

907-911 DEWEY STREET (HOUSE)
St. Joseph
Buchanan County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1894

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

907-911 DEWEY STREET (HOUSE)

HABS No. MO-1894

Location: 907-11 Dewey Street
Lot 3, except the east 54 feet, Block 34, Robidoux Addition
St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

Present Owner: Samuel Lowery

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: This triplex residence, 907-11 Dewey Street, is one of many multiple family structures built during the period of St. Joseph's greatest growth and expansion from about 1880 to 1920. Like others constructed during this period, this building is associated with the demand for housing and the popularity of rental real estate as an investment.

This particular building has moderate architectural significance as an unusual example of the triplex or diminutive townhouse. In St. Joseph, duplexes or apartment buildings were much more common types of rental housing.

Despite interior alterations, the building exterior retains its integrity of location, design, and materials. The original roof shape, windows, doors, and exterior finishes are evident and the entrance porch retains mass-produced ornamentation characteristic of the Victorian period.

Project Statement: This building has been recorded prior to demolition to satisfy a memorandum of agreement by the City of St. Joseph, Missouri, with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of erection: 1891
Architect: Unknown
Original owner: Carl Arnhold

Historical context:

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 the company's goods and interest in the post and became 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 rail lines serviced the city center, yet skirted around it. The first depot was built south of the original river trade complex, as were several other passenger stations and freight depots. These rail lines slowly directed some of the city's growth south.

Commercial success, particularly in the wholesale distribution business, was predominant in the history of St. Joseph. With a national (and in some cases, international) reputation as a distribution center, the city's business grew steadily from frontier days through the period of industrialization to the early twentieth century, serving as one of the largest and most profitable commercial centers in the country. The city's location and transportation advantages earned it the name "Queen City of the West" by the 1880s. 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. By 1900 the city's population was recorded as over 100,000, but this was undoubtedly inflated because the figure in 1910 was only 77,403.

North St. Joseph (Robidoux Addition)

The Carl Arnhold triplex at 907-11 Dewey Street is located in the oldest part of the North St. Joseph neighborhood. It was constructed on land that was platted as the Robidoux Addition in 1845, only two years after the original town of St. Joseph was established. The surrounding area is the northwestern segment of a "residential ring" of historic development around the original town site and the present central business district. This semicircular pattern of residential development on the upland was oriented toward the Missouri River bottomlands and the commercial center of the city. Other historic districts and neighborhoods to the east and southeast which have been identified and surveyed include the Robidoux, Cathedral, and Museum Hill areas as well as the Patee Addition.

The Dewey Street building was constructed in 1891 only two blocks west of St. Joseph Avenue, the major diagonal trafficway and linear commercial district in North St. Joseph. The most important influence in the early historical development of North St. Joseph was the horse-drawn streetcar line which began operating in 1876 from Market Square along St. Joseph Avenue to New Ulm Park at the northern edge of the city. According to Chris Rutt's 1904 History of Buchanan County and the City of St. Joseph, "this was the best street railway in the city, its horses being of a high quality and its cars equipped with stoves." By 1884 this operation was known as the Union Street Railway Company. Eventually, the company began experimenting with electrical power and electric cars were run between the powerhouse at Highland and St. Joseph avenues and New Ulm Park in the fall of 1887. In the spring of 1888 they were run to Market Square. In his 1904 history, Rutt boasted that the Union was the first electric line in the West.

In 1890 the People's Street Railway, Electric Light and Power Company bought the Union and Wyatt Park lines and consolidated the entire streetcar system of St. Joseph under one management. The company was reorganized as the St. Joseph, Railway, Light, Heat, and Power Company in 1895. Later in January, 1898 the Union line was extended to the stockyards in South St. Joseph. Proximity to the streetcar line made the Arnhold triplex convenient for workers who could travel to a job almost anywhere in St. Joseph.

Paralleling the route of the streetcar line along St. Joseph Avenue, the Chicago Great Western Railroad built its line to St. Joseph in 1892. The railroad developed an area of freight sidings and loading docks east and southeast of the Dewey Street property. The development of the railroad increased the traffic for commercial businesses on St. Joseph Avenue and the demand for residential property in the vicinity.

Multiple Family Residences in St. Joseph

Multiple family residential structures were constructed in St. Joseph as early as the 1850s and continued to be built into the twentieth century. The majority, however, were constructed from the 1880s through the 1920s. This was the period of St. Joseph's greatest growth and expansion. Due to the city's role as a distribution center for goods, a variety of jobs were available in the many wholesale warehouses, railroad shipping lines, and associated industries and businesses. Multiple family structures satisfied the needs of two kinds of workers: those new to the community who had to wait for a house to be constructed, and those who could not afford a single family residence. Both types reflect the population growth St. Joseph experienced due to its burgeoning economy, especially after 1880. The construction industry was booming, but it was still difficult to keep up with the demand for housing. The multiple family structures helped alleviate some of the housing problems experienced during this period.

This demand for inexpensive housing benefitted St. Joseph's wealthier citizens. Real estate had proven to be a popular form of investment for those who made their fortunes through the wholesaling, banking, and related industries. Multiple family buildings, which had a ready source of tenants, were relatively safe investments.

Even though the occupants of these structures were primarily the working or young professional class, there was still a desire for quality construction and a desirable location. Thus many of these units were built in the prestigious residential neighborhoods on the hills overlooking the central business district. The architectural styles and detailing made them compatible with the surrounding residences. They were usually constructed of brick, and were either two or three stories high. Those constructed during the 1880s and 1890s were most commonly in the Queen Anne style. These featured typical multiple rooflines, but were presented in a more symmetrical fashion than their single family counterparts. There was also a variety of material texture and ornamentation used, often Eastlake inspired.

The floor plan of these structures represents the widest variability within this property type, and the structures can be sub-classified accordingly. The "townhouse" sub-type is a single family residence of two to three stories attached to a similar unit sharing a common partition wall. As these were sited on narrow lots, the structures could either be individually owned, or the group could be owned by an investor who rented each unit. Many townhomes in St. Joseph were built in one of the Victorian styles, such as Italianate or Second Empire, or featured an array of eclectic Victorian details on the facade. The Dewey Street property is a relatively small and modest example of this building type. Only the front porch is ornamented with sawn wooden detailing and turned posts. The simplicity of the main block is not typical of the most common Victorian period styles.

Multiple family residential structures are significant in the areas of commerce, industry, and architecture. The buildings serve as a tangible link to St. Joseph's period of greatest growth. An analysis provides insight into the background and status of the building owners and residents, both important participants in St. Joseph's economy. The wealth and jobs created during the late nineteenth century drew many classes of workers, and the residences constructed for them are indicative of the town's overall economic conditions and later settlement patterns. They are thus significant for the association with the historical development of St. Joseph. Since it was built by and for a building tradesman, the Dewey Street property illustrates a little known but significant aspect of the city's development.

Some multiple family structures are representative examples of a specific architectural type or style. Notable examples were located in favored residential districts and reflect the styles popular in single family residences of the time. In addition, St. Joseph retains a wide array of different types of multiple family residences, differing primarily in floor plan and scale. As an example of the triplex or diminutive "townhouse" sub-type, the building at 907-11 Dewey represents a type noted on Sanborn maps of the late nineteenth century, but never as common as the duplex or conventional apartment house. Many of these buildings in other neighborhoods and historic districts have been demolished.

907-11 Dewey Street

Construction of this building was indicated by a building permit issued to Carl Arnhold September 12, 1891 for a residence valued at \$1500. At the time the property was addressed on Levee Street; the street was renamed after 1899. It appears that this three-unit dwelling was constructed to be a rental property because Carl Arnhold was listed in the 1890s as residing on the east side of 2nd Street north of Highland Avenue. Both Carl and Carl A. Arnhold (presumably father and son) were listed as residents at the same location. Carl A. Arnhold was a mason as were Frederick and George Arnhold, who lived in the same location on the west side of 2nd Street. Both of these men (presumably relatives) were listed as masons. In 1894 Fred Arnhold was specifically recorded as a bricklayer.

The number of residents listed at this address, their transiency, and their occupations further support an analysis of the function of this building as rental working-class housing. In 1899 the occupants were Jennie Clark, seamstress (907); John Allphin, driver for a manufacturing company (909); Joseph Chrissinger, telegraph operator; and Theodore Chrissinger, carpenter (911). In 1907 the residents were Mrs. Sarah Hawman, widow (909) and Charles Hughes, bartender (911). The apartment at 907 Dewey was vacant. The apartments were fully occupied in 1930. Charles Roberts, bricklayer, and his wife Dora were listed at 907 Dewey. Arthur Chastain, bricklayer, and his wife Lottie were recorded at 909. Two families were listed at 911--James Taylor, lineman, and Elsie; John Stephenson, no occupation listed, and Mary.

What seems likely is that Carl Arnhold, a bricklayer or masonry contractor, constructed this triplex or "diminutive rowhouse" as an income-producing investment property. Perhaps the other Arnholds participated in the project either as laborers or as partners in a family enterprise. Evidence of a considerable family investment in this block was provided by the building permit record for the two adjoining lots to the south. The two buildings, a duplex and a single-family residence, still stand and are similar in form although not in plan to the structure at 907-11 Dewey.

The earliest permit was issued to Charles Arnold August 2, 1887 for a dwelling valued at \$600 on Lot 1. This may be a reference to one of the men recorded as Carl Arnhold in the 1890s. Other permits for construction on Lot 2 and part of Lot 1 were issued to P.N. Arnold, Prefonella Arnold, and Petrone Arnold. These may be different references to the same person. The permits indicate construction of a residence valued at \$700 in March, 1894 with what was probably an addition in April, 1896 valued at \$300. Apparently, all three buildings served as rental housing for workers who lived close to the St. Joseph Avenue streetcar line.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The triplex residence located at 907-11 Dewey Street has marginal significance as an example of the triplex or diminutive townhouse property sub-type. The building is relatively plain, but it does have an entrance porch with Victorian period ornamentation. The scale, material, massing, and ornament are typical of other structures in the neighborhood.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor (to be demolished). The building is vacant and deteriorated due to neglect. There is a large hole in the roof to the east. This leak has caused substantial damage to the rear masonry wall.

B. Summary Description

This is a rectangular brick masonry building oriented parallel to the street. Originally, the building had three dwelling units. It has two stories built into a steeply sloping site so that the main entrances to the west are at ground level and the rear basement entrances are at ground level in the rear. There are six front and rear bays with three main entrances to the west and three rear entrances to the east. The building is approximately 40 feet wide from north to south and 28 feet long from east to west. It has a brick foundation, and in the rear a rubble stone footing is visible. The main facade is constructed of pressed brick laid in running bond; the side and rear walls are common brick laid in common bond. There are flat brick arches over the masonry openings with smooth-cut stone sills. The main facade has a raised brick water table.

The building has a full-length entrance porch with a low hipped roof on slender turned wooden posts. There is a tongue and groove beaded board porch ceiling. Two sections of open wooden railing remain on the sides of the porch. The wooden floor is supported on both original brick piers and modern concrete blocks. There is a cut stone step in front of the southernmost entrance. Two central brick chimneys are located in the walls that partition the three units. Between this building and its neighbor to the south, there is a coursed limestone block retaining wall with double-wide concrete steps leading to the rear of both properties. To the north there are narrow stone steps leading to the rear.

The main entrances have smooth-cut stone sills, raised five-panel wooden doors, and overhead transoms. The transoms have been covered. There is a basement entrance at the southwest corner of the building flanked by a window. In the rear there are three basement entrances; all four have paneled wooden doors. A single shed-roofed wooden stoop remains over the north entrance. The paired windows in the main facade have 2/2 wooden double-hung sash. In the rear the single upper floor windows have 2/2 sash. The basement windows have paired 4/4 and 4/2 sash except for two windows with 2/1 sash in the northwest corner of the building and two fixed windows with divided lights in the center of the west wall. Unlike the openings on the upper floor, the basement windows only have wooden sills.

The building has a low truncated hipped roof covered with deteriorated asphalt roll roofing. There is a simple wooden fascia board with deteriorated crown and cove molding at the eave.

Interior

It appears that the original plan consisted of three dwelling units, each with two principal rooms on each floor. Presumably, the upper rooms were parlors with a basement kitchen to the east and a rear bedroom. There is a central doorway between the two rooms on the upper floor. In the basement the original doorways were probably located next to the stairs as found in the north unit. Two stairs remain next to the outside walls of the basement, but only a paint outline on the south partition wall marks the original stair location in the central unit. The two existing stairs are boxed with vertical beaded boards.

The interior of this building has been substantially remodeled, probably in the late 1940s. At that time doorways were cut between the upper rooms of the two northern units to create a four-room flat. The two remaining rooms to the south became an efficiency apartment.

Additional openings were cut between the basement rooms to create a single apartment in the basement. In this configuration, the southern stair was blocked off and the rear basement room was used only as a utility-storage room.

The interior has wooden tongue and groove flooring. Generally, the floors are covered with carpet and vinyl flooring. Walls and ceiling are lath and plaster on the upper floor, but the basement walls and ceilings are covered with vertical tongue and groove boards. On the upper floor in the center rear, the plaster has fallen from the ceiling and exterior brick wall because of water damage from the hole in the roof. On the upper floor, the original interior doorways have transoms; the modern openings are wider and do not have transoms.

Decorative features include heavy wooden moldings and baseboards. The beaded baseboard has a molded upper edge; the original door and window moldings have a reeded profile and medallion corner blocks. There are molded base blocks. The modern cased openings are unornamented. Original moldings in the basement have rounded edges without other ornamentation.

On the upper floor, there are corner chimney flues in the front parlors against the inner partition walls. In the basement, there are four corner flues in the north partition wall and two flues in the south unit against the partition wall.

C. Site

This property is located on a sloping site between Wyeth Hill to the northwest and low land to the east along what was once Blacksnake Creek. The building is now on the edge of a deteriorated residential neighborhood; there are no houses on the opposite side of the street because the land is included in the right-of-way for the interstate highway.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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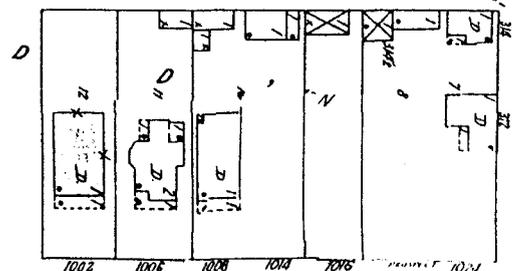
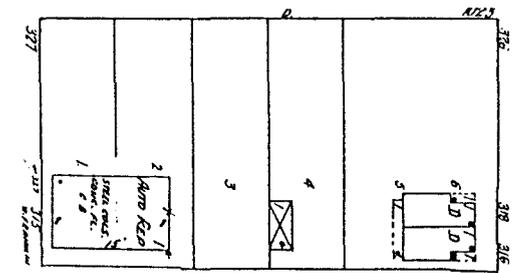
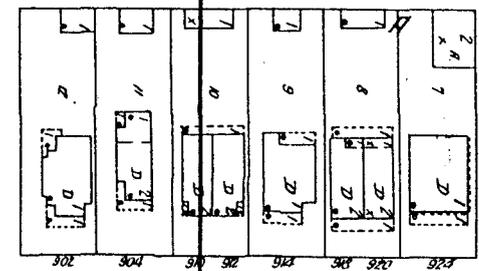
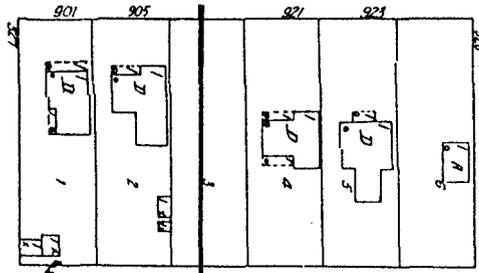
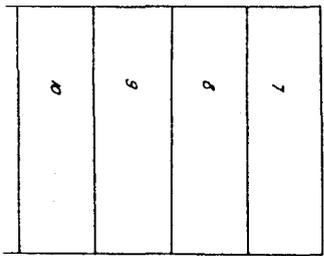
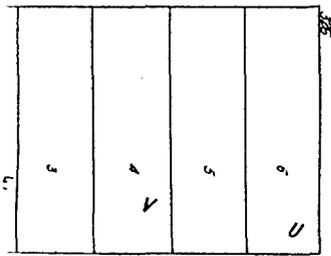
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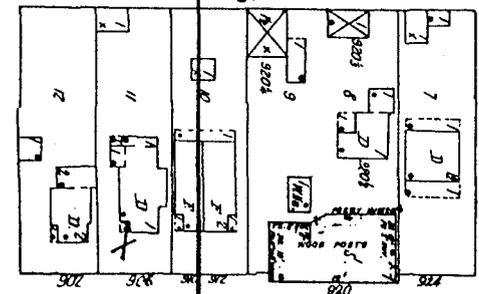
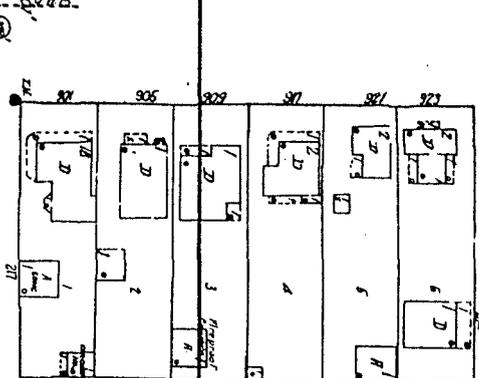
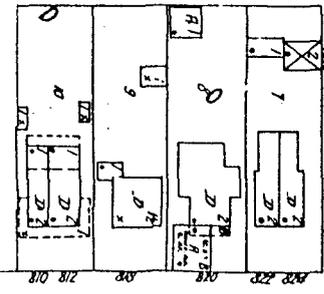
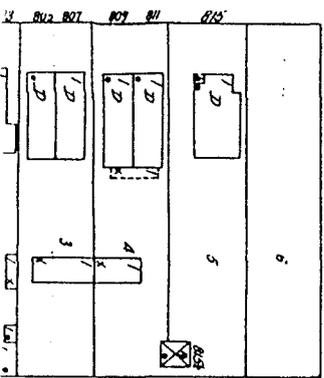
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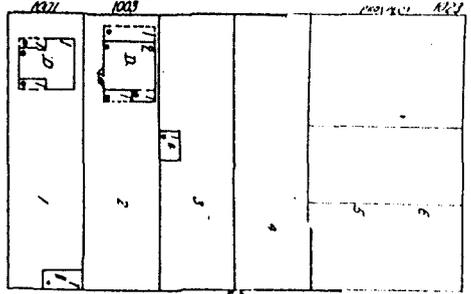
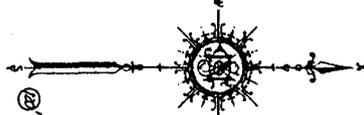
BELLEVUE



PROSPECT



W. FRANKLIN



W. POLLIN

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DEWEY

