



September 29, 1988

FINAL REPORT - CHOUTEAU'S LANDING SURVEY

OBJECTIVES

The St. Louis riverfront, site of the earliest commercial activity in the city, has long been a vital part of the city's economic health. Businesses and industries have lined the St. Louis wharf since the city's inception; although the nature of some of these companies has changed over the years, the riverfront industrial strips remain important connecting links in both the city's history and its industrial life. One of these strips, dubbed "Chouteau's Landing," is the basis of this survey. Located along the river south of Poplar Street, the area (like "Laclede's Landing," north of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial) was named in the twentieth century for the city's founding Laclede/Chouteau family. This area, while at an early stage having residential buildings mixed with commercial, is primarily commercial/industrial and boasts a diverse range of building styles and ages. Always an excellent area geographically for transportation of goods, Chouteau's Landing is a good example of the continued adaptation of an area to current needs. The objectives of this survey were to identify those buildings in the survey area built prior to 1938 and which appear to maintain their integrity, and to evaluate them as to their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

AREA SURVEYED

The survey area (as delineated on the accompanying map) is as follows: beginning at the point of intersection of the south line of the Poplar Street Bridge/Highway I40-64 and the east line of Leonore K. Sullivan Boulevard (Wharf), running west along the south line of Highway I40-64 to its point of intersection with the east line of South Seventh Street; then south along South Seventh Street to its point of intersection with the north line of Highway I55; running northeasterly along Highway I55 to a point approximately in the center of City Block 73; then running southeasterly along an extension of the north line of Lasalle Street to its point of intersection with the east line of South First (Main) Street; then southwardly to its point of intersection with the north line of Convent Street; then eastwardly along Convent Street to the river. The area, originally extending a bit farther to the north, was truncated by the construction of the Poplar Street Bridge/Highway I40-64 and the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial area. The character of the area changes west of South Seventh Street and includes extensive redevelopment. To the south, the inaccessible Nooter company compound and Highway I55 provide a hard edge for the survey area. The survey area is approximately 110 square acres.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS USED

The methods used in this study began with an elemental foot survey, noting any demolitions, new construction, changes in existing buildings, obvious boundaries, etc. The archives at City Hall, Market and Tucker Streets, were then consulted to obtain information available on building permits. The permits are arranged by city block

number, more or less chronologically. As with any building permit search in St. Louis involving early buildings, the problem arises wherein the permit lists only the street name and the side of the street the building was to be built on. This problem can sometimes be resolved by the use of city directories or other archival information in which the owner's name can be matched with a known location. More often than not, however, there is simply no positive way to match such a permit with an existing building. Every effort was made to get an exact date for every building surveyed. Two sources most often used in this effort were the 1875 hand-drawn perspective view of St. Louis by Compton & Dry, of which a copy for the survey area is included in this report; and the 1883 map of St. Louis by Hopkins, which shows the outline of each structure and often gives its name - a copy of which is also included (the xerographic quality of it is not the best, a factor not in the hands of this surveyor). By comparing the existing buildings in the survey area with these two sources and with building permits, a large percentage of the buildings were reliably dated with a specific year. Those that eluded a definite date were assigned circa dates based on their appearance on the maps, their physical aspect, and their comparison with similar St. Louis buildings with known dates. The deductive process of dating these buildings is generally described at length on the survey sheets under Item #43. It should be noted for the record that the building permits in this area proved to be unusually poor, with permits for all or most of several blocks simply missing from the archives; additionally, when the original permits were microfilmed, an unusually large number of them were overlapped, leaving the researcher with the very frustrating experience of knowing that a permit was there, almost within grasp, yet of no value whatsoever. The originals of the permits are in storage and not available to researchers, unfortunately.

In addition to the permits, the Building & Zoning Department of the city instituted the need for a building certificate at some point in time. Some buildings have both permits and certificates, some have only one and some, of course, have neither. Even all buildings of the same time frame may not have a corresponding certificate, so even this backup source sometimes fails the researcher. However, in several instances, buildings in the survey area were dated using the certificates, which do not list the architect or the cost of the building. When the date was pinpointed by certificate, it is so noted on the survey sheet.

With a certificate or building permit date, research was then taken to the Main St. Louis Public Library, where the Daily Record is available on microfilm. The Daily Record, still in continuous publication, began in St. Louis in the Fall of 1890. It lists every legal transaction in the city, including building permits. The building permits as available to the public today are really copies made by WPA workers during the 1930s; they did not often record the architects, contractors, size or other vital information about a building. That information is, however, recorded in the Daily Record. The information process using building permits and certificates is, then, a two- (or more) step procedure. Using these sources, a date and other available information was secured for every possible building in the survey area.

Once again in the field, a photograph was taken of every building not obviously new or completely devoid of integrity. At the same time, the information gleaned as described above was consulted to check for accuracy.

Buildings were next assigned survey numbers, beginning in the northwest corner of the map and moving the length of each north-south street, block by block. Two things are important to note here: first, those buildings and parts of buildings with asterisks are either newer than 1938, or are lacking in integrity in the researcher's estimation;

this should be differentiated from the "non-contributing" status often seen in National Register districts. Second, some buildings were built in stages; to facilitate the reader's ease of understanding, these are given the subdivisions of A, B, C, etc. under a single survey number (e.g., 54a, 54b). They are described on separate sheets for the most part, to enable the reader better to focus on the individual parts. Thus, although there are 57 survey numbers, there are in reality several more buildings with sheets.

Once the basic data and photographs were done for the buildings, an attempt was made as far as possible to trace the history of the building. Because these were and are commercial buildings, the business sections of the city directories were often consulted. Reverse city directories, those that list the streets and the occupants of each address, proved to be very valuable. Unfortunately, they begin in 1909, leaving a large early gap in the history of some buildings. Where possible, a name found in the early reverse directories is traced backwards through the regular directories, sometimes proving fruitful. More often, though, the thread is lost because of the very rapid turnover of tenancy found in this area. Another map, the Whipple Insurance map, was useful at this point. Originally published in 1897, the map copy we were able to locate was updated at some unspecified time; from our best estimates, the updates took place from about 1902 to 1909 or possibly as late as 1910. Names often appear on the Whipple map, along with building story heights and other structural information, all helpful in this research. A copy of the Whipple map is not included because it is available only on microfilm at a very large scale; a map of this area, when pieced together, is some ten feet by six feet. A reduced version was unobtainable. The Whipple was especially good when used in conjunction with the Sanborn map, the map from which our base map was drawn. The Sanborn shows building materials, unusual structural details (skylights, etc.), height, and sometimes gives a building date (this was the only clue to building dates in at least one instance in this survey). The copy of the Sanborn we worked with was updated around 1960, using new information printed on paper and pasted over the old. This is referred to occasionally on some of the sheets as a "paste-over," and it was sometimes possible to remove the pasteovers to check the building histories underneath ("Was this an old building that was sheathed, or was it all new? Could this have been taller/bigger/shorter/smaller before?" etc.).

Throughout this project, every effort was exerted to relate the research process and information thus procured in a logical and chronological manner. Each sheet was prepared with that goal in mind, in order that the reader can more easily draw logical conclusions from the information given.

RESULTS

The area of Chouteau's Landing is located between the original downtown commercial hub and the Soulard neighborhood to the immediate south. It appears to be typical of the commercial/industrial neighborhoods running the approximately twenty miles of St. Louis' shoreline, although it does boast a longer history than that of the areas at the points farthest north and south. Geographically, the area was at the right place at the right time for rapid early development. A riverfront location was paramount, of course, to shipping during the era when overland travel was difficult or impossible; the Mississippi River was the key to the early success of the town, and Chouteau's Landing played its part in this success. Later, when rail transport became the critical factor in the continuation of commercial prosperity, the important Iron Mountain Railroad had tracks and a depot at the levee of Chouteau's Landing, assuring merchants of

reduced drayage costs and rapid turnover of goods. Additional railroads have serviced the area over the years, providing continued attraction for prospective business and industry.

That the character of land use in this area has not changed a great deal in over one hundred years becomes clear with a comparative study of maps of the area. The 1875 Compton & Dry perspective drawing gives an especially dramatic view of the town (note that Mulberry Street is now Gratiot and Sycamore and Labadie are now Lasalle). While there were a number of private residences in the survey area that year (most notably in City Block 49, bound by Second, Chouteau, Third and Lombard), the majority of the buildings were in commercial use, with most residents living in second-floor or rear (often flounder, such as still found today in City Blocks 76 and 160) quarters, frequently above or behind their own businesses. A wide range of enterprises can be seen (albeit more clearly on the original, where the numbers on the buildings are more legible), including several flour mills, two distilleries, salt and other warehouses, and at least two pork packers, among many others. The area was densely built up for the most part, the open spaces visible in the drawing usually being associated with the attached business such as the stockyard in City Block 48.

The extent of early flour milling in the survey area is significant in the commercial history of the city. Because of St. Louis' central location and river access, grain was readily shipped to the city for processing. There were fourteen mills in the city in 1847, twenty-two in 1850, and twenty-seven in 1872,¹ several of the largest being located within the survey area. In particular, these were the Pacific Mill at Third and Cedar, the Atlantic (later Regina) Mills at Main and Plum, the Saxony Mills on Lombard (all razed), and the George Plant Milling Co. at First (Main) and Chouteau, which was rebuilt at least twice, of which the buildings remain in City Block 44E. Of the Plant Mill it was said in 1902 that it was "now much the largest mill here ..."² Flour milling was so important, in fact, that the Millers' Exchange was established in 1849 several blocks to the north at Main and Locust. The Exchange provided a special meeting and exhibit hall for grain merchants, steamboat captains hauling grain, millers and grain farmers and was separate from the more general Merchant's Exchange. The Millers' Exchange was the first grain exchange in the country.³ The fact that so many mills were located in the small area surveyed was attributed by Kargau in 1902 to the location, saying of the Regina Mills,

"...the location of this mill affords better transportation facilities for the incoming grain and the outgoing flour, than any other mill in the city possesses, its nearness to the river is likewise an important factor in the saving of freight expenses, all of which is of benefit to the purchasers of its product."⁴

Indeed, the mill was, like that of Plant, located on the Iron Mountain Railroad tracks (the railroad's depot is visible in City Block 853 on the Compton & Dry map) and near the Missouri Pacific line, which had rails down Poplar Street to the levee where it joined with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern, providing an important link with the big freightyards between Poplar and Cerre Streets just west of South Seventh Street.

The Iron Mountain Railroad was originally constructed from St. Louis to Pilot Knob, Missouri in 1853-57, largely through the efforts of James Henry Morley. Its original charter was granted by the State Legislature in 1851 for the purpose of connecting St.

Louis with the iron deposits of Iron Mountain in St. Francois County or Pilot Knob in Madison County. The eighty-five miles of railroad were opened for business in May of 1858. In 1874, the consolidation of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railway Company; the Arkansas Branch of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railway Company; the Cairo, Arkansas & Texas Railroad Company; and the Cairo and Fulton Railroad Company formed the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway Company. One of the chief services performed by the company was that it provided a connection with virtually all other railroads coming into St. Louis.

By 1883 when the Hopkins map was published, the importance of rail lines in the area had clearly increased. The St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad had expanded both in track mileage and its depot facilities along the levee at Chouteau's Landing. The railroad now ran tracks west from the river to warehouses and to a smaller depot in City Block 74. This innovation of taking the tracks up to (and sometimes into) manufacturing complexes is still in use today; City Block 42 is one prime example in which the tracks can be seen surviving up to the building in 1883 and into the building in 1988. As Kargau pointed out, cutting excess shipping costs benefits both the buyer and the seller.

River shipping was still a vital element in the location of business in St. Louis in 1883, but rail lines were fast becoming all-important. The Merchant's Railroad Bridge, begun in 1887 and finished in 1889, was a contributing factor in the transition. The members of the Merchant's Exchange had formed the St. Louis Merchant's Bridge Co. and the St. Louis Merchant's Terminal Co. by the mid-1880s in order to spearhead the building of a second bridge across the Mississippi. Railroad magnate Jay Gould had for some time monopolized the Eads Bridge and most of the railroads serving the city; St. Louis businessmen were anxious to free themselves from what was beginning to be regarded as something of a tyranny.⁵ With the construction of the bridge and its elevated approach tracks (right through the middle of the survey area - visible in several photos), local people hoped to attract investors in what was a dream for years to link St. Louis to the Pacific coast by a direct transcontinental railroad. The financial Panic of 1893 caused bridge investors to cut their losses and sell the bridge to the existing terminal monopoly; their original intentions for the bridge as a great connecting link went by the wayside amid what was regarded as a great scandal at the time.⁶ The tracks and bridge today, although appearing to be somewhat deteriorated (to say nothing of their detracting to the landscape), are heavily used. Their construction caused some demolition and some alterations to buildings in their path, and these are so noted on the survey sheets.

The Whipple Insurance maps from around the turn of the century indicate a trend that was beginning to take shape - that of larger buildings taking over much of whole city blocks. This was primarily true of the row of blocks nearest the river, which naturally offered the best transportation access for large manufacturing businesses. Smaller buildings and smaller operations remained as they had been on the streets farther away from the river and railroad tracks and depots. As these businesses are traced through the years by the use of city directories, it becomes apparent that a very rapid business turnover rate was the norm in this area. The various histories as given on the survey sheets show this tendency quite clearly. There are many reasons for this to be the case. The primary reason is that small, family-owned concerns usually have a definite lifespan. Drygoods and grocery stores are good examples of this type of operation, in which a sole owner runs the business for the duration of his productive

adult life and then goes out of business upon retirement. The stores along South Fourth Street, especially in City Block 76, are good examples of this type of business. The owner usually lived above or behind the store, which was a small operation. Financial setbacks were often the cause of small businesses selling out; these could be associated with widespread financial failure, such as the Panic of 1893 or the Depression of the 1930s, or they could be simple failure on the part of the businessman. Floods in 1872 and 1885 were particularly devastating, as was the tornado of 1896, and fires also took their toll, especially among the mills. The nature of business in the area gradually changed between 1883 and 1902-09 as well, and drygoodsmen and grocers found themselves with such a reduced clientele that they were forced to go out of business or move elsewhere. Some of this movement was summed up in 1902:

"One of the principal reasons for the removal of the [Merchant's] Exchange [in 1875] from Main to Third Street was the continued wane of the river traffic and the general exodus of business from the neighborhood of the Levee. The westward march of trade began when the wholesale firms (mostly in the drygoods, clothing and hat and cap line) left Main for Fifth Street and afterwards for Washington Avenue; Fourth Street was deserted by the wholesale millinery and the retail drygoods houses, which also went further west ..."⁷

While the area referred to primarily was a few blocks to the north, the same situation existed on a less dramatic scale in the Chouteau's Landing area. After the turn of the century, very few people were actually living in the survey area. New owners of buildings, like that at 740 South Fourth or, later, 908 South Seventh, were more apt to be service-oriented rather than in sales. Large businesses, like Crunden-Martin and Glidden (City Blocks 42 and 43) set up longtime operations in manufacturing and wholesaling; because these types of commerce do not deal with the public they, like Gunther Salt (City Block 44E & W) and G. S. Robins (City Block 45), don't have to consider things like the customer parking or the aesthetics of the landscaping of the building.

In fact, few frills are in evidence on the buildings in this survey. Today, the area is bustling with truck and rail traffic and few buildings appear to have remained long vacant. Medium and small industry alike seem to be doing well in what is probably one of the few areas of the city that has retained its original type of land use virtually since the onset of white settlement.

Architecture

The architecture of the survey area varies widely both in age and in style, ranging from c. 1870 store/residences in City Block 76 to a tiny 1920s diner in City Block 155 to the elegantly designed buildings of the Crunden-Martin complex in City Blocks 42 and 51. If there is one link to be found throughout the survey area architecturally, it is utilitarianism. Most of the buildings belie their industrial function in some way, particularly the later buildings. The buildings constructed before about 1905 (especially those of the Robins complex in City Block 45, the aforementioned Crunden-Martin complex and those buildings in City Block 41, with their fanciful brickwork) tend to have a character and style uniquely their own, apart from their primary function. The 1916 Powell building in City Block 52 fails to carry the air of grace that can be found in the factory building (#50) in City Block 43. The straight functionalism of #37 in City Block 50, for example, is no comparison for the Romanesque arches - even in their altered state - of building #20 in City Block 161.

It is interesting to note that there are few detached buildings in this area built after 1938; the main exceptions are the fast-food places and filling stations of the Broadway/South Fourth Street strip. Owners, perhaps mindful of costs, chose rather to make new additions to or drastically alter existing buildings for the most part. The type of total redevelopment that has occurred in the area immediately west of Chouteau's Landing has not happened in this area, although a large number of buildings were removed for the highway system during the 1960s and 1970s. The highways and elevated railroad tracks are in fact the major distraction to the architecture of this area.

Chouteau's Landing is Phase I of several industrial districts that are in the process of being identified in a multipart program. Similar areas appear to exist along much of the city's waterfront and in western pockets near the freightyards. The nearest counterpart to Chouteau's Landing is located along the river on the city's near north side. Until the other phases of this survey are completed, we do not yet have enough context to identify potential National Register nominees. With the completion of the other industrial survey areas, a much better vantage point will be gained for making a judgement on the eligibility of these buildings based on their thematic merit.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Ernest D. Kargau, Mercantile, Industrial and Professional St. Louis (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., [1902-03]), p. 101.

² Ibid., p. 100.

³ Ibid., p. 93.

⁴ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵ Alexander Scot McConachie, The "Big Cinch:" A Business Elite in the Life of a City, Saint Louis, 1895-1915 (PhD dissertation, Washington University, 1976), p. 107-109.

⁶ Ibid., p. 110-111.

⁷ Kargau, p. 35.

Chouteau's Landing Survey - Key to Photographs (57 sites; 68 photos)

All photos taken August-September 1988 by Cynthia H. Longwisch; negatives in possession of Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. 917 Locust, St. Louis, MO 63101.

1. 612 South Seventh Street
camera facing southeast
2. 615 South Sixth Street
camera facing northwest
3. 734-40 South Seventh Street
camera facing northeast
4. 908 South Seventh Street
camera facing east/northeast
5. 609-615 Chouteau
camera facing northwest
6. 601 Chouteau/915 South Sixth Street
camera facing northwest
7. 1150 South Seventh Street
camera facing east
8. 1200 South Seventh/620-26 Hickory
camera facing southeast
9. 1201 South Sixth Street
camera facing southwest
10. 1144-50 South Sixth Street
camera facing northeast
11. 1128-32 South Sixth Street
camera facing northeast
12. 1120-26 South Sixth Street
camera facing northeast
13. 1100-16 S. Sixth/518-24 Lasalle
camera facing northeast
- 14a. 510 Lasalle
camera facing southeast
- 14b. 500-06 Lasalle
camera facing southwest
15. 1125-27 South Broadway
camera facing southwest
16. 1129 South Broadway
camera facing southwest
17. 1131 South Broadway
camera facing southwest
18. 710-12 South Sixth Street
camera facing northeast
19. 700-08 South Sixth/520-24 Cerre
camera facing northeast
20. 514-16 Cerre
camera facing southwest
21. 701 South Broadway
camera facing southwest
22. 700 South Broadway
camera facing southeast
23. 736 South Broadway
camera facing southeast
24. 918 South Fourth Street (right)
camera facing southeast
25. 916 South Fourth Street (left)
camera facing southeast
26. 904-08 South Fourth Street
camera facing northeast
27. 900 South Fourth Street
camera facing southeast
28. 818-22 South Fourth/331 Lombard St.
camera facing northeast
29. 317-21 Lombard Street
camera facing northwest
- 30a.& b, same photo
758 South Fourth Street (right)
756 South Fourth Street (left)
camera facing east
31. 754 South Fourth Street
camera facing east
32. 746-48 South Fourth Street
camera facing northeast
33. 742 South Fourth Street
camera facing east
34. 740 South Fourth Street
camera facing southeast

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| 35. 730-34 South Third/217 Cedar
camera facing northwest | 49b. 101-07 Chouteau (center)
camera facing northwest |
| 36. 753-65 S. Second/210-13 Gratiot
camera facing northwest | 49c. rear, 101-07 Chouteau (left)
camera facing southwest |
| 37. 800 South Third Street
camera facing southeast | 50. 820-26 S. Second/145 Lombard
camera facing northeast |
| 38. 823-29 South Second Street
camera facing northwest | 51. 114-20 Gratiot
camera facing southeast |
| 39. 222-28 Lombard
camera facing southeast | 52. 100-110 Gratiot/803 S. First (Main)
camera facing southwest |
| 40. 905 South Second Street
camera facing southwest | 53. 825 South First (Main)
camera facing northwest |
| 41. 205-09 Chouteau
camera facing northwest | 54a. 764 South Second/125 Gratiot
camera facing northeast |
| 42. 219-21 Chouteau
camera facing northwest | 54b. 122-30 Cedar
camera facing southeast |
| 43. 200-02 Chouteau
camera facing southwest | 54c. 108-20 Cedar
camera facing south |
| 44a. 146 Chouteau/1000-12 S. Second St.
camera facing southeast | 54d. 104 Cedar
camera facing southeast |
| 44b. 100-126 Chouteau
camera facing southeast | 54e. 100-02 Cedar (behind elevated tracks)
camera facing southwest |
| 44c. 100 Chouteau
camera facing southwest | 54f. 101-11 Gratiot
camera facing northwest |
| 45a. 137-45 Chouteau
camera facing northeast | 55a & b, same photo camera facing n.w.
731 South First (Main) (left)
721-29 South First (Main) (right) |
| 45b. 916-18 South Second Street
camera facing southeast | 56a & b, same photo camera facing s.w.
717-19 South First (Main) (left)
711-15 South First (Main) (right) |
| 46. 900 South Second Street
camera facing southeast | 57. 1151 South Wharf/1-15 Convent
camera facing northwest |
| 47. 912-16 Risley (left)
camera facing northeast | |
| 48. 119-21 Chouteau (left)
camera facing northeast | |
| 49a. 109-17 Chouteau (left)
camera facing northwest | |

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