

WESTMINSTER PLACE SURVEY PROJECT REPORT ST. JOSEPH, MO

Introduction

The City of St. Joseph, Missouri, completed an architectural and historical survey of the Westminster Place neighborhood in December 2001. A inventory of structures, which had begun in 1994 under the auspices of then Historic Preservation Planner Dale Nimz, was finalized this past December when the City hired two interns from Missouri Western State College – Andrea Raffurty and Geriandi Jackson – to complete the building-by-building recordation under the guidance of Gregory Sekula, Historic Preservation Planner. This is the third such project that the City has initiated in partnership with Missouri Western State College. The internship provides students with a basic understanding of architectural styles and terminology and teaches them important research skills to determine the early history of buildings and construction dates.

Survey Boundaries

The Westminster Place Subdivision encompasses a four square block area bounded by Frederick Avenue on the south, Osage Street (vacated) on the north, 24th Street on the west, and 26th Street on the east. Undeveloped land associated with Corby Parkway, part of St. Joseph's extensive Parkway System, lies to the south of the subdivision. Properties along 24th Street were excluded from the inventory due to the fact that the resources are almost exclusively ranch houses that date to the post-1950 period and do not visually relate to the majority of extant historic resources in the neighborhood. These were primarily constructed in the first three decades of the 20th century. A complete list of inventoried properties is included in this report.

Survey Objectives

This survey was designed to provide a comprehensive inventory of historically and architecturally significant structures within the project area. While the focus was on properties that met the arbitrary 50-year age criterion as set for in the National Register of Historic Places program, all properties within the project area were inventoried with the exception of the 24th Street properties. The survey will contribute to the growing database of historic properties on the local and state levels and provide important information on the story of the City's historical patterns of development. The information gathered from the survey should also aid the City and the State in assessing the National Register eligibility of the neighborhood.

Methodology

Both on-site field assessments and archival research were used to obtain information regarding the properties in the survey area. Information was gathered from the following sources:

- 1) St. Joseph, Missouri, Public Library, Main Branch. The reference room of the main branch is a repository for city directories of St. Joseph (beginning 1860), maps, atlases, county and city histories.
- 2) Sanborn Fire Insurance Rate Maps, City Hall, Department of Planning and Community Services, 1100 Frederick Avenue, St. Joseph, MO.
- 3) Building Permit Records, City Hall, Department of Planning and Community Services, 1100 Frederick Avenue, St. Joseph, MO
- 4) *Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri, 1989* (1990 and 2000 amendments), National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation forms.

Field Survey

- 1) *Photography:* At least one 5" X 7" black and white photograph of each structure was made using a 35 mm camera. Each photograph was labeled. The negatives are on file at the Department of Planning and Community Development, City Hall, St. Joseph, MO.
- 2) *Site Visit:* Several on-site analyses of architecture within the survey area were conducted in order to fully assess condition and integrity of individual structures (i.e., identification of obvious alterations and/or additions).
- 3) *Maps:* A base map was prepared for the survey area. Each structure was identified numerically. The location and orientation of each identified resource is shown on this map.
- 4) *Missouri Historic Property Inventory Form:* The form was prepared for each structure within the designated survey area. The information collected included the street address and legal description; a description of prominent architectural features with emphasis on the primary façade; a documented or estimated date of original construction; identification of obvious alterations/additions; a designation of style or design when applicable; identification of architect and/or builder, if known; and other pertinent information provided on the form.

Neighborhood Physical Description and Brief History

The neighborhood known as Westminster Place was platted in August 1904 and recorded in the Buchanan County Recorder of Deeds Office on February 4, 1905. The subdivision originally was an undeveloped tract of land that was owned by the prominent Tootle family of St. Joseph. As platted, the subdivision consists of four blocks bounded by Frederick Avenue on the south, Osage Street (vacated) on the north, 24th Street on the

west, and 26th street on the east. There are typically 24 lots per block. (The exception is Block 3 which has 25 lots.) Single lot size is approximately 50' X 127'. Many of the residential structures built in Westminster Place are located on properties that comprise more than one lot.

Stone pillars flank the south and east entrances to the subdivision at 25th Street and Frederick Avenue and 26th and Folsom Streets, respectively. 25th Street, the neighborhood's main thoroughfare, is a broad boulevard-like street with sidewalks and a wide planting strip graced with mature deciduous street trees placed at regularly spaced intervals. Houses, for the most part, maintain uniform setbacks with generous front yard setbacks. In the center of the intersection of 25th Street and Folsom Street is a circular planting island that includes a fountain with small reflecting pool. Summer plantings and benches provide further embellishment to this landscaped oasis. Property abstracts in Westminster Place indicate that property owners were to pay "10 cents per foot each year to the [Westminster Improvement] Company for maintenance, parkways, ornamentation, grounds, shrubbery, and grass parkings." At the north end of the development lies the Corby Parkway, part of St. Joseph's historic parkway system designed by George Burnap. The vacated Osage Street, the northern boundary of Westminster Place, has been replaced by a cul-de-sac at the end of 25th Street. Both 24th and 25th Streets dead-end into parkway property. The lack of resulting thru-traffic in the neighborhood creates a quiet sanctuary.

The majority of residential structures located in the Westminster Place subdivision were built as single family homes in the first three decades of the 20th century. Of the 46 houses inventoried as part of this project, only 5 houses were built during the post-World War II period. A sixth house was substantially remodeled during this period. The newest house surveyed – a ranch style home located at 1117 N. 25th Street – was constructed in 1975. Most houses represent architectural plans and revival styles popular nationally during the first quarter of the 20th century. American Foursquare and bungalow forms are common, many of which are embellished with Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Tudor Revival, and Craftsman detailing. Several houses in the neighborhood appear to have been built speculatively by the Westminster Improvement Company or individual builder/contractors. Architect-designed houses are also found in the neighborhood. The most prominent and architecturally striking residence is the 1911 Jacob Geiger house located on the east side of the entrance to Westminster Place. This individually listed National Register property, now adapted for re-use as a bank, was designed by the architectural firm of Eckel & Aldrich. The architect Edmond Eckel was responsible for the design of at least three additional residences within the subdivision, one of which was his own residence (1324 N. 25th Street). The architect Walter Boschen also completed residential commissions on the street, including his own residence at 1114 N. 25th Street. Many of the homes in the subdivision were occupied by a variety of professionals from some of the City's leading firms: C.D. Smith Drug Company; Douglas Candy Company; Townsend, Wyatt, and Wall Dry Goods Company; Richardson Dry Goods Company; the German-American Bank; and the Tootle-Lemon Bank.

Neighborhoods like Westminster Place developed in St. Joseph after the turn-of-the 20th century largely as a result of the expansion of St. Joseph's streetcar lines. As documented in *The Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri*, the first street car railway in St. Joseph was established in 1866. A year later the Union Street Railway Company started in a building south of Randolph Street and operated a successful horse-drawn system. By 1887 electric power was introduced and by 1890 the People's Street Railway, Electric, Light & Power Company had acquired and consolidated various street car lines. In 1895, following the sale at auction of the People's Street Railway, the newly formed St. Joseph Railway, Light, Heat & Power Company was incorporated as the St. Joseph Traction & Lighting Company. The success of electric power pushed development further east away from the hilly terrain of the bluff neighborhoods and provided for suburban development. A major streetcar line along Frederick Avenue made Westminster Place an ideal location for new residential development. Today, this well-preserved neighborhood retains its early 20th century character and has remained a desirable place to live.

**ADDRESSES OF PROPERTIES INVENTORIED FOR THE
WESTMINSTER PLACE SURVEY PROJECT 2001**

1. 1100 N. 25th Street
2. 1110 N. 25th Street
3. 1111 N. 25th Street
4. 1114 N. 25th Street
5. 1117 N. 25th Street
6. 1202 N. 25th Street
7. 1207 N. 25th Street
8. 1210 N. 25th Street
9. 1212 N. 25th Street
10. 1215 N. 25th Street
11. 1219 N. 25th Street
12. 1221 N. 25th Street
13. 1222 N. 25th Street
14. 1301 N. 25th Street
15. 1302 N. 25th Street
16. 1305 N. 25th Street
17. 1308 N. 25th Street
18. 1309 N. 25th Street
19. 1310 N. 25th Street
20. 1316 N. 25th Street
21. 1319 N. 25th Street
22. 1320 N. 25th Street
23. 1324 N. 25th Street
24. 1400 N. 25th Street
25. 1401 N. 25th Street
26. 1411 N. 25th Street
27. 1416 N. 25th Street
28. 1417 N. 25th Street
29. 1420 N. 25th Street
30. 1112 N. 26th Street
31. 1114 N. 26th Street
32. 1116 N. 26th Street
33. 1124 N. 26th Street
34. 1202 N. 26th Street
35. 1206 N. 26th Street
36. 1212 N. 26th Street
37. 1214 N. 26th Street
38. 1218 N. 26th Street
39. 1302 N. 26th Street
40. 1306 N. 26th Street
41. 1312 N. 26th Street
42. 1314 N. 26th Street
43. 1316 N. 26th Street
44. 1404 N. 26th Street
45. 1418 N. 26th Street
46. 1420 N. 26th Street