

AN HISTORIC SURVEY
OF THE GORE-LOCKWOOD DISTRICT
IN WEBSTER GROVES

The Old Webster commercial district is seven blocks in the southeast part of the original Webster Groves Subdivision and commercial property in eight other blocks along Lockwood in subdivisions called Avery's Addition, Mary Gore's Subdivision, Francis Plant's Subdivision, Glen Park and part of Survey 1953 which was the Gregoire Sarpy Spanish Land Grant. Gore Avenue and the Missouri Pacific Railroad tracks formed the original intersection of Webster Groves, the nucleus of the commuter and commercial facilities from which the community grew.

Buildings in Old Webster are predominantly one- and two-story brick buildings dating from the 1880's through the 1920's. The oldest commercial buildings are on Gore near the railroad tracks -- Italianate and Victorian Vernacular with cast iron fronts. Lockwood Avenue was originally lined with fine, frame mansions, all the way east to Old Orchard, but those properties became commercial in the 1920's after the Webster Groves Zoning Ordinance prohibited commercial growth in areas not already commercial.

Scattered between the retail establishments in Old Webster are some major institutions. Two large Gothic Revival churches, two late 19th century frame mansions converted for commercial use and a reproduction of the Governor's Palace at Williamsburg, Virginia, contribute to the nostalgic atmosphere of the business district. A large bank and a large savings and loan, both very modern, interrupt the historic spell of Old Webster.

The history of Old Webster illustrates the development of a typical suburban commercial district. It is a window into America -- making Old Webster a unique historic and architectural resource for the entire St. Louis metropolitan area.

HISTORY

In 1860 John Marshall laid out a subdivision of almost 280 acres, the southwest part of his property, around the railroad stop, a wooden platform, and he

called it Webster Groves.¹ The land did not sell right away because people were preoccupied with the Civil War. But people were there. Edward Avery lived in a small cottage south of what is now Lockwood and commuted into St. Louis to teach. Stephen Gore and his family had a dry goods store on the south side of Lockwood at the head of what is now Gore Avenue. The Helfensteins, the Studleys, the Plants, the Lockwoods, prominent St. Louis businessmen, lived just south of this area near the railroad before the war. In 1861 Charles Connon, from Scotland, bought four lots from Marshall and established the first greenhouses and wholesale florist company in the St. Louis area. In 1864 Connon's brother-in-law, August Moody, bought a lot by the railroad tracks and built a large frame grocery and dry goods store attached to his house. It served as the post office until August Moody was killed by a mailbag thrown from a train in 1870.²

In 1865 Nathan D. Allen, a real estate developer, purchased two large lots on Lockwood Avenue in the Webster Groves Subdivision and built his frame Italianate house.³ The end of the war allowed men to think of the future and in 1866 others began to follow Allen's example, building frame Victorian homes in the healthy country atmosphere. The healthy atmosphere was important because the city of St. Louis was plagued with cholera every summer. Even after the war, people did not realize that cholera was transmitted by sewage and contaminated drinking water.⁴ Alfred and Sarah Lee had nine children and six of them died before they were six years old, one every summer, until they moved to Webster Groves.⁵ The railroad made it possible for men to commute to St. Louis from Webster Groves and John Marshall sold lots that were small enough to be economic for non-farmers.

In 1865, Henry Prehn bought the northwest corner of Gore and the Pacific railroad tracks where he built a frame house for his large family and a grocery and dry goods store that handled a little bit of everything.⁶ Some time in the 1860's a board and batten railroad station was built at Gore Avenue on the north side of the tracks next to Prehn's.⁷ The intersection of Gore and the

railroad tracks was becoming the nucleus of a commercial district, the heart of Webster Groves.

With the war over and the community growing, four churches were organized in 1866: Emmanuel Episcopal, down in Old Orchard and the First Baptist, First Congregational and Webster Groves Presbyterian churches in the heart of Webster Groves, in the Webster Groves Subdivision. The First Congregational Church met in a small frame building called Chapel Grove Seminary, a private school that John Helfenstein, William Plant and Robert Studley built for their children on Lockwood Avenue near Rock Hill Road. The Congregationalists built a parsonage before building their church because William Plant was tired of having the minister live with him.⁸

The Presbyterians met for the first year in members' homes. Then in 1867 they built a frame church with a gable roof and two octagonal towers on the front, on the corner of Lockwood and Gore facing Gore.⁹

The First Congregational Church built a small, Gothic, stone church on Lockwood in 1870.¹⁰ In 1872 J. W. Brannon built a large two-and-a-half story brick building with a mansard roof on the northeast corner of Gore and the Missouri Pacific tracks. It had a saloon on the first floor and a large hall on the second floor and hotel rooms on the third floor. The large hall was used as the high school at the turn of the century.¹¹

An economic depression swept across the country in the 1870's but two factors caused particular hardship in Webster Groves. Jane Morrison, Gregoire Sarpy's daughter, contested the Sarpy land grant.¹² People could not buy property with a clear title so property values plummeted. In addition, the Missouri Pacific Railroad decided it was more profitable to handle only freight and for ten years the Missouri Pacific waged a railroad war against commuters, sometimes changing schedules and sometimes stopping only in Kirkwood so that a

Webster resident had to hire a horse in Kirkwood to get home. The Congregational Church suffered from the depression and had to let its minister go. The Presbyterian church and the Baptist church helped the Congregational church pay its debts.¹³

The 1880's brought an end to the depression. The Morrison suit was settled, people could buy land with a clear title and the Missouri Pacific Railroad decided to cooperate with commuters.¹⁴ A housing boom began. All over Webster Groves, frame Victorian houses were built for commuters. Two beautiful mansions were built on the north side of Lockwood, one for Benjamin Lippincott who owned a soda water company¹⁵ and one for Charles Ferguson, the vice president of the Collier White Lead Company.¹⁶

In the early 1880's the commercial district developing on Gore contained mostly frame or board and batten buildings, saloons, dry goods, a carpenter's shop, a blacksmith, a doctor's office. Henry Prehn's grocery store was a local institution. He dressed meat, accepted eggs as payment, gave credit and delivered. His pot-bellied stove was a gathering place for men and children. But in 1880, on the night his tenth child was born, Henry Prehn's grocery store and home burned to the ground. His insurance had lapsed two days before. With a spirit that is a significant part of the community, the residents of Webster Groves appeared the next morning with money and helped to build a two-story brick store with living quarters above. Prehn paid them back in groceries.¹⁷

After Prehn's fire, two-story brick buildings with cast iron fronts were built in the commercial district, the Cannon Building on Gore at Moody, the M. W. Warren Building on Gore at Moody, Parker's Livery Stable on Gore, Schulz's Grain and Feed Company on Gore at Marshall Place, and Allen's Music Hall on the southwest corner of Gore and the railroad tracks were all built in the late 1880's. Allen's Music Hall burned to the ground in the 1890's, but for almost

with Beaux-Arts details at Gore and Lockwood.²⁹

A new, Queen Anne railroad station was built in 1904,³⁰ and in 1907 the Empire Real Estate Company built the three-story Empire Building on Gore.³¹ It had cast iron storefronts, and terra cotta articulates the upper windows. The cast iron storefronts were replaced in 1937 by large shop windows under a pseudo-Colonial broken pediment.³²

In 1910 the Gorlock Realty Company tore down S. A. Moody's old frame real estate office on the northwest corner of Gore and Lockwood and had the prominent architectural firm of Klipstein and Rathmann design a large, two-story commercial building. Theodore Bopp of Kirkwood built the building.³³ The center section on Lockwood is only one story high and was built as the Webster Groves Post Office. It had a brick facade and a dome with skylights around its base with a flagpole on top. A large stone eagle stood on the edge of the roof above the post office door. The statuary, the dome and brick piers suggesting monumental columns gave the Gorelock Building a Beaux-Arts flavor.³⁴ This largest and most elegant piece of real estate in the commercial district housed the city hall on the second story and the jail in the basement until about 1922.³⁵

In 1912 Webster Groves became the first municipality in St. Louis County to establish a full-time, paid fire department. Like the volunteers, the professionals continued to keep their equipment in the livery stables, Parker's in Webster and Bopp's in Old Orchard, until the firemen had raised enough money from picnics and carnivals to build a firehouse.³⁶ In 1913 John Berg, a contractor from Northwest Webster, built the narrow two-story brick Fire Company No. 1 on Lockwood. It has a square three-story tower in the back for drying hose.³⁷

During the decade before 1920 the commercial district continued to grow. Leonard Nagel, who lived on Slocum, built a one-story brick building on the southeast corner of Gore and Kirkham in 1913.³⁸ Nagel had helped to build the Singer Building, the first skyscraper in St. Louis, in 1872, and then in 1923 he helped to

tear it down to build the Federal Reserve Bank.³⁹

In 1913 the Parker Livery and Undertaking Company on Gore burned to the ground. Shortly afterward William Parker had a heart attack and died. Laura Parker, his wife, rebuilt the two-story brick building, adding four monumental cast-iron columns on the front. She phased out the livery business and emphasized the undertaking.⁴⁰ She was an excellent business woman, she sang at every funeral, and she soon had the most successful undertaking establishment in St. Louis County.

In 1916 the Gibson Motor Car Company built an automobile showroom at 220 West Lockwood.⁴² In 1917 the Weilandy-Reller Motor Company built a Ford showroom and service station at Gore and Lockwood. They had a gasoline pump on the curb on Lockwood. Many automobile distributors appeared in Webster Groves in the next ten years. Up and down Gore and Lockwood one could buy a Buick, a Dodge, a Ford, a Gibson, a LaFayette, a Nash, an Oakland 6, an Oldsmobile, and in Old Orchard one could buy a Studebaker.⁴³

The residential area along Lockwood Avenue was changing. As the twenties approached, six of the big, old, frame houses on Lockwood east of this study area were torn down, moved or adapted for non-residential use.⁴⁴ The Plant home at 12 E. Lockwood was purchased by the Webster Groves Lodge U.D. for use as the Masonic Temple in 1914.⁴⁵ A large brick meeting hall was attached to the rear of the old Plant home in 1922.⁴⁶ The Webster Groves City Hall moved into the old Congregational Church parsonage on the southeast corner of Lockwood and Elm in 1922, in effect shifting the center of town east on Lockwood.⁴⁷ The Webster Theater Company tore down an old house and built the Ozark Theater at 103 E. Lockwood in 1921, and added an outdoor airdome theater, for summer movies, on the east side, in 1923.⁴⁸ (But movies could not be shown on Sundays.)

The Lippincott mansion was moved in 1916, to make way for the telephone company's Classical Revival building at 5 W. Lockwood,⁴⁹ and in 1920, the Ferguson mansion passed into a new era. Mr. Ferguson had died in 1918 and his daughter,

Edith, who had served as a Red Cross nurse in France, came home from the war with a virus and died.⁵⁰ The family sold their large Colonial Revival home to the Webster Groves YWCA and for a year that fabulous facility hummed with the activities of confident young women who had just won the right to vote. The YWCA had a cafe-tearoom on the first floor and rooms to rent on the second floor. There were meetings and classes and choral groups for women and girls and an employment bureau and room registry for housewives.⁵¹ But the tearoom did not make enough money to support the building and all of its activities and the YWCA closed in 1921.⁵² Laura Parker bought the building for her undertaking establishment and converted the second floor into an apartment for herself and her daughter, Thelma. Mrs. Parker used the first floor parlors for funerals, an innovation in the twenties. Previously bodies were laid out at home.

The commercial district at Lockwood and Gore prospered in the twenties, and that decade gave us many of the buildings which are part of Old Webster. In the twenties the Connon Building at Gore and Moody had its cast-iron storefronts removed and the front and south side faced with yellow brick. It was used as offices by the phone company for a while.⁵⁴

Harry Sloofman, a shoemaker, built the Lockwood Building, 122, 124 and 126 West Lockwood, in 1926. It has beautiful terra cotta tiles articulating the four bays of windows on the second floor. There are three storefronts on the first floor and since Harry Sloofman opened his building in 1926 the western storefront has always been the Arcade Shoe Repair Shop.⁵⁵

During the boom of the twenties all of Webster prospered. Contractors and developers built houses speculatively, before they had buyers. In an attempt to preserve the suburban, country atmosphere, the city of Webster Groves passed the first zoning ordinance in the St. Louis area in 1923.⁵⁶ It insured that Webster Groves would be a residential community of single-family houses except in the few areas already commercial.

Lockwood Avenue was zoned commercial from Rock Hill Road east to Plant Avenue. James Allen owned a large frame house on the south side of Lockwood between Plant and Maple⁵⁷ and in 1923 he sold the frontage on Lockwood to developers who built three two-story brick commercial buildings. In later years one-story commercial buildings filled in the spaces between the two-story buildings.⁵⁸

In 1925 the Weilandy-Reller Motor Company moved its Ford dealership from the southwest corner of Gore and Lockwood to a big new automobile showroom at 45 E. Lockwood. Weilandy-Reller had purchased George Washington Sanders' old house and moved it around the corner to 17 N. Maple.

And in 1926, Dr. Marshall Baker sold that part of his property on Gore and Lockwood which faced Lockwood for commercial development.⁶⁰ Lungstras Dying and Cleaning Company built the Spanish Colonial building on the corner, William A. Straub built a Federal Revival grocery store east of the cleaners and the Martin Investment Company built several small commercial buildings east of Straub's.⁶¹

Apartments could locate only in areas zoned commercial.⁶² The three-story brick Rockwood Court Apartments with Tudor half-timbering were built at the west end of the commercial district on Lockwood in 1928. Groups of concerned citizens vehemently opposed the apartments before they were built. Letters were sent to all the residents of Webster warning them of the dangers of having transients live in Webster Groves and urging them to contact their aldermen.⁶³

Features of the Gore and Lockwood business district of the twenties which have since disappeared were: an outdoor movie airdome on the southeast corner of Gray and Lockwood (movies were prohibited on Sundays in Webster Groves); Holekamp Lumber Company and the Polar Wave Ice and Fuel Company on Lockwood at Gray where the Shell Gas Station is now; the two-story brick offices of Union Electric Light and Power Company and St. Louis County Gas Company where Reliable

Life Insurance Company is now; Chapel Grove Seminary, on the hill just west of the Gas and Electric Company, converted to a house; a large grassy yard like a park on the corner of Gore and Lockwood next to the bank with tall trees and a trough for watering horses;⁶⁴ and in the Webster Palace of Sweets, in a small frame building west of the Bristol Building, there was a blind tiger. Blind tigers appeared in many small towns during Prohibition. In Webster Groves men went to the Webster Palace of Sweets, where kids bought homemade ice cream and cookies after school, and asked to see the blind tiger. They were shown into the back room where they could have a drink of bootleg whiskey and put a quarter in the saucer. George Jones stood outside his fix-it shop at 61 North Gore and chuckled as he counted the men going into the Webster Palace of Sweets.⁶⁵

The Depression settled quietly over Northwest Webster. In 1930 Ambrose Mueller, the druggist, built a yellow brick building, with terra cotta detail, 14 and 16 North Gore. The first floor was his pharmacy and soda fountain and the second floor was offices.⁶⁶ In 1931 Philip Seris had his little frame barbershop next to the train station covered with brick.⁶⁷ The First National Bank of Webster Groves, in the Bristol Building, folded, but every customer was able to get his money back.⁶⁸ Grocers gave credit. The shopkeepers on Gore and Lockwood formed the Gore Lockwood Merchants' Association to promote shopping in Webster. They collaborated on advertising in the Webster News Times and they lit a large Christmas tree at Gore and Lockwood to inspire Christmas shopping.⁶⁹ In 1932, the fine new Georgian Revival city hall, designed by Hugo Graf and Wilber Trueblood, was built at Lockwood and Elm, replacing the old frame house at that corner which had served as the city hall since 1918.⁷⁰ C. W. Lowry and Ed Lammert opened the Lammert's Department Store in the first floor of the Bristol Building in 1937 and it remained Webster's largest store until it closed in 1972.⁷¹

In the 1940's Webster Groves assumed an air of suburban sophistication. The old Brannon Building at the northeast corner of Gore and the Missouri Pacific Railroad tracks was torn down in 1949. It had degenerated into an auto repair shop on the first floor and a seedy hotel on the second and third floors.⁷²

In the 1950's the automobile was king. Trolleys and commuter trains stopped running. Straubs built their modern supermarket on Lockwood at Gray where there was plenty of parking.⁷³

An early creative adaptive reuse of an old building began in 1959 when the McMillan family converted Mrs. McMillan's father's old building, the Henry Schulz Grain and Feed Company, into Rolling Ridge Nursery.⁷⁴ The McMillans' sons own the business now, and they operate a popular Christmas store in November and December.

In addition to being progressive, Webster Groves was still old-fashioned, traditional. Church-going was an integral part of living in Webster, and membership figures for all the churches were ascendant. The First Congregational Church was the largest Congregational church in the State of Missouri, with over 1000 members, and in 1956 it added a huge Sunday school building on the back.⁷⁵ The Webster Groves Presbyterian Church was three times as big as the Congregational Church, and after a horrible fire on New Year's Day of 1958 the Presbyterians rebuilt their church and added a tremendous Sunday school on the back.⁷⁶

In the early sixties many older communities were in a state of flux as new highways spawned new communities and people moved west to avoid school integration. The Northwest Webster Improvement Association probably contributed to the stability of its integrated community by welcoming black members and fostering good feelings of neighborhood spirit.⁷⁷ The commercial area was not so wise. The Toll House Restaurant at 127 West Lockwood refused to serve blacks and it was boycotted and picketed until it went out of business. The drug stores removed their soda fountains.

Evidence of a growing awareness of the value of the historic, nostalgic atmosphere of Webster Groves began to emerge in the commercial district in the 1960's. Harvey and Donna Kassebaum purchased the Missouri Pacific Railroad Station in 1965 and restored it as The Station, a successful dress shop.⁷⁸ The Reliable Life Insurance Company purchased the old Gas and Electric Company building at 231 West Lockwood in the fifties and in 1969 Reliable Life finished building a copy of the Governor's Palace at Williamsburg for their new corporate headquarters, reflecting the strong local interest in the past.⁷⁹

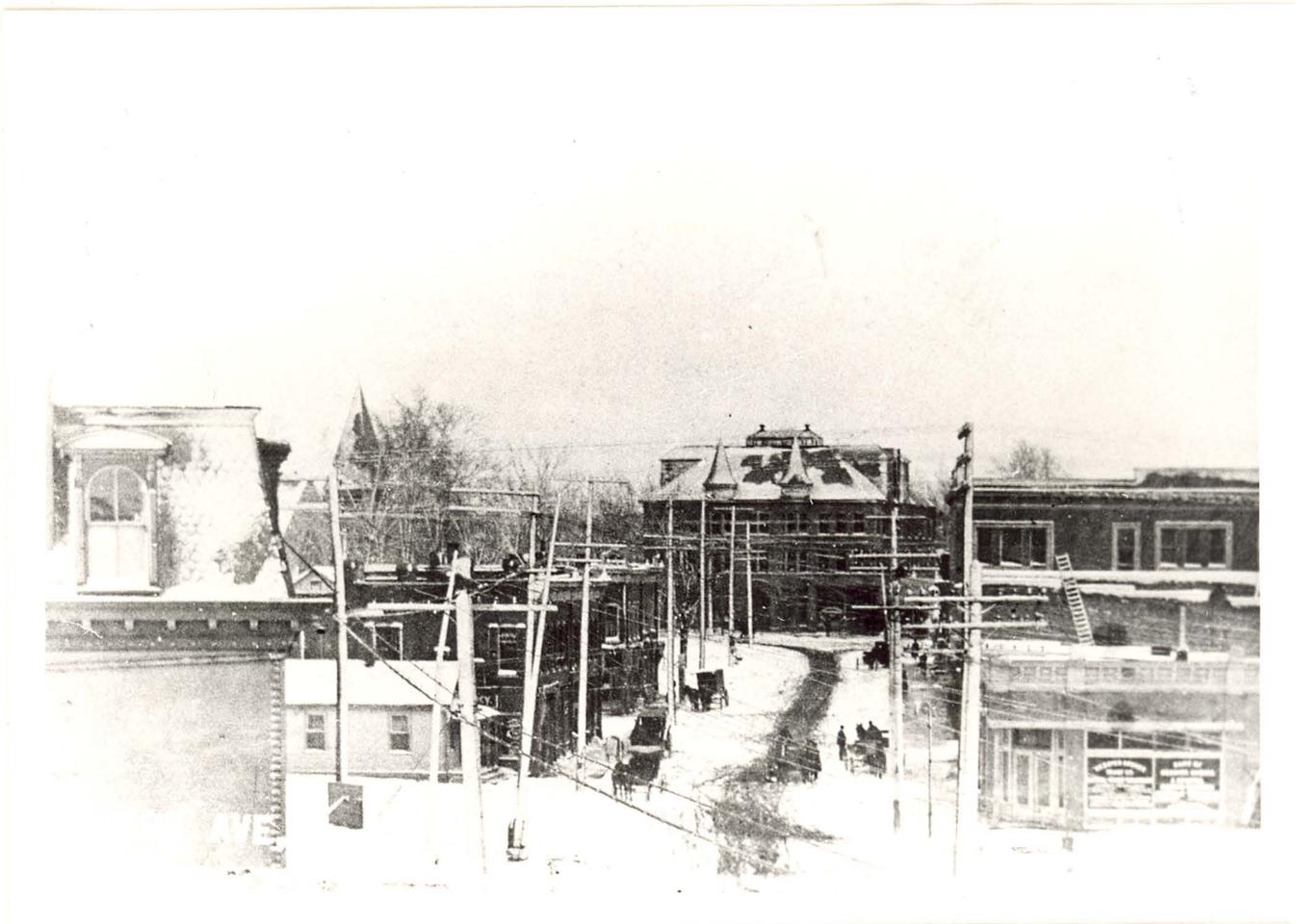
Meanwhile the Webster Groves Trust Company enlarged their bank across the little park on the corner of Gore and Lockwood in 1966.⁸⁰ They covered their Beaux Arts facade with modern yellow concrete. And the old Bristol Building at the head of Gore Avenue was torn down in 1972, to make room for the modern, glass Farm and Home Savings and Loan Company. The Bristol Building was structurally unsound and there were no tax incentives for rehabilitation.⁸¹ But with it went the architectural and commercial focal point of Webster Groves and with it went a little mall that was created by a row of one-story shops set back on the west side of the building.

In the past twenty years small independent merchants on Gore and Lockwood found it difficult to compete with the convenience, the parking and the modern merchandising of the shopping centers. In the 1960's the merchants formed the Gore-Lockwood Trade Association to promote business and to work with city hall. In 1979 they changed their name to The Old Webster Trade Association and created a special taxing district, an arm of the city government, to tax themselves to pay for beautification of the area and collective advertising.⁸²

In 1983, with several major retail spaces vacant and low morale among the merchants, the Webster Groves City Council, following the recommendation

of an advisory commission of the Old Webster Taxing District, declared the Old Webster Business District economically blighted and created a Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority.⁸³ In 1984, the City Council approved a redevelopment plan for Old Webster which includes design guidelines for all buildings and new construction in the business district and the creation of a historic district at the core of Old Webster.⁸⁴

Five buildings at Gore and the railroad tracks were listed on the National Register in 1982, as part of the Marshall Place Historic District: The Station, 44 N. Gore; Prehn's Grocery, 49 N. Gore; The Corvette Shop, 50 N. Gore; The Brockman Building, 58 N. Gore; and Rolling Ridge Nursery, 60 N. Gore. Two other buildings in the Old Webster Business District were listed on the National Register in 1984: the Ferguson House, 17 W. Lockwood and the Gorlock Building, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111 and 113 W. Lockwood.⁸⁵



Looking north on Gore Avenue from a railroad tower, around 1910. The old Bristol Building is at the end of Gore on Lockwood Avenue.



Looking south on Gore Avenue from the old Bristol Building at Gore and Lockwood, around 1925.

NOTES

1. St. Louis City Plat Book 6, pp. 28-29, Recorder of Deeds, St. Louis City Hall, Tucker Blvd. and Market St.
2. From the Kate Moody Collection at the Missouri Historical Society; see individual family names.
3. Deeds for Webster Groves Subdivision are located in Webster Groves Historical Society Archives, Webster Groves High School.
4. Ernest Kirschten, Catfish and Crystal (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1960), pp. 158-160.
5. Conversation with Miss Sarah Booth.
6. "Prehn, Henry," Kate Moody Collection.
7. Conversation with John Brown; also Julius Pitzman, Atlas of St. Louis City and County (1878).
8. Sylvia Stevens Schmid, Centennial History of the First Congregational Church (1966), pp. 4-8.
9. Mrs. Leo J. Vogt, The History of the Webster Groves Presbyterian Church (1966).
10. Schmid, p. 9.

11. Ann Morris, 1977 Century Street (Webster Groves Historical Society, 1977), p. 33.
12. "Morrison Suit," Kate Moody Collection.
13. Schmid, p. 8.
14. Morris, p. 3.
15. "Lippincott, Benjamin," Kate Moody Collection.
16. "Ferguson, Charles," Kate Moody Collection.
17. "Prehn, Henry," Kate Moody Collection.
18. Kate Moody Collection, see individual names.
19. Vogt, p. 4.
20. Conversation with Otto Zinke.
21. Clarissa Start, Webster Groves (1977), pp. 63-68.
22. Ibid, p. 69.
23. "Webster Groves Civic Improvements," Kate Moody Collection.

24. Map of City of Webster Groves accompanying Revised Zoning Ordinance of 1930.
25. Conversation with Harriet McMillan.
26. "Webster Groves Civic Improvements," Kate Moody Collection.
27. Webster Groves Historical Society Cookbook (1978), p. 78.
28. Conversation with Harriet McMillan.
29. Webster Groves Trust Company Silver Jubilee (1925).
30. Esley Hamilton, "Marshall Place Historic District" (National Register Nomination), 1980.
31. Real Estate Tax Assessments for the City of Webster Groves, 1907.
32. Webster Groves Building Permit #5771.
33. Webster Groves Building Permits #421 and 497.
34. Old Post Card, c. 1911.
35. "Webster Groves City Hall, old," Kate Moody Collection.

36. Start, p. 115.
37. Webster Groves Building Permit #688.
38. Webster Groves Building Permit #718.
39. "Nagel, Leonard," Kate Moody Collection.
40. "Parker Undertaking," Kate Moody Collection.
41. Conversation with John Brown.
42. Webster Groves Building Permit #951.
43. "Businesses," Kate Moody Collection.
44. Plat Book of St. Louis County, Missouri (Des Moines, Iowa: Northwest Publishing Company., 1909), p. 59.
45. Start, pp. 157-158.
46. Webster Groves Building Permit #1768.
47. Real Estate Tax Assessments for the City of Webster Groves; 1917, 1918.
48. Webster Groves Building Permits #1422, 1995.

49. Conversation with John Brown.
50. "Ferguson, Charles," Kate Moody Collection.
51. "YWCA," Kate Moody Collection.
52. Conversation with Sarah Booth.
53. Conversation with Harriet McMillan.
54. Conversation with John Brown.
55. Conversation with Mrs. Harry Sloofman.
56. Conversation with MaryLou Miller, Webster Groves City Clerk.
57. 1909 Plat Book of St. Louis County; p. 59.
58. See histories or building permits for 112, 114, 118, 120, 122, 126, 130, 134, 140 East Lockwood.
59. Webster Groves Building Permit #2896.
60. 1909 Plat Book of St. Louis County; p. 59.
61. See histories of 50, 40, 36, 34, 32 and 30 W. Lockwood.
62. Map of Webster Groves accompanying Revised Zoning Ordinance of 1930.

63. "Apartments," Kate Moody Collection.
64. "Businesses," Kate Moody Collection.
65. Conversation with Esther Jones.
66. Webster Groves Building Permit #4943.
67. Webster Groves Building Permit #5049.
68. "First National Bank of Webster Groves," Kate Moody Collection.
69. "Gore Lockwood Merchants Association," Kate Moody Collection.
70. "Webster Groves City Hall, New;" Kate Moody collection.
71. Webster Groves Historical Society Cookbook, p. 18-
72. "Webster Groves History," pamphlet file, Webster Groves Public Library.
73. Conversation with Sue Straub.
74. Conversation with Harriet McMillan.
75. Schmid, pp. 39, 44.
76. Vogt, p. 14.

77. Conversation with J. Marshall Magner.
78. Conversation with Donna Kassebaum at The Station.
79. Conversation with secretary at Reliable Life Insurance Company.
80. Conversation with Warren Druschky's secretary at Webster Groves Trust Co.
81. Conversation with Joe Morrison, City Manager.
82. Conversation with Roy Gleason at Webster Records.
83. Webster Groves Ordinance 7274.
84. Team Four; Old Webster Redevelopment Plan; 1984.
85. "Properties on the National Register of Historic Places"; 1984; provided by the Missouri State Division of Parks and Historic Preservation

Statement of Significance

The Old Webster Historic District has significance to the City of Webster Groves because it is associated with events which have contributed to the broad patterns of the city's history. The district, when considered as a whole, is significant architecturally because its buildings embody distinctive characteristics of styles and periods of architecture typical of modest commercial structures built from 1880 to 1930. The area is a valuable window into the past, into a small Midwestern suburb developing along commuter lines at the beginning of the century; except for two modern banks, the district (and much of Webster Groves) was completely built up by the time of the Great Depression and has maintained its historic integrity ever since.

The Old Webster Historic District was the beginning of Webster Groves, the original intersection. In 1853, the Missouri Pacific Railroad influenced the location of the Webster College for Boys and the college influenced the name and location of the Webster Station. The Webster Station made the area ideal for commuters and inspired John Marshall to lay out the Webster Groves Subdivision in 1859, in lots small enough to be economic for non-farmers. With Gore and the railroad tracks as the nucleus, a commercial district grew to be the heart of Webster Groves.

Dry goods stores and their pot-bellied stoves served as social centers. The School District of Webster Groves was established at a meeting in the old station, in 1868. Three old halls that are gone now -- Brannon's Hall, Allen's Music Hall, and Bristol Hall -- held town meetings, recitals, plays and dances. In 1896, a murder was planned at Brannon's Saloon and the Webster Barber Shop, which led residents to

embark upon the incorporation of Webster Groves.

Three of the buildings have housed the city hall and jail; the Heritage Building at 21,23 and 25 N. Gore, the Gorlock Building at 101, 105, 107, 109, 111 and 113 W. Lockwood and the present City Hall at 4 E. Lockwood. Three have housed the first professional fire department in St. Louis County: Rudolph's at 19 N. Gore, Fire House No. 1 at 130 W. Lockwood, and the City Hall at Lockwood and Elm. Three buildings were formerly residences: Blanner Electric at 134 W. Lockwood, Gerber Chapel at 23 W. Lockwood, and the Lockwood Group at 17 W. Lockwood; they reflect the former character of Lockwood Avenue as a row of fine houses. Two of the buildings in the commercial area are large Gothic Revival churches: the First Congregational Church at 10 W. Lockwood and the Webster Groves Presbyterian Church at 45 W. Lockwood; they remind us of the traditional religious influence that has always been strong in Webster Groves.

Webster Groves has often been characterized as traditional, conservative, a Republican bastion, and in 1940 that image was fulfilled when Republican Forrest Donnell, a lawyer from Webster Groves, was elected governor of the state of Missouri and Wendell Willkie, the Republican candidate for president, gave a campaign speech at the station in the heart of Webster Groves.

The Old Webster Historic District reflects not just the history of Webster Groves but the history of all of St. Louis County. The County developed as suburban residential commuter communities first along railroad tracks, then along streetcar lines, and finally automobiles and highways made all of St. Louis County available for commuter communities. Old Webster reflects those first and second phases of

development in St. Louis County along railroad tracks and trolley lines.

The buildings which make up the Old Webster Historic District today reflect not the earliest Webster Groves hamlet whose buildings were frame and board-and-batten, but the prosperous, formative years of 1880 to 1930. The variety of architectural styles and vernacular buildings with classical details gives a glimpse of the commercial and institutional aspirations of the small suburban community. There are three Italianate buildings with carved brackets under their eaves and two rows of Italianate cast iron front buildings from the 1880's and 1900. The Gorlock Building, the largest commercial building and the cornerstone of Old Webster, is a surprising example of Beaux Arts Classicism by the prominent architectural firm of Klipstein and Rathmann and has been restored to reflect that grandiose style. The Lockwood Building is a flowery combination of Jacobethan and Art Deco architecture. And the Queen Anne station, the Gothic Revival churches, and samples of Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Federal Revival, Georgian Revival, Greek Revival, Spanish Colonial, Tapestry Brick, Art Deco and vernacular architecture make Old Webster a treasury of vanishing art forms of a variety, a diversity, only found in an area which has developed gradually over time.

Non-contributing Structures

There are five non-contributing structures in the Old Webster Historic District:

Fina International Auto Center, 134 E. Lockwood, a large gas station, built in 1929.

The Chapman Building, 20 W. Lockwood, a small, inconspicuous one-story brick office building, built in 1965.

Charterbank of Webster Groves, 75 W. Lockwood, a two-story building which was enlarged and a modern facade added in 1966.

Farm and Home Savings and Loan, 110 W. Lockwood, a two-story building of reflective glass, built in 1972.

Gillum Polk Associates, 144 W. Lockwood, a one-story brick and glass rectangle, built in 1959, with a large two-story addition, put on in 1982.

There are 49 buildings in the Old Webster Historic District, so 10.2% are non-contributing. Rolling Ridge Nursery, 60 N. Gore, has two temporary greenhouses on its property which are not included in the county of buildings.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Old Webster Historic District follow the property lines of buildings facing on North Gore Avenue and on East and West Lockwood Avenue. The boundaries of the Old Webster Historic District have been drawn to include not the entire commercial area but only the center core of buildings and a noncontiguous group of buildings on Lockwood at Plant which represent the historic and architectural essence of Old Webster. The Old Webster Historic District includes the oldest buildings clustering around the railroad tracks, the more impressive buildings on Lockwood and the little group of buildings at Plant Avenue which have an old vernacular charm typical of the 1920's and Webster Groves. The boundaries were drawn to exclude newer buildings and those which have been altered beyond recognition, most of which occur on the north side of Lockwood and at the edges of the commercial area. The Carriage Trade auto repair shop at 50 N. Gore on the east side of Gore next to the railroad tracks was excluded from the district because it is a low modern building set back from the street far enough to be visually not part of the district.

The boundaries of the Old Webster Historic District define the heart of Old Webster, those buildings which must be preserved as the essence of this early commuter town.

The Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority has design guidelines which will apply to any buildings within the commercial area using tax abatement or low interest municipal bonds to finance major changes. Those guidelines are similar to the Webster Groves Historic Preservation Commission's Guidelines for Preservation for the Old Webster Historic District. The buildings within the Old Webster Historic District are those which the Commission feels are so important

that they must follow guidelines for preservation for any material change to the exterior, no matter how those changes are financed.