

514-516 N. 12th Street
St. Joseph
Buchanan County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1883

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

514-516 NORTH TWELFTH STREET

HABS No. MO-1883

Location: 514-516 North 12th Street
Lot 9, Fink's Addition
St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

Present Owner: Clint Larsen, et al

Lamonia, Iowa 50140

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: This property has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing property in the potential Cathedral Hill Historic District. The potential district may contribute to the "Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri" under the context "Wholesale Distribution in St. Joseph, 1866-1914." Although it is very deteriorated, the structure retains sufficient integrity of design and association to demonstrate a sense of time and place and thus is significant as a contributing element in the potential district.

The building is, at best, marginally significant as a representative example of the duplex residential structure property type described in the multiple-property context statement (Historic Resources, 1988) and as a late and simplified example of the Queen Ann style. Duplexes of St. Joseph are significant in the areas of commerce and architecture. This building type is a "noteworthy reflection of discretionary wealth, due to the booming economy, which was invested in real estate during St. Joseph's period of greatest expansion." Duplexes, such as 514-516 North 12th, are therefore significant because of their historical association with the development forces which played a major role in shaping St. Joseph. The number and quality of duplexes found in St. Joseph are unique to this area. As illustrations of a distinctive type and/or style, many examples are also architecturally significant.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Dates of erection: ca. 1898

Architect: Unknown

Historical Narrative:

In July of 1843, Joseph Robidoux filed the town plat for St. Joseph with the Clerk of Common Pleas in St. Louis. Robidoux had operated a trading post at this location, where Blacksnake Creek joins the Missouri River, for several years. At first he was an employee of the American Fur Company, but in 1830 he purchased their goods and interest in the post becoming sole proprietor. When the town plan was recorded in 1843, the population of the settlement was about 200 people. By December the population had increased to 500 as settlers learned of the establishment of a town.

The discovery of gold in California greatly benefitted St. Joseph. As the northern and westernmost point that could be reached by steamboat before embarking on the arduous overland trip, St. Joseph had an advantage over Independence, the settlement that had been the main point of departure for the Santa Fe Trail. The needs of outfitting the thousands of emigrants passing through St. Joseph led to the establishment of several outfitting and mercantile businesses. Many emigrants, in fact, chose to remain in St. Joseph to share in the fortunes that were being made. The population, which was 800 in 1846, had jumped to 3,460 by 1850. During the 1850s, nearby Fort Leavenworth was the general depot for the distribution of supplies to all forts throughout the West. Supplying the military was another lucrative economic opportunity which helped establish St. Joseph as a regional trade and outfitting center.

By 1860 the town grew to a population of 8,932 and citizens began to build residences in what was to become a more prestigious area--the hills overlooking the original town site near the Missouri River. Robidoux Hill to the north, Cathedral Hill to the northeast, and Museum Hill to the east were neighborhoods that were subdivided and developed after this time as the original town evolved into a commercial and industrial district. One more essential step in securing St. Joseph's prominence as a city and a major outfitter to the west was the completion of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad line in 1859. St. Joseph was the westernmost railroad terminus for more than ten years until the transcontinental Union Pacific railroad was completed through Omaha and Council Bluffs in 1869.

With the beginning of the Civil War, most business and construction in St. Joseph came to a halt. Residents were divided in their sympathies, as was much of Missouri, and United States troops occupied the town. Although St. Joseph served as a military supply and mobilization center, residents were not allowed to participate in this trade. Virtually no structures were built or improvements made to the town infrastructure during this period. In general the town declined, as evidenced by a decrease in population from approximately 10,000 in 1861 to 7,500 at the close of the war.

Prosperity returned quickly to St. Joseph after hostilities actually ended. By 1870 the population had increased to 19,565 more than twice that in 1860. In the late 1860s railroad construction connected St. Joseph to Council Bluffs and Kansas City and opened a new route to Chicago and the east. In the 1880s about ten railroads built lines to St. Joseph making important connections with St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, Denver, and many other markets.

The Duplex Property Type in St. Joseph

The duplex residence at 514-516 North 12th is associated with the development of St. Joseph in the late nineteenth century. During this period, the city's population continued to grow at a remarkable rate--to 32,431 in 1880 and 52,324 in 1890. The 1880s and 1890s became known as "the Golden Age" of St. Joseph. Expansion of wholesale trade, banking, and manufacturing created wealth which was manifested in the construction of many large and elaborate residences during this period. There was also a large market for rental properties including modest single-family residences, duplexes, and apartment buildings.

Located among the elaborate homes of St. Joseph's wealthy citizens and the single-family dwellings of its middle class were a large number of duplex residences. They were constructed in the favored neighborhoods of the late nineteenth century, and continued to be built up through the early part of the twentieth century. They were generally on narrow lots, often with only a few feet between them and the structures on either side. All were built to conform to the surrounding neighborhood, and thus have the same setback as the residences. This is often to within ten feet of the front property line.

Duplexes were built for three primary reasons: to allow members of the same family to reside together in a fashionable district and still have affordable private quarters; to provide income for the owner living in one half of the structure (often a widow); or as a purely speculative and income-producing venture for its owner who resided in another structure, frequently just next door. The wealth earned by those associated with the wholesaling and related industries allowed them to invest their money in other areas of the economy. Real estate was a favored form of investment in St. Joseph, both directly through the construction of these income-producing duplexes and indirectly through the large number of banks, building associations, and other financial institutions. To afford a speculative duplex required "discretionary" income on the part of the investor. Most large personal fortunes were established in St. Joseph after 1880, thus most duplexes were constructed after this date.

This property type had many of the stylistic features of the surrounding single-family homes. The majority were two-story and constructed of brick, although there are isolated one-story and wood frame and weatherboard examples. The predominant style for those built during the 1880's and early 1890's was Queen Anne. These had many of the elaborate and fanciful features of the surrounding single-family Queen Anne residences, such as projecting bays, stained glass windows, gable end decoration, and elaborate cornice, window and door moldings. Much of the ornamentation was expressed in patterned brickwork, such as stringcoursing, dentils, arched window lintels, etc.

The primary difference between this property type and the single family residences was that despite a varied and irregular wall surface treatment, the duplexes remained basically symmetrical with mirror-image units, while the single-family Queen Anne style residences were generally asymmetrical. Also, many of the duplexes were flat-roofed, as opposed to the multiple-pitched roofs of the single-family homes of the period. However, many duplexes utilized devices to avoid the appearance of a flat roof, such as false mansard fronts, or end gables over projecting bays. A few duplexes were constructed in other elaborate styles of the Victorian period.

From the end of the 1890s to the 1920s a simpler style of duplex was also built. These were most often flat-roofed with the brick detailing limited to the cornice or parapet and window openings. The front usually featured a full-length front porch on both stories, with massive square brick columns and groups of three or four over one windows (associated with the Prairie or Craftsman styles). Some later duplexes were also built in a foursquare-type planform, again with simplified Prairie or Craftsman detailing. A few duplexes built after the turn of the century were slightly more elaborate. Generally, these were Colonial Revival in appearance.

514-516 North 12th Street

This building is a representative example of the duplex property type in a simplified Queen Anne style constructed late in the period of its popularity. Although it was dated (ca. 1895) in the Cathedral Hill Survey I, further research indicates that the building was constructed in 1897-98. No building was recorded at this location in the 1897 Sanborn map. In the city directories, the first residents were listed in 1899. Phil and Thomas W. Rogers resided at 514 North 12th. At the time Phil Rogers worked as a clerk in the city engineer's office and Thomas was a real estate agent for C.S. Johnson. Frank D. and S.C. Close resided at 516 North 12th Street. Frank was listed as a commercial traveler and S.C. worked for the "Woolen Mills Store"--presumably also a salesman.

All of these men had different residences in the 1898 and 1894 directories suggesting that they occupied the duplex on 12th Street soon after it was completed. Because a building permit for the property was not available, it was not possible to determine the original owner of this building without a title search. Possibly one of the pairs of brothers who first occupied the property also constructed the building as an investment.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Merit and Interest: 514-516 North 12th Street is a late example of the Queen Ann architectural style and a representative example of the duplex property type. The building is moderately significant as a contributing element in a potential historic district.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor (to be demolished). The building is deteriorated and has been vandalized.

- B. Summary Description: This is a two-story flat-roofed brick duplex residential building. It is approximately 35 feet wide from north to south and 62 feet long from east to west. There is a basement and brick foundation walls. The front facade is constructed of pressed brick laid in running bond. The rear and side walls are constructed of common brick in common bond. There is a projecting brick water table course. Masonry openings have flat brick arches in front and segmental arches in the side and rear with smooth-cut stone sills. Sills in the front openings are painted white.

The porch has been substantially altered. There is a brick masonry platform (painted white), modern wooden posts, steps and railing. The porch roof is ornamented with small brackets and a triangular molding at the eave. In the rear there is a divided shed roof porch. The section to the south has been enclosed with horizontal boards and enlarged. The north section is open and the porch posts have been removed.

There are two interior chimneys in each sidewall. Front entrances have glazed, paneled wooden doors and cut stone sills. The overhead transoms have been filled. Rear entrances have wooden raised four-panel doors. The principal windows in the front facade are large four-light sash. Other windows are 1/1 wooden double-hung sash.

At the eave there is a pressed metal cornice with vents, brackets, and a molding with triangular ornamentation. Behind the parapet wall, the roof is nearly flat sloping to the rear. It is covered with deteriorated asphalt built-up roofing.

Interior. Both sides of this duplex building had mirror image plans. There is a small entrance vestibule opening to a hall and second floor stair. Both floors have linear suites of rooms. There are parlors, a dining room and kitchen on the first floor. On the second floor there were three bedrooms and a rear bathroom. This interior configuration is intact in the south unit, but the hall partition and parlor walls have been removed in the north unit on the second floor.

The vestibule has an ornamental tile floor. Doors are cased with fluted head and side moldings. From the stair hall paired paneled doors open to the front parlor. The front stair railing in the south unit has been removed. Between the parlors there are sliding pocket doors. These rooms have wood flooring. There is a composite baseboard with a deep cove profile surmounted by a crown molding. Due to water damage, sections of the lath and plaster ceiling have fallen. In both units there is a chimney flue opening in the dining room. An ornamental iron stove remains in the north unit. In the rear kitchen to the south beaded wooden wainscoting with a beveled cap molding remains. Also, the kitchen woodwork evidences the original darkly stained varnished finish, although most of the trim has been painted. A rear stair to the second floor and an interior stair to the basement open from the kitchen.

- C. Site: This duplex residence is situated on an elevation above a sloping street. The property is approximately one half block north of Frederick Avenue, a major traffic route with commercial development along both sides.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Bibliography:

Denman, David. "Cathedral Hill Survey I Interim Report" (July, 1987).
Prepared for the City of St. Joseph Community Development Department,
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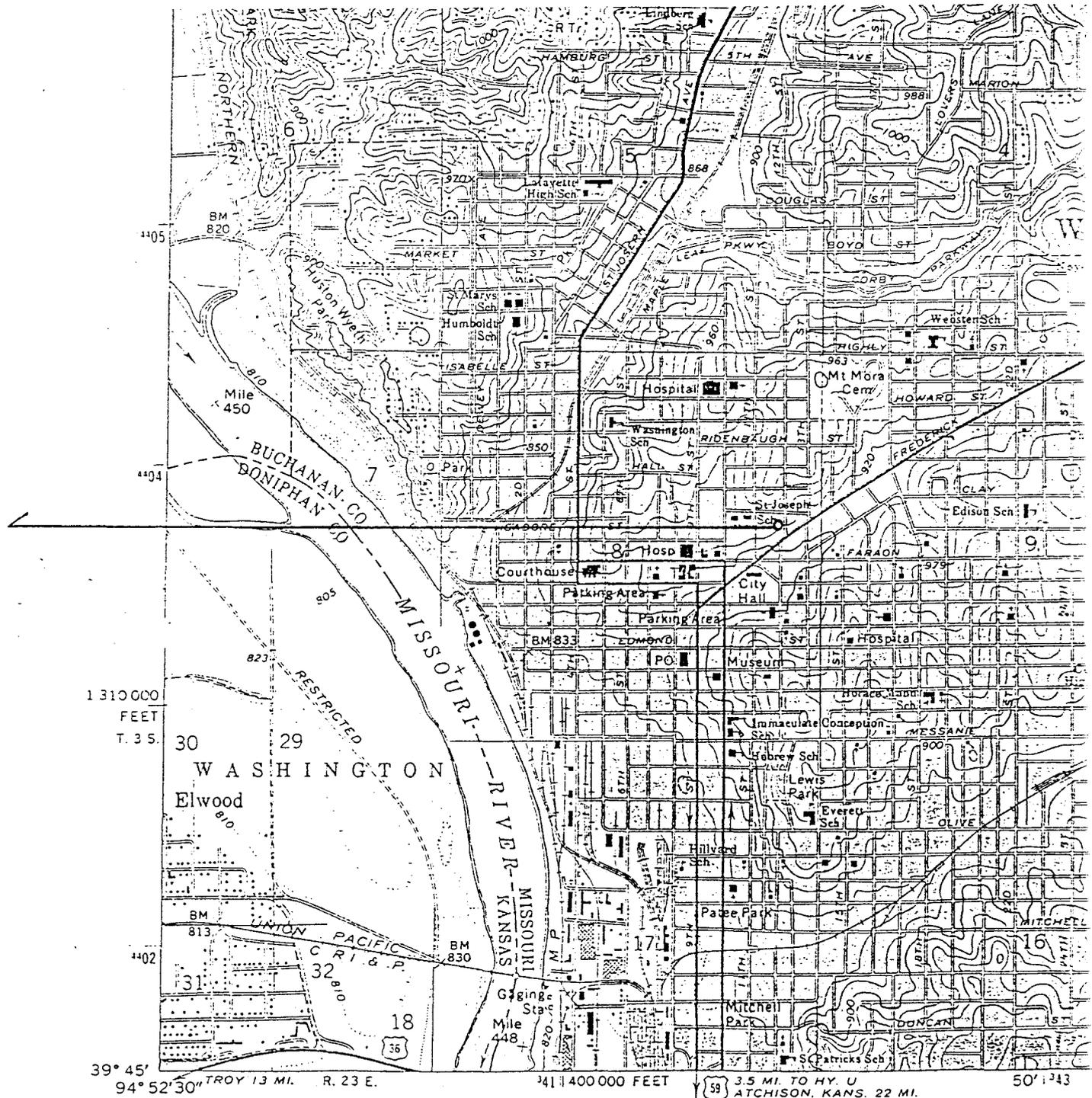
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Wolfenbarger, Deon. "Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County,
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and Outline of Property Types. Prepared for the City of St. Joseph,
Landmark Commission, and the Missouri Historic Preservation Program.

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