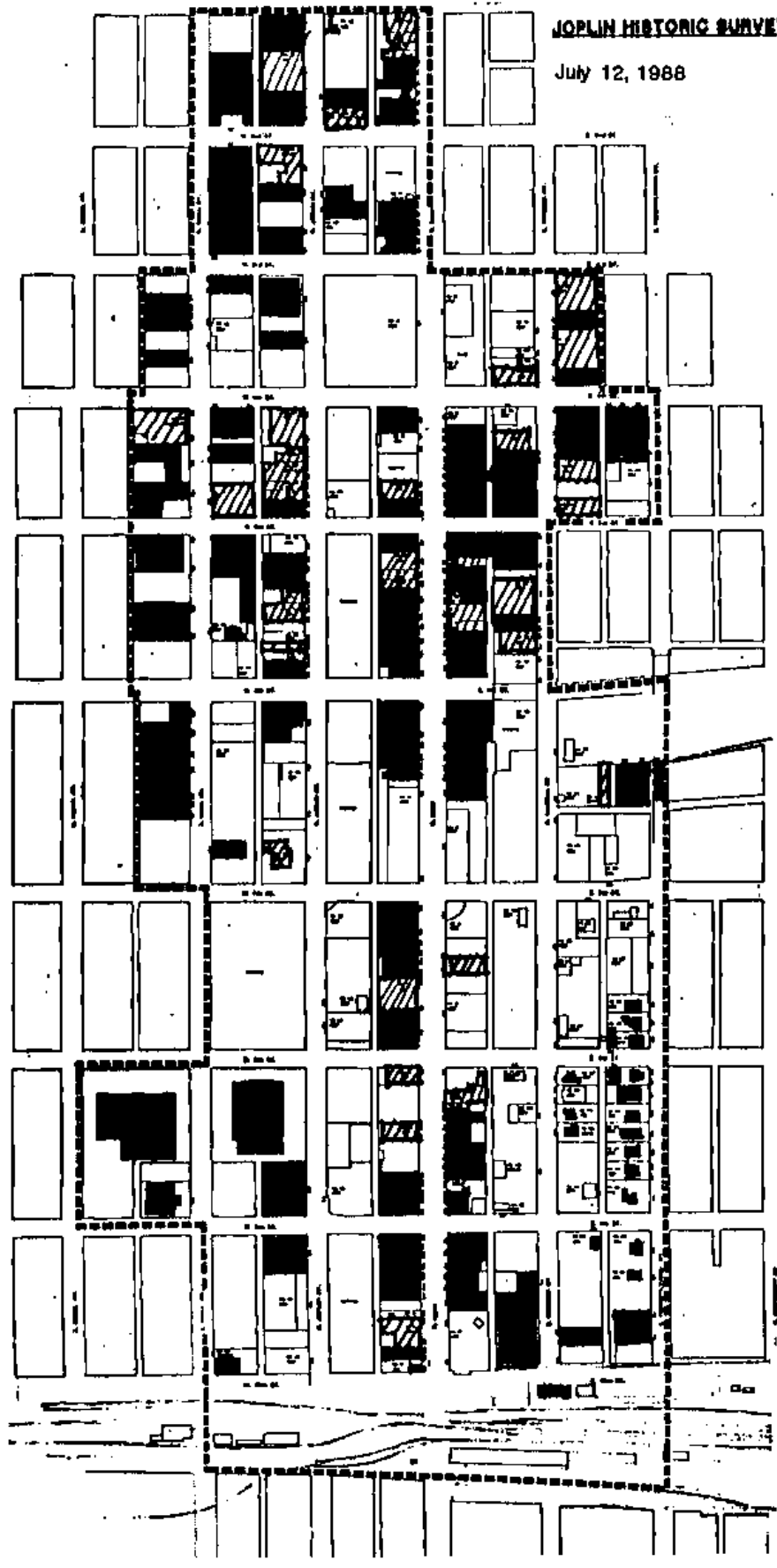


JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY
JULY 12, 1988

- Potential for Individual National Register Listing
- Fifty Years Old or Older Integrity is Questionable
- ▨ Does Not Retain Integrity Of Design
- Less Than Fifty Years Old

Buildings With Potential of Meeting National Register Criteria After Renovation

JOPLIN HISTORIC SURVEY
July 12, 1988



- Integrity
- ▨ Date



Joplin Street Early 1900's



Joplin Street Today

August C. Michaelis

August C. Michaelis was born in 1863. His brother, Alfred S. Michaelis, was born in 1883. In 1890, August moved to Joplin to work as a building contractor. By the mid 1890s, he assumed the vocation of architect. He designed most of the important buildings and houses in Joplin from 1896 to 1903. He was the superintendent of building construction in Joplin and was largely responsible for Joplin's appearance at the turn of the century. August's building designs are described as having "distinguishing characteristics of utility and dignity.": His buildings varied wildly in style, although Neo-classical motifs persist throughout. His designs made prominent use of Greek-inspired elements (Ionic column, pediments, porticos, symmetrical facades, etc.) and Italian elements (Romanesque arches, cut stone, towers, etc.). He also designed stunning Queen Anne mansions.

Michaelis' architecture made an abrupt shift in style around 1903 when August's brother, Alfred, joined the firm. August was trained as a carpenter and taught himself architecture by studying classical designs. Alfred went to Chicago in 1898 to study architecture. When he returned, he obviously was enamored with the new Chicago style he had learned there. After 1903, the buildings the brothers designed together reflected that influence. Neo-classicism had gone out of favor.

The Michaelis firm ended in 1925 when Alfred fell from a scaffolding and died during the construction of Joplin's Memorial Hall. August left Joplin and gave up his practice.

Buildings designed by August Michaelis, 1896 - 1903

Joplin High School
St. John's Hospital
Congregational Church
Michaelis house
J.A. Hewitt house,
E.J. Overly house Model Block
Bartlett Building
Morgan house
Campbell Building
Wyman Block
Wise house
Schifferdecker/Spencer house
Clarketon Hotel
Miners Bank
McKinley Block
E.D. Porter home
Carnegie Library

Buildings designed by August and Alfred Michaelis, 1903 - 1925

Joplin Furniture
Christmans Department Store
South Joplin Christian Church
Memorial Hall
Churches in Webb City, Carthage, and Pittsburg

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Local newspapers: various name changes - Joplin Daily Globe, Joplin News Herald, Joplin Daily Herald 1882-present
Jasper County Histories: North, ed. 1883; Livingston, ed. 1912
1902 photos cited: souvenir book published 1902
1907 photos cited: souvenir book published 1907
1913 photos cited: souvenir book published 1913
Miscellaneous files & materials collected by Post Art Library

All items listed above are located in the Joplin Public Library 300 Main, Joplin, MO. Either in the Post Art Library, the Genealogy Room, Reference Library files, or microfilm files. Ask at Post Art Library for precise locations.