

Identification Results

Objectives and Surveyed Area

The objectives of the Liberty Survey Project were: to characterize the range of historic properties in that region; to identify the number of properties associated within that context; and to gather information to determine which properties within that area are significant.

The survey boundaries were selected by representatives of the City of Liberty in consultation with officials from the Missouri State Office of Historic Preservation. The boundaries of the survey area are: Gordon Avenue to the north; Mill Street to the south; Water, Missouri and Leonard Streets to the east; and Jewell and Evans Streets to the west. There are approximately 350 structures within the survey area.

Methodology

The City of Liberty had determined, through a reconnaissance survey, the boundaries of the 1986 Liberty Survey Project.

Mapping

Blocks and individual buildings are keyed to enable identification for survey forms. (all photographs are also keyed and numbered so as to be easily identified on the map). When the survey site work is completed, a final map will show the significance of the surveyed area, as determined by property type, age, and non-conforming intrusions.

Photography

An individual photograph of each structure is made using a 35 mm. camera with professional black and white film. contact sheets are keyed by sheet number and exposure number and then identified as such on the individual inventory sheets.

Archival Research

Information and data are gathered from the following primary sources: water permits, building permits, abstracts and plat

maps, Western Contractor, city and social directories. In addition, local histories, newspapers, and oral histories are used as source material.

Previous research has provided limited resource material. However, as architectural historians, we often rely on our knowledge of the architecture of this Midwestern region, in order to identify and understand the vernacular and folk-housing trends in Liberty.

Field Survey

An on site analysis of architecture within street subdistricts was conducted in order to fully assess present condition and physical status of individual structures.

Architectural Evaluation

Field survey and stylistic analysis were evaluated.

Assemblage

Data was put in final form and photographs were attached to Inventory sheets.

History and Results

During the first half of the 19th century, settlers poured into the state of Missouri, eager to claim their stake in the ever increasing opportunities of the "frontier." Clay County was formed when part of Ray County was partitioned off shortly after Missouri was admitted to the Union as the 24th State in 1821. Early settlers of the area were primarily from southern States, especially Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The new county proclaimed this heritage by being named in honor of the Kentucky statesman, Henry Clay.

The Clay County Court conducted its first session in February of 1822. Soon thereafter, commissioners were chosen to select a county seat. Citizens John Owens and Charles McGee each made available 25 acres for such a purpose and that location, which encompasses part of the present City of Liberty, was approved by the Court. The town of Liberty was laid out by the summer of 1822 and the

first sale of lots was held on July 4, 1822. The original plat provided for a public square, seven north-south streets, and four east-west streets. There were 196 lots in the original plat, known as "Original Town." Nearly all the lots fronting the public square were disposed of in the first sale.

By 1823, the town was flourishing as a trading post and outfitting point for those moving further west. This role was increased when Fort Leavenworth in Kansas was established in 1827 and even more settlers came to trade in Liberty. Several business buildings had been erected, but up to 1826 not more than a dozen houses had been built, and these were primarily log cabins.

Liberty was officially incorporated as a town in 1829 and during the last half of the 19th century had a relatively stable population which evidenced a steady growth pattern. In 1850, the town had 600 residents, and by 1891, the town had reached the impressive population of 2,600.

Liberty's growth was aided by the arrival of the railroad lines. In 1867, the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad (later known as the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) laid rail from Kansas City to Cameron, Missouri, which passed through Liberty. Other railroad lines soon followed and by the turn of the century, six to eight passenger trains passed through or stopped in Liberty daily.

Liberty experienced a real estate and building boom in the late 1880's. In 1887, approximately seventy new residences were constructed at an average cost of \$1,000 each. A similar number were constructed the following year, but at an average cost of \$1,500. In

1889, the average cost had risen to \$2,000 and approximately eighty new homes were built in the town. Another building boom took place in 1908 with the construction of at least forty new residential structures completed.

The opening of the ASB Bridge over the Missouri River in 1913 dramatically increased the ease of travelling between Kansas City and Liberty. As a result, another boom occurred as new people came to make Liberty their home. As local municipalities north of the Missouri flourished, Liberty prospered as well.

With even more improved highways, and the construction of new bridges across the river, Liberty has become a home to residents who may work elsewhere, but who enjoy the small town charm that is an identity here. Recent efforts to restore the 19th Century character of the City can only enhance the livability of this history-rich seat.

A review of the surveyed housing stock reveals that the greatest portion of structures in the area are of the folk-house type--- a style influenced by the trans-continent migration of the railroad. The development of the railroad, as it crossed the continent from east to west in the later half of the 19th Century, had a profound effect upon the character of the American house.

Building materials could be transported quickly and inexpensively from one location to another. New building materials (i.e. timber being used in place of sod) called for new styles and construction techniques so that heavy-hewn log frames were abandoned for light balloon or braced frame building covered with sheathing. New building materials and construction techniques were adapted to existing folk-

housing types and gradually, new types of folk-housing from other regions were introduced as well. These are identifiable as six distinctive house shapes that dominated American folk building through the first half of the 20th Century, and can be classified as the following:

- 1) Gable-front
- 2) Gable-front-and-wing
- 3) Hall-and-parlor
- 4) I-house
- 5) Mass-plan, side-gabled
- 6) Pyramidal

Within the surveyed area, there are examples of each type of folk-housing identified above. These structures date between 1860-1890 and were imported primarily from the southern states of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. The majority of housing types in this surveyed area can be identified within this particular group.

Also dating from this time period are examples of pattern houses based on variations of the Queen Anne style, and a few examples of Georgian, Dutch and English Colonial Revival styles.

Post 1900 through 1940, the housing stock is comprised of vernacular adaptations of High-Style architecture including Prairie style, colonial Revival and Kansas City Shirtwaist.

In evidence, too, are post WWI Bungalow and Bungaloid style houses. There are also several ecclesiastical structures dating from before and after 1900. These include Neo-Classical and Gothic Revival structures.

Recommendations

Upon the completion of the 1986 Liberty West Survey Project, possible districts and or individual structures, on both the local and or

National level, can be recognized. From our research to date, it appears that a multiple resource nomination including, but not limited to, residential structures and ecclesiastical buildings might be the most appropriate. A single structure, however, that does appear eligible would be Lightburn Hall.