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FINAL REPORT - NORTH BROADWAY INDUSTRIAL AREA - PHASE I

HISTORIC PRESERVATION
PROGRAM

OBJECTIVES

The growth and development of the city of St. Louis was initially dependent on the proximity of the town to the Mississippi River. Businesses, industries and some residences have lined the St. Louis wharf since the city was founded; although the exact nature of many of these interests has evolved over the years, the riverfront industrial strips remain important connecting links in both the city's colorful history and its industrial life. Although the reliance on the river has lessened somewhat as other means of transportation have become available, the riverfront districts have retained their hold on the city's economic life, contributing much to the industrial and transportation aspects of central midwestern commerce. One of these strips, here referred to as the North Broadway Industrial Area (Phase I) for lack of an historical designation, is the basis of this survey. Located along the river north of the Laclède's Landing National Register District, this area is the counterpart of the "Chouteau's Landing" strip to the south of downtown, surveyed in 1988. The North Broadway area is primarily a mix of commercial and industrial buildings in a diverse range of styles and ages; a small number of strictly residential dwellings also remains. Lying just upstream from the early commercial/industrial hub of Laclède's Landing, the North Broadway area has always been an excellent location for the transportation and manufacturing of goods. Its ongoing history exemplifies the continued adaptation of an area to meet specific needs. The objectives of this survey were to identify those buildings in the survey area built prior to 1939 (a few exceed this limit by one or two years) 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 (delineated on the accompanying map) is as follows: beginning at the point of intersection of the west bank of the Mississippi River and the north line of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, continuing westwardly to its point of intersection with the east line of North Third Street; running northwardly along Third Street to its point of intersection with the south line of Cass; then westwardly to its point of intersection with the east line of the Mark Twain Highway (I-70); running north and west along the highway line to its point of intersection with the east line of North Ninth Street; then northwardly to its point of intersection with the extension of the east line of Outer Road/Tenth Street; then northwardly to its point of intersection with the south line of Clinton; then eastwardly to its point of intersection with the river. In other words, the area is bounded by the river and the highway, from Laclède's Landing to Clinton Street. The area originally con-

tinued westwardly from the river in an uninterrupted expanse, but was truncated by the construction of the Mark Twain Highway in the 1960s and 1970s. The northern half of the area nearest the river and the southwest quadrant have experienced considerable demolition and some new construction, partly in anticipation of the St. Louis Harbor Development Project and partly in response to the revitalization of the Laclède's Landing and downtown area districts. Clinton Street, the northern boundary, was chosen as a convenient temporary survey boundary, as indicated in the appendage "Phase I" to the survey title; the industrial riverfront extends much farther up the river and is considered a likely candidate for future survey, beginning with Clinton Street in "Phase II." The area surveyed is approximately 220 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. These 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 solved by the process of elimination (the permit usually gives the number of stories and the general use of the building); city directories or other archival information in which the owner's name can be matched with a known location can also be helpful in this situation. Often, these early (pre-c. 1880) permits cannot be positively correlated to an existing building. Every effort was made to obtain an exact building date for every building surveyed; these efforts were aided by the fact that the majority of extant buildings in the survey area were built after 1885, when addresses were assigned to building permits with much greater accuracy. Two sources most often used in dating the earlier buildings in this survey were the 1875 hand-drawn perspective view of St. Louis by Compton & Dry, of which a copy for the the survey area is here provided; and the 1883 map of St. Louis by Hopkins, which shows the outline of each structure - a copy of which is also included here. The latter map was particularly helpful in this survey area. Those buildings that eluded dating by conventional and deductive means were assigned circa dates based on comparison with similar, dated, buildings nearby, their physical aspect, and/or their appearance on the early map(s). The deductive process of dating these particular buildings is generally described at length on their respective survey sheets under Item #43. The quality of the building permits for this area was about average for St. Louis (but much better than those for the Chouteau's Landing survey); some blocks were poorly recorded while others appeared to be fairly complete. Some missing permits and informational gaps or conflicting information are always to be expected.

With the building permit information in hand, research was then taken to the Main St. Louis Public Library, where the St. Louis Daily Record is available on microfilm. The Daily Record, still in continuous publication, began in St. Louis in October, 1890. It lists every legal transaction in the city, including building and demolition permits. The building permits as available to the public today are really typed copies made by the WPA during the 1930s and later microfilmed; they did not often record architects, contractors, size or other vital information about a building. Additionally, the transcription process from hand-written originals was often faulty. The complete building permit information is recorded in the Daily Record. Occasionally, entries

for permits cannot be located in the Daily Record (usually due to a mistyped date on the permit); thus, sometimes even relatively recent permits have no verifiable architects or builders. From time to time, even a seemingly complete Daily Record entry fails to list an architect or builder; this is probably due to the rather large number of owner-built buildings particularly common around the turn of the century.

Returning to the field, a photograph was taken of every building not obviously new or completely devoid of integrity. This last assessment was somewhat loosely interpreted for this survey because of the likelihood of imminent development and loss of many buildings that might not be otherwise recorded. During this phase of the survey, the information gleaned as described above was consulted to check for accuracy.

Buildings were next assigned survey numbers, beginning in the southeast quadrant and moving north using an east-to-west, block-by-block pattern. Those buildings on the map designated with an asterisk are either newer than 1939-41, or are devoid of integrity in the researcher's estimation; this should not be confused with the "non-contributing" status often seen in National Register district nominations. The problem of multiple buildings that presently form a single building or complex of buildings was met by assigning each separate unit its own survey number in cases where the researcher felt that they were originally disparate units. The use of A, B, C, etc. to designate the various units as used in the Chouteau's Landing survey was deemed too confusing. Additions to buildings are mentioned within the discussions in Items #42 and 43 as appropriate. The survey yielded a total of 123 numbered properties.

Once the basic data and photographs were done for the buildings, an attempt was made to locate information about the original company or individual owner as well as a rough history of the use of the building. The business sections of city directories, including helpful advertisements, and city histories of several types were consulted in this phase of the research. It was discovered that the majority of the businesses received no mention in the city histories; many of these required payment to be mentioned and others only listed businesses run by social-register types, so it is not unusual that small companies run by average citizens might not make it to the published histories for posterity. The reverse city directories, no longer as accessible as they once were, proved of limited use in this survey at any rate. They begin in 1909, and to track ownership prior to that it is sometimes possible to pick up a name in 1909 and backtrack using standard directories. Because of the extremely rapid rate of ownership turnover, leads are usually lost in a year or two. Another map, the Whipple Insurance map, was originally published in 1897 and updated after the turn of the century; it proved most helpful in earlier surveys but was unavailable to us during most of the research period due to the interpretation of copyright law by the Comptroller's Office in City Hall, keeper of the map. The base map provided here was drawn from a Sanborn Insurance map. The Sanborn shows building materials, unusual structural details, height, and sometimes gives a building date. The copy of the Sanborn we worked with was updated around 1960, using new information printed on paper and pasted over the old; it is often possible to remove pasteovers to obtain original information.

RESULTS

(Note: The survey area encompasses many of the sites of the original Indian mounds for which St. Louis was nicknamed "Mound City." The most in-depth survey of these sites to date was conducted by Michael J. McNerney et al for the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers. His report can be found in the St. Louis District Cultural Resource Management Report No. 31, published by the Corps in February 1987.)

Immediately adjoining the Laclede's Landing district on the north, the North Broadway Industrial Area really marks the beginning of a virtually unbroken strip of industrial development extending upriver to the city limits at Riverview and beyond. While similar in composition to its southern counterpart, Chouteau's Landing, the North Broadway area has experienced a somewhat higher demolition/rebuild rate than either Chouteau's or Laclede's Landing. The industrial/commercial/residential/transportation mix appears to be fairly typical of the riverfront neighborhoods running the approximately twenty miles of St. Louis' shoreline. It is to be expected that the farther out from the core area of the immediate downtown vicinity, the generally newer the construction, since the paths of development - although somewhat scattered - basically moved both north and south out from the original settlement. The dense settlement pattern along the river is especially well-illustrated by the Compton & Dry views of the city, done at a time when railroads were coming into their own but while land travel was still basically slow and difficult and riverboats provided a strategic link in moving goods and people. The early industries and businesses in the North Broadway area played a key role in helping St. Louis become the third most productive manufacturing city in the United States by 1870.¹ Later, as railroads supplanted much of the river traffic in shipping goods, this area became threaded with rail lines, many of which provided private spurs directly to loading docks; many of these are still visible today and can be seen on the map, although most are no longer still in use (see City Blocks #690, 689, 248, 236, 322, 320, 319, 294 & 295 for private spurs). The freight depot of the St. Louis Southwestern Railway (sheet #24) and other depot locations helped make this area a hub of rail lines; much of First (Main) Street and North Levee are today virtually impassible by automobile because of the multitude of tracks. Merchants came to rely heavily on these lines to reduce drayage costs and provide a rapid turnover of stock; a large number of the buildings built during the decades around 1900 were warehouses, supplanting many of the industrial concerns that had originally located in the area. The concentration of warehouses in the survey area today is doubtless one of the highest in the city. Large trucks provide the primary means of shipping for most of these warehouses today.

Occupation rates and the character of land use in the North Broadway area have changed with the years; today, the density of the area is probably at an all-time low since the early part of the nineteenth century. The Compton & Dry plates for the neighborhood show us a densely-packed area of businesses and residences west of North Second Street, with the strip between North Second and the river almost exclusively industrial/commercial. This general division still applies; the biggest difference, in addition to the lack of density, is the fewer number of residences throughout; less than fifteen residence-only buildings remain in the survey area. (It should be noted that First Street was Main, Dickson was Bates, Tyler was Webster, Lewis was Ashley, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was Franklin, Cole was Wash, and Leonor K. Sullivan Blvd. was part of North Levee.) Many of the original multi-story commercial buildings west of North Second also provided family housing in the upper stories, but few of these are left. As these buildings were replaced, beginning largely around 1890, the functions of the replacement buildings allowed less and less for private residential use. This was a gradual phasing out, rather than an abrupt movement, as can be seen by scanning the dates of the buildings in the western half of the survey area. This coincides with the westward citywide movement of residences as people

sought the cooler and cleaner suburban areas ringing the city in the vicinity of the city limits. It is interesting to note that in 1875, a huge, four-story building known as the Whittier Tenement Building, was located on the east side of Broadway between O'Fallon and Ashley (Lewis). It is supposed that this building provided housing for some of the many workers that were required to keep the river-side factories in operation (it has been razed).

Like the residential move westward, small businessmen, particularly those in businesses tied directly to the individual consumer (groceries, pharmacies, dry-goods stores, etc.) gradually began to move out of the area as their clientele left. Fires and floods were particularly hazardous in this area; high-water marks can still be seen on buildings and city records for the area are rife with permits to repair fire damage. Fire was particularly likely to break out in the years when foundries and factories all depended on coke- and coal-fired furnaces and boilers to produce heat and steam and small independent fire department companies were unable to quell large blazes - especially in the more densely-built places. These hazards, natural attrition, financial failure, reduced clientele - all these served to cause a gradual decrease in the non-industrial businesses of the area, those nearer the river leaving the earliest. A similar movement was happening in the Chouteau's and Laclede's Landing areas, summed up in 1902:

One of the principal reasons for the removal of the [Merchants] 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 lines) left Main for Fifth Street and afterwards for Washington Avenue; Fourth Street was deserted by the wholesale millinery and retail drygoods houses, which also went further west ...²

Fortunately for this area, a great diversification of enterprises was located here from the outset, so that the loss of any one type of business was not catastrophic. A quick glance at the Compton & Dry plates reveals the wide variety of commerce and industry that could be found here: a broom factory, several iron works and foundries, a quarry, a lumber yard, a number of mills of different types, warehouses, and manufacturing plants of many kinds. Local dry goods and clothing businesses and at least two public markets provided services for those living in the vicinity. The entrepreneurial specialization that has come to characterize many cities (the garment district, the wholesale district, etc.) appears to have basically begun in St. Louis when the westward shift began, allowing owners to choose their locations with care rather than accepting the haphazard growth patterns of the city and its resultant mix of businesses. A small bit of the clustering effect that was to come can be glimpsed in the North Broadway area, especially in the locations of foundries and iron works (in the Broadway & Collins area were the Sligo Iron Store, the Fulton Iron Works, the Rohan Boiler Works and the Broadway Foundry, to name a few.).

Although the primary continuity in the North Broadway area of one hundred years ago and that of today lies in generalities, some specifics have been carried on. One of these is the ice/refrigeration business. The Compton & Dry plates show the Mississippi Ice Company and the Huse, Loomis & Co. Ice Houses located in adjoining lots on North Levee at about Cass. These were originally located near the river to take advantage of ice harvesting. Nearby locations were the sites of the St. Louis Cold Storage Company's buildings after the turn of the century; later, Fresh, Inc. took advantage of the thick-walled buildings in their refrigeration business. The

Laclede Gas Light Co. already had a power plant on the river in 1875 (now razed; site of the 1935 Laclede Power Plant, sheet #53). It is interesting to note that the Union Electric Power Plant (now Thermal Resources Power Plant, sheet #19) is the second monumental building on its site to be built directly on the river.

As the importance and extent of railroads grew, the railroads vied for routes into lucrative areas. St. Louis was recognized as a crossroads in this regard and was the cause of much maneuvering by both railroads and merchants' associations to receive the coveted rights-of-way. The riverfront was naturally very attractive, being both a break-in-bulk point and a dense manufacturing area - heavy users of coal; in 1903, fourteen different railroads were bringing coal in from across the river.³ The first rail line into the North Broadway area was the St. Louis, Kansas City & Northern Railway, which had its tracks east of First (Main), near the river. One of their early depots was located on the southwest corner of Biddle and North Levee (razed); the Chicago & Alton Railway shared their tracks and had their own freight depot at the south end of the block. The St. Louis, Kansas City & Northern was known as the North Missouri until 1871⁴ and ran from St. Louis to Ottumwa, Iowa with a branch to Kansas City. After that year, new management reorganized the railroad, building an iron bridge across the Missouri at St. Charles and laying track at a rapid pace. Their new cars, it was said, went "bowling over the smooth steel rails with an ease which can only be likened to a ride on scudding banks of clouds."⁵ (This company later merged with others to become the Wabash line west of the river) The growth of this company mirrored that of a number of fledgling railroads; by 1894, St. Louis' new Union Station boasted the trains of twenty-two railroad companies on its tracks.⁶ The Merchants (railroad) Bridge, so important in the development of the Chouteau's Landing rail system, also impacted the North Broadway area; the tracks led from the bridge to Seventh Street to the levee and along the levee to Carr Street, continuing north along First (Main) and Hall Streets to Bremen. The Merchants Bridge also served to connect the Chicago & Alton; Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis; the Wabash; the St. Louis, Chicago & St. Paul; the Keokuk lines; and the St. Louis Transfer Railway, most of which found their way through the North Broadway area. Although the construction and subsequent sale of the bridge during the financial panic of 1893 were regarded as great folly and quite a scandal at the time, the bridge and tracks have always been put to heavy use and doubtless contributed much to propelling St. Louis to considerable financial success during the early years of this century.

Once the great number of rail lines were in place and the trend for small businesses and residences to move out of the area had taken its toll, the area east of First became more solidly industrial; the portion between First and Broadway became industrial with some commercial; and the part west of Broadway still retained some residences among commercial and light industrial concerns. The density of the built environment evidently was little changed until the rapid rise of urban renewal in the 1960s. By this time, the residences were in far-from-desirable locations; a highway was being built, truncating the neighborhood and the entire riverfront and downtown areas appeared to be blighted. The highway and its accompanying large-scale demolition had an isolating effect on the neighborhoods west of Broadway; most of the remaining residences dating from the second half of the nineteenth century were razed. As the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (Arch) and the Laclede's Landing area became national attractions, eyes were turned to the adjoining property to the north. Many condemned buildings were demolished in the southern half of the survey area during the 1970s and early 1980s, but hoped-for development of this adjoining property has been very slow - to date, only one "luxury" hotel has been built on the cleared land. Some of the older buildings were cleared in anticipation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers'

proposed St. Louis Harbor Development Project, a plan that included making the riverfront area of this survey into a pleasure marina and making the nearby streets into a tourist-oriented area of shops and restaurants. This plan was proposed some years ago and was tabled until recently due to lack of funding. According to Corps sources, the project has been brought up again in recent months. The full impact of this project has yet to be seen; however, it is very likely that much of the survey area will be targeted for major redevelopment should the project be funded. A further loss of density and character of the area would be the probably result of this plan.

ARCHITECTURE

Much like the architecture of the Chouteau's Landing survey area, that of the North Broadway Industrial area varies widely both in age and style, ranging from the c. 1870 - 1890s residential remnants in the northwest quadrant to boxlike turn-of-the-century warehouses scattered throughout the area to the imposing power plant in City Block 227 to the rhythmic facades in City Block 690. Although there are few, if any, high-style buildings in the surveyed area, there is a great diversity of styles used to distinguish what are basically utilitarian boxes. Like buildings found throughout the city, those designed prior to about 1905 tend to more often feature an attention to detail and craftsmanship, creating buildings of character and integrity seldom seen in later construction. The facade of #28 (230 Cass), the simply but elegantly designed elevations of #81-83 (1921-31 N. Broadway), the exuberance of #121 (2101 N. Second) - all bespeak another era, in which functionalism need not be ugly. The graceless lines of newer utilitarian buildings such as #12 (1130 Collins), #26 (1451 N. Second), #35 (1518-24 N. Seventh) or #45 (1545-47 N. Broadway) tend to project a harsher, colder image lacking in humanity. This is an unfortunate trend because it is the touch of the beautiful and handsome - the human touch - that enlivens the older buildings and makes them into objects of impact in the cultural landscape.

The buildings in the survey area that were built more recently than c. 1939-41 tend to be smaller buildings, often of pre-fab corrugated metal construction (Butler or Morgan buildings); many are concrete block. Those starred on the map due to a loss of integrity have been transformed almost completely, often with the extensive use of corrugated fiberglass or metal or, again, concrete block.

The North Broadway Industrial Area - Phase I is actually the second phase of several industrial districts that are in the process of being identified in a multipart program. The next logical survey area is that adjoining this survey to the north, which will be North Broadway - Phase II; Phase III is also a potential area for survey, even farther north. Other similar industrial areas exist along much of the city's riverfront to the south, as well, and in a few areas near the freightyards in the west part of the city. Until more phases of this survey are completed, we do not yet have enough context to identify potential National Register district nominees, although there would seem to be enough likely candidates. A much better assessment of the eligibility of these areas based on their thematic merit can be made upon completion of the remaining industrial survey area.

NOTES

¹Camille Dry and Richard J. Compton, Pictorial St. Louis: The Great Metropolis of the Mississippi Valley (St. Louis: n.p., 1876; reprint ed., St. Louis: Harry M. Hagen, 1971), p. 11.

²Ernest D. Kargau, Mercantile, Industrial and Professional St. Louis (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co. [1902-03] , p. 35.

³Ibid., p. 215.

⁴J.A. Dacus and James W. Buel, A Tour of St. Louis; or the Inside Life of a Great City (St. Louis: Western Publishing Company, 1878), p. 164.

⁵Ibid, p. 165.

⁶Kargau, p. 88.

PHOTOGRAPHS - NORTH BROADWAY INDUSTRIAL AREA SURVEY - PHASE I

Photographs were taken in August, 1989 by Cynthia H. Longwisch; negatives are in possession of Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 917 Locust, St. Louis, MO 63101.

All other information is on the photos.

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