

QUALITY HILL

Bounded by Jefferson Street, Broadway Street, 10th Street, & Fourteenth Street

Kansas City

Jackson County

Missouri

HABS No. MO-1250

HABS

MO-1250

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
INTERMOUNTAIN SUPPORT OFFICE - DENVER  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, CO 80225-0287

INTERMOUNTAIN  
SUPPORT OFFICE

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

QUALITY HILL

HABS No. MO-1250

- Location: The Quality Hill neighborhood is an area in Kansas City, Missouri's, Central Business District. The Quality Hill neighborhood historically stretched from 7th Street on the north to a vaguely and variously defined border line on the south at about 13th Street, and from Central Street on the east to the bluffs on the west in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The two full blocks and portions of nine blocks which comprise the Quality Hill National Historic District are bounded by Jefferson Street on the west, Broadway Street on the east, 10th Street on the north and 14th Street on the south.
- Quad: Kansas City  
UTM: A 15/362670/4329120  
B 15/362640/4328610  
C 15/362270/4328610  
D 15/362260/43~~0~~<sup>2</sup>9160
- Date of Construction: circa 1856-1929
- Present Owner: Multiple Ownership
- Present Use: In recent years, after many demolitions, new town houses simulating earlier styles and patterns have been constructed on Quality Hill. The district remains primarily a residential neighborhood, composed of young professionals desiring an urban environment close to work and social/cultural activities.
- Significance: The Quality Hill Historic District is a significant surviving section of what was once one of the most fashionable and prestigious residential neighborhoods in Kansas City, Missouri, during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The area was developed and utilized by individuals originally from the East (New York, Pennsylvania and New England) who played a major role in the early industrial, political and social life of the city. The Quality Hill neighborhood represents a variety of nineteenth and early twentieth century residential, ecclesiastical and small commercial design architecture from the period spanning the years 1856 to 1929.
- Historian: Lisa Lassman Briscoe, Landmarks Commission, July 1991  
Revisions by Sarah F. Schwenk, Historic Kansas City Foundation, September 1996

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. PHYSICAL CONTEXT OF SITE AND ENVIRONS

The Quality Hill neighborhood, located in the northwest quarter of the Central Business District of Kansas City, Missouri, encompasses ten blocks and portions of one additional city block on high ground on steep bluffs overlooking the Missouri and Kansas river valleys. This location is one of the highest elevations in the city. The neighborhood has been historically defined by its late nineteenth century and early twentieth century residential character consisting of streets laid out in a grid pattern within an area visually bounded to the west and south by bluffs overlooking the flats or "West Bottoms" located at the confluence of the Kansas (Kaw) and Missouri rivers; to the north by a commercial/industrial area sloping down to the Missouri River; and to the east, by the city's southward expanding central business district.

Named thoroughfares slope from north to south in a medium decline. Numbered streets generally slope from east to west in a medium decline. The intersection of West 10th and Jefferson streets is the highest point of elevation in the neighborhood. Several streets are discontinuous due to the construction of the Interstate 70 highway and other man-made obstacles. The primary focal street in the neighborhood is Pennsylvania Avenue the center of the concentration of historic residential properties. On the eastern portion of the neighborhood Broadway Avenue, which runs north-south, is the major transportation artery in the area — running from the original Missouri River levee to the mid-nineteenth century community of Westport in what is now the "Mid-town" area of Kansas City.

A large number of the structures are constructed above grade on rectangular lots near the street lines. Numerous uncoursed native limestone retaining walls are situated at various locations of the neighborhood. The majority of buildings are of brick with stone and/or terra cotta embellishments. A few frame structures do exist. Due to the sloping topography of the neighborhood, some foundations are stepped and a number of buildings have exposed basements.

The neighborhood is visually bounded on the east by the almost unbroken massing of three to five story, turn-of-the-century commercial buildings facing Broadway Avenue. On the west are the bluffs overlooking the Missouri and Kaw Rivers where c. 1950 apartment towers (10-11 stories), park land and the low c. 1955 post World War II modern American Hereford Association office building and the River Club are positioned to take full advantage of the view of the river valley below. To the north along 7th and 8th are large early twentieth century, Chicago School design warehouse and manufacturing buildings. The southern boundary is delineated by the I-70 freeway extension link with I-35 (14th to 15th Street) and is visually defined by the large massing and surrounding open park setting of Grace and Holy Trinity Church.

At the time of the nomination of the historic core of the neighborhood to the *National Register of Historic Places* in 1977, the neighborhood contained over a hundred architecturally and historically significant buildings.<sup>1</sup> The buildings, erected during the period from 1856 to 1929, reflect a variety of popular architectural designs spanning over seventy years of Kansas City development. Over one-half of the buildings were constructed during the 1880s. Since that time, a large number of multi-family residential units have been constructed in the area bounded by 10th and 12th streets between Bank Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. This infill housing, in size, massing and materials is complimentary to adjacent buildings of historic significance.

At the same time, many of the historic buildings were renovated and rehabilitated in accordance to the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation" as historic preservation tax credit projects.

Extant single family residences dating from the late nineteenth century are clustered near the center of the neighborhood. The greatest number and the most elaborate and refined single-family and town house designs are those found between 10th and 11th streets on Pennsylvania, Washington and Jefferson Avenues.

The next largest number of historic property types present are the apartment hotels and apartment houses erected in the period from 1880 to 1920. Small (2-5 stories) early twentieth century, apartment buildings are clustered in the 500 block of 11th Street and on Pennsylvania near 11th and 10th streets and near Washington and 10th. Larger apartment buildings and apartment hotels are more dispersed and tend to have corner locations, such as those found at 10th and Broadway and 12th and Pennsylvania.

Due to location and size and setting, several ecclesiastical institutions also play a dominant role in the visual definition of the area. And, interspersed throughout the area at street corners or in peripheral areas on the north and south are small two to three story commercial retail buildings and structures.

As a whole the majority of the historic resources are in good condition. Due to their lot size, scale and massing, and the compatibility of new infill construction, the area is noted for the dense urban setting of its residential architecture.

## B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Kansas City: 1826-1860

The nucleus of present day Kansas City, Missouri evolved from two early nineteenth century trading centers. The site selected in 1826 by Francois Chouteau, a French fur trader, on the south side of the Missouri River near the confluence of the Kaw (Kansas or Kanza) River became, upon its platting in 1839, the "Town of Kansas." A second trade staging area approximately four miles to the south near the Missouri-Kansas border was platted in 1835 as the "Town of Westport." Linking the two communities were primitive narrow "roads" which followed either the river levee

or deep ravines in the hilly terrain. By 1847 a wagon road which cut through the bluffs at Main Street in the Town of Kansas connected Westport with the river landing. Other north-south access roads soon followed and included Gillis, Holmes, Grand and Broadway streets. Delaware, Wyandotte and Market streets were added in the 1850s. Main and Broadway (which led to the Town of Westport) were the first to be paved.

River traffic, generated by resumed trade in the southwest after the end of the Mexican War and the discovery of gold in California in 1848, stimulated the growth of the two communities. In response to these developments, the Jackson County Court officially incorporated the Town of Kansas in 1850, and three years later the City of Kansas was chartered by the Missouri General Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The community's location on the river, the advent of the overland emigrants to California and Oregon, and the opening of the Kansas Territory to settlement gave it dominance over Westport. By 1860, the City of Kansas counted a population of 4,500; Westport, with its population of 1,200, retained its village status.<sup>3</sup>

Neither Westport nor the City of Kansas could boast of a large settled population prior to the Civil War. Between 1846 and 1860 the population of the area varied greatly due to disease, immigration levels and sectional conflict. Westport grew unsteadily from approximately 300 to 1,200 and the fluctuating population of the City of Kansas grew from approximately 700 to 4,500 citizens. Immediately after the war, the population of the City of Kansas dropped to 3,500 but, within the next two years it soared reaching somewhere between 15,000 and 28,000.<sup>4</sup>

The early population of the region included native peoples, and European and Euro-American trappers, traders and settlers. By treaty, the United States government relocated the last remaining native tribes in 1825 to designated areas further west. At this time, Euro-American settlers and their African-American slaves migrated to the area from Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and Kentucky. The next wave of settlement occurred during the 1840s and 1850s when large numbers of Euro-Americans came into the area as part of the westward migration. While the majority continued west, many chose to settle in the area. By the mid-1850s an influx of German and Irish immigrants and settlers and investors from the northeastern states brought economic and cultural diversity to the city.<sup>5</sup>

The underlying physical development of the City of Kansas during this era is evident in the rectangular plat additions which spread south and southeast over the hilly terrain from the original river settlement. The first additions extended three blocks from Delaware street on the west to Grand Avenue on the east, and twelve blocks from the Missouri River on the north. By mid-century the city limits expanded south to Twentieth Street and east twelve blocks to Lydia Avenue. Within this area, clustered around a grid of platted lots was a scattering of small, plain buildings — residences, commercial structures and other facilities — common to small towns in western Missouri.<sup>6</sup> Residences and farmsteads, however, tended to spread out faster than population growth and, as a result, neither the City of Kansas nor the Town of Westport had high residential density prior to the arrival of the railroad in the region.

The buildings and structures of the period were generally austere, utilitarian, vernacular designs, many of log or frame construction. Residential buildings favored the styles which evolved in the Middle South and "Little Dixie" area of Missouri. Classical and Gothic Revival styles prevailed as the design choice for the finer residences. Brick construction was common for many of these buildings and others that were more formal in design and decorative treatment. Thus, both tradition and the influences of academic architecture determined any conscious styling used in the mid-nineteenth century buildings of the region.<sup>7</sup>

#### Kansas City: 1870-1910

Much of the city's nineteenth century growth can be attributed to the completion of a rail line in 1856 linking Kansas City to the east and the completion in 1869 of the Hannibal Bridge — the first bridge to span the Missouri River. Separating these two events was a period of decline due to the increasing sectional hostilities prior to the Civil War and the war itself.

Almost immediately following the placement of the rails, the City of Kansas became a shipping hub between the eastern and western regions of the United States. With the location of the Hannibal Bridge in Kansas City came a notable advantage to the city over rivals along the Missouri River; in addition to the link with St. Louis, Kansas City had a direct line to Chicago via the railroad's bridge over the Mississippi in 1871. Kansas City also provided similar access for central Kansas and the greater Southwest. As a consequence of its growing network of railroads, the city soon became the funnel through which one could receive manufactured goods and could ship agricultural products, especially cattle, to either Chicago or St. Louis and thus to the entire eastern half of the United States. At the same time, with the establishment of stockyards in 1870-71 in the West Bottoms, Kansas City also became a terminus for the cattle trade.<sup>8</sup>

The resulting growth in rail lines and the commercial trade in grain, livestock and related agriculture processing industries such as meat packing substantially altered the physical appearance of the city. Due in part to topography, the "spread out" character of Kansas City's built environment continued despite the fact that commercial, manufacturing and residential developments became more clustered and grew in density near locations chosen by the growing network of rail lines.

As the levee lost its role as the focal point of commercial activity, the city turned its back on the river. Main Street, running north and south, displaced the landing as the principal nucleus of retail, commercial and governmental activity, becoming the central axis for development. From near the foot of Broadway, the Hannibal Bridge angled off across the river. Along the river bank to the east of the bridge ran the levee — still busy but declining rapidly in its importance. Back of the levee to the south was the city's central business section grouped around the Market Square at the corner of Main and Fifth streets. Here, the businessmen who moved their establishments the half mile inland from the banks of the river, erected a mixture of frame and brick buildings, seldom more than three stories high, that incorporated architectural design features — elaborate cornices, decorative lintels, stone foundations — which emphasized the more permanent nature of the city.

The area surrounding the Market Square, frequently referred to as "Old Town," generally incorporated the area bounded by Broadway on west, Woodland Avenue on the east, between Fifth and Tenth streets on the south and the levee on the north.

West and south of the Hannibal Bridge, following the curve of the river was an area of flats located between the river, the bluffs and the state line. As early as 1865, the City Council recognized the potential for commercial growth in this area and issued bonds to open Third, Fourth, Fifth and Twelfth streets into the flats. Within a few years, clustered by the railroad tracks in what became known as the "West Bottoms," were mills, warehouses, packing plants and a growing residential community of poor laborers.<sup>9</sup> As the number of livestock traders, meat and leather processing plants, grain elevators and flour mills grew, portions of this rapidly industrializing area quickly became slums or newly created working class neighborhoods — first a home for Irish and African-American laborers and, later, for successive waves of unskilled emigrants.<sup>10</sup>

As early as the mid-1850s successful businessmen located their homes on the bluffs a short distance to the west of the business center and east of the bottoms in an area known as Quality Hill. Below the latter and partly separated from the former by the hills which projected to the river was a mixed area.<sup>11</sup> Another elite residential enclave, "Knob Hill," located north and east of Market Square between Walnut and Grand streets, rivaled Quality Hill in the wealth and status of its inhabitants. Some of the city's founding families who had emigrated from the middle south established homes in "Knob Hill" area beginning in the 1850s. To the south of the central business district across 10th and east of Main Street was McGee's Edition which dated from the late 1850s and housed the majority of the city's middle and upper-middle class citizens. The area included residential pockets of the rich as well as the poor and was an integrated neighborhood where German and Irish emigrants, whites and blacks of varying degrees of wealth and poverty lived.

After real estate promoters established the city's first horse drawn trolley line, in 1869 between the city market and 17th Street, sprawl began. Random development of outlying areas began beyond the settled boundaries of Westport and the center city area.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, distinct neighborhoods and commercial centers emerged in the developed parts of the city. Residential areas differed from one another in their physical relation to the city core. Invisible ethnic, racial, and socio-economic class boundaries separated them as well.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1871 and 1900 the city witnessed the extensive effects of the railroad. As the population jumped from 15,000 to nearly 165,000 the city limits more than doubled. During this period telephones and long distance service, electric lights and sewers reached a large portion of the city's populace. Rail lines and structures in and around the West Bottoms and industrial areas mushroomed and, by the 1880s, twenty-four railroads entered the city. The stockyards, built in the West Bottoms in 1871, encouraged related industries to build nearby and, by 1900, eight meat packing plants employed over 5,000 men. Meat inspection and processing companies proliferated. Wholesale goods and warehouse development occurred in or near the rail yards and particularly

to the west of the business center in what is now referred to as the Warehouse or Garment District around 8th and Broadway.<sup>14</sup>

With the establishment and growth of rail lines and the ensuing commercial development, Kansas City acquired the economic base and population to support a booming real estate market. The 1880s was the most active and prosperous decade of this era. During its peak period, investment in construction ran about a million dollars a month. Only New York City and Chicago exceeded Kansas City in the number of dollars financing new construction. A series of land annexations kept pace with this growth. The annexations in 1873 and 1885 expanded the city boundaries south to 31st Street and east to Cleveland with the state line and the river remaining the other boundaries. The city continued its tendency to urban sprawl with residences and businesses scattered over the terrain.

In 1880, Kansas City boasted of ninety miles of streets, fifteen of which were paved. Private developers and public works projects leveled the hilliest parts of the terrain and filled ravines. Massive cuts through the river bluffs allowed greater access to the steamboat landing and waterfront rail lines. The city's retail center quickly moved southward toward 11th and Main where large office buildings were already under construction. The hilly nature of the topography still tended to physically isolate the railway yards from the retail and commercial heart of the city, and new industrial and warehouse construction remained visually separate from the downtown areas of expansion. By 1886 cable car and electric trolley lines replaced the horse drawn car lines. The extensive cable system precursed the automobile in its lasting effect on the patterns of development within the city. Promoting outward expansion, the twenty-five mile cable system was so extensive that people were able to reach all corners of the city as well as outside the city limits.<sup>15</sup>

Residential development followed the city's expanding transportation network and different sub-communities or neighborhoods emerged within the expanding municipality, reflecting informal social, economic and ethnic stratifications.<sup>16</sup> Existing residential neighborhoods, such as those in McGee's Addition, grew and expanded. Other established neighborhoods, such as Quality Hill and Knob Hill which were adjacent to growing industrial districts, lacked space to expand and many of their residents built new homes further east and south.

Initial residential expansion tended to be in the eastern part of the city. In the area southeast of "Knob Hill" along Independence Boulevard and Woodland, Forest and 10th streets, well-built apartments and spacious single-family dwellings began to rise to house the city's merchant class, civic leaders and newly wealthy cattle barons. By the end of the decade, small middle class houses surrounded this island of privilege. Another northeast neighborhood, Pendleton Heights, reflected the impact of the rapid extension of cable car lines toward the eastern edge of the city. The erection of high style homes for the wealthy in this neighborhood which began in 1886 was soon followed by a wave of cheap residential buildings — quickly built houses and three story residential blocks. Development also occurred to the south along the Broadway residential corridor. Affluent families, many of which were former residents of Quality Hill, erected large

"suburban" style homes in the Hyde Park and Roanoke neighborhoods located in today's "mid-town" area south of 36th Street.<sup>17</sup>

It was during this period of expansion and growth that professionalism in architecture became firmly established in the city. The construction boom of the 1880s, attracted major architectural firms from Chicago and New York to open temporary offices in the city. The number of architects tripled in the five years between 1884 and 1888, a peak that was not reached again until the building boom of 1904-1906. These "architects" ranged in skills and expertise from the academically or professionally trained to carpenter-builders who simply proclaimed themselves architects. What ever the degree of skill or training, the buildings and structures erected in the period reflect the presence of competent and even innovative architectural practices, in particular the elaborate designs of the residences of the wealthy in Second Empire, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, and Romanesque styles.<sup>18</sup>

By 1887 the real estate boom was over. Platted land for two or three miles around the heart of the city lay vacant. Large parcels of undeveloped farm land separated suburban residential areas. During the next decade, Kansas City emerged from the chaotic growth and social fluidity of the postwar period, into a roughly-crystallized social structure featuring a social and business elite at the top, a large number of poor laborers on the bottom and a larger number of clerks and small entrepreneurs of various kinds in between. The city's population grew more steadily and modestly, from 132,716 to 248,381. Expansion moved at a more orderly rate, generally southward to meet the demand for housing. The street railway systems merged and by 1908 almost all were electrified. The commercial and governmental center of Kansas City again moved southward to Main and Grand streets at 11th Street.<sup>19</sup>

As the physical size of the city and population steadily grew and expanded, a considerable change in the city's infrastructure and appearance occurred. By 1897, the city limits extended south to 79th Street and the city took on the form of a rough rectangle stretching ten miles from the Missouri River along the State line and stretching east eight miles encompassing the Town of Westport and other antonymous communities. By 1909, the city limits reached to the Blue River on the east, an area encompassing some sixty square miles, where they remained until after World War II.<sup>20</sup>

The city's patterns of growth provided some stark contrasts. Recently completed twelve-story skyscrapers towered over the "Downtown" area centered along 10th and 11th streets. But as the population spread into a wider radius, Kansas City experienced a develop-and-abandon phenomenon. While the center core and expanding rim experienced growth, intervening undeveloped areas became blighted.<sup>21</sup> The Old Town area around fifth and Main was a disheveled civic center — more and more isolated from retail and professional services. Displaced by the city's growing industrial base, slum dwellers in the West Bottoms and the Old Town moved eastward into what had been prosperous middle and upper class neighborhoods. The city's first elite residential areas began to decline. Knob Hill became known as Hobo Hill. In Quality Hill, commercial buildings and new and converted multi-family housing units steadily replaced the

mansions and town houses. In what was becoming the mid-town area, Hyde Park still continued to accommodate well-to-do families, as did the Roanoke area. But these enclaves were too small for the city's growing white-collar and leisure class inhabitants. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the selection of a location for the great new Union Station at 23rd street and Main, the progress on a comprehensive system of parks and boulevards, and the real estate developments of J.C. Nichols further emphasized and encouraged development in the newly annexed areas to the south and southeast.<sup>22</sup>

Expanding growth had stimulated a sustained campaign to improve the city's transportation system and appearance. Beginning in the early seventies and continuing in the following decades, there had been growing support for improving the main thoroughfares which linked Kansas City to communities to the east and west. Civic leaders, many of whom were well educated and well traveled, decried the lack of community brought on by rapid growth and advocated comprehensive planning and a mixing of natural beauty with the city's commercial development. This interest and an aggressive street paving program in the late 1880s led to the establishment of a city Board of Parks and Boulevard Commissioners in 1892. The Commissioners' plan, developed by landscape architect George Kessler, to address urban ills utilized designed landscapes, trafficways, open green spaces and high style architecture.

Under Kessler's direction, a park and boulevard system initiated the City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City. For the next twenty years, blighted bluffs and ravines were converted into parks linked by an extensive boulevard system following both the traditional grid and natural topographical features. By 1910 the new park and boulevard system emphasized the inadequacies of older developments and stimulated new planning and development. Throughout the city appeared new housing, better facilities, schools, and hospitals and retail shops.<sup>23</sup>

#### Kansas City 1910-1930

During the first decade of the new century, the city's population grew by 54 percent. And between 1910 and 1930 the population increased by 150,000, to 399,746 — a rate of growth mirroring that of other urban centers in the country. The city's economic base continued to be in sales, production and processing related to agriculture and real estate with manufacturing and warehousing increasing.

Businesses became more dispersed. In addition to the industries located in the Central Industrial District, new industries located on the eastern edge of the city near the lower valley of the Blue River. Construction of over 250 commercial buildings in the Central Business District and development around the new Union Station south of 19th Street in the Midtown area affirmed the city's continuing potential for development and the need to accommodate a growing population.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile the advent of the automobile had by 1913 brought the first decline in mass transit passengers and spurred the development in 1923 of the city's first suburban shopping center, the Country Club Plaza and surrounding suburban residential areas.

These same factors created a change in housing preferences as well. During the construction boom of the 1880s and continuing to the end of the century, Kansas Citians demonstrated a traditional preference for the detached house, though some row houses and apartment dwellings were built over the years. By the turn-of-the-century, however, housing shortages, a growing middle class, consumer preferences and the emergence of speculative developers ushered in an era of small apartment dwellings, typically four or six unit buildings.<sup>25</sup> As the housing market increased with the city's accelerating population, apartment houses became an even more attractive housing option for both the developer and residents. And, by the end of World War I, the apartment house became an established part of the city's residential patterns. Between the end of the W.W.I and 1925, when the construction market peaked, there was a significant increase in both the number of smaller apartment houses as well as in the average size of apartment houses. During this period a sizable number of large (18-24 units) apartment buildings and apartment hotels appeared in clusters in certain neighborhoods.<sup>26</sup>

The first decades of the twentieth century became known as an era when Kansas City began a process to address the ills of rapid development, urban congestion, flight from the city core and fluctuating land values through the introduction of city planning. During this period, architecture shifted from the aesthetic abstractions of the Victorian period to styles which reflected the social and economic realities of the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> Demands on construction dictated by growth and new technology stimulated the rationalization of American building for the next thirty years. As a result, architects gradually turned to classical or historic architectural forms and to even more functional styles.<sup>28</sup> While in Kansas City this transition occurred more slowly, the need for more housing, and the increasing number of commercial structures did create a shift to more functional adaptations of historic styles and new designs.

The evolution in design of apartment dwellings in the city is representative of these general changes. In the late nineteenth century, apartment houses took the form of row houses or two to three story apartment hotels which reflected the popular Victorian design idioms of the era. During the early years of the twentieth century, most apartment buildings in Kansas City continued to be only several stories but now featured the popular multi-deck colonnaded verandah, a classical design motif that sometimes occurred for the length of an entire block. By the end of World War I, a decided trend toward historic eclecticism had emerged. Stylistic ornamentation now appeared on functional plans. English Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical and Italian Renaissance influences decorated "modern" building plans. In the adaptation of historical design influences for ornamentation, there was also a growing a tendency toward flatter, crisper, more mechanical lines and ornamentation.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1930s Kansas City's nineteenth century residential neighborhoods had completely changed in character. Elite single-family residential enclaves such as Quality Hill and Knob Hill once found adjacent to the city's business core had disappeared. Automobiles and street cars connected the residential neighborhoods and small corner retail centers to the south with the central city, further encouraging the relocation to the suburbs. The most easily identifiable white upper class neighborhood in Kansas City was the Country Club District established by J.C. Nichols in 1907

and located some fifty blocks to the south of the river. The West Bottoms now was almost entirely industrialized. The Old Town was an almost indistinguishable part of the City's Central Industrial District. McGee's Addition, a conglomerate of commercial and residential areas with a mixed ethnic and social population, could no longer be characterized as a neighborhood. Elsewhere, middle and working class neighborhoods developed in various sections of the city with a greater dispersion of homes east and southeast of the Central Business District.<sup>30</sup>

### History of the Quality Hill Neighborhood

Kersey Coates, a Quaker from Pennsylvania, upon his visit to Kansas City in 1854, foresaw the possibility of establishing a residential neighborhood on the bluffs overlooking the confluence of the Kaw and Missouri rivers.<sup>31</sup> Coates acquired a large part of the area before the Civil War and in 1859 built his large home at the corner of Tenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Another early resident was Dr. Johnston Lykins, a former mayor of the city, who also acquired a large portion of the area and in 1856-57 erected an elaborate mansion at the southeast corner of Ottawa (now Twelfth) and Washington Streets.<sup>32</sup> The area soon became the center of an elite residential area.

A number of factors led to the area's development as a prestigious neighborhood. Running from Seventh Street ". . . to a vaguely defined border line on the south at about Thirteenth Street and from Central Street on the east to the bluffs on the west, . . ." the neighborhood was easily accessible to the business district and yet the elevation, with its magnificent views of the Missouri and Kansas river valleys, made it an attractive location for a residential suburb. The decline of another fashionable neighborhood, Pearl Street Hill, due to encroaching commercial expansion prompted many of Quality Hill's first residents to move into the new area. Joining these citizens were wealthy investors and businessmen newly arrived from the East.<sup>33</sup>

The name "Quality Hill," originated from the political speeches of Southern sympathizers, Jeffersonian Democrats, residing in the eastern portion of the city. Using this term, they branded its residents as "silk stockings," a political synonym for "Republicans." What began as an epithet, originated in the spirit of mid-nineteenth century political partisanship and linked to the sectional differences prior to and during the Civil War, ultimately remained in the public mind as a geographical term.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the political affiliations of many of the residents remained unchanged. After the Civil War, Quality Hill became the mecca for those who fought under Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan.<sup>35</sup>

By the 1870s, a sizable portion of the city's elite lived in the residences noted for the spacious yards, expensive-looking architecture and ornate carriages passing in the streets. Quality Hill reached its greatest social pre-eminence concurrently with the great real estate boom of the 1880s and maintained its position as a prestigious residential neighborhood until the turn-of-the-century. Here lived some of Kansas City's pre-Civil War leaders still active in public affairs — Johnston Lykins and Kersey Coates, Dr. Theodore Case, and Michael Dively. Here also lived newer post-war arrivals to the city's civic, commercial and social elite — S. B. and Kirkland B. Armour, James

M. Nave, Dr. David R. Porter, Howard M. Holden, E. H. Allen, Charles F. Morse, Wallace Pratt, Major William Warner, Dr. D. M. Jarboe, Brig. General Hiram F. Devol, and C. A. Brockett.<sup>36</sup>

Over one-half of the buildings within the Quality Hill neighborhood were constructed during the 1880s and many of the most elaborate and refined single-family and town house designs were those found along Pennsylvania Avenue. The building boom of the 1880s also attracted two religious congregations to Quality Hill where they constructed ornate churches. The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church (1886-88) was located on Pennsylvania Avenue. The Grace Church (1887-88) located on Washington and West 13th Street was later enlarged and became the Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. These institutions joined the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, which was an established presence in Quality Hill by 1855.

The Roman Catholic Church had played a major role in the development and stabilization of the neighborhood. In 1835, Father Benedict Roux purchased 40 acres of land on the hill adjoining the present site of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. He sold ten of the acres located between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets in 1839. Father Bernard Donnelly, erected a brick church in 1856 on the location of the present Cathedral. This was demolished to make room for the present church which was completed in 1884.<sup>37</sup> To the west of the church, located on the block between 11th and 12th streets, and Pennsylvania Avenue and Washington Street, was St. Teresa's Academy, a boarding and day academy for girls of Protestant and Catholic faiths established in 1867 by the Sisters of St. Joseph.<sup>38</sup>

Between 1889 and 1891, the first multiple-family dwellings appeared in the Quality Hill neighborhood. Developers erected family hotels such as the Montague, the Virginia, and the Cordova for the use of affluent families waiting for their new homes to be built in developing neighborhoods further south or by prominent bachelors. Also departing from the early single-family atmosphere was the Progress Club, constructed in 1893 from designs by Frederick Gunn and Louis S. Curtiss. The impressive Chateausque design building, served as a social club for the prominent Jewish families.<sup>39</sup> Following the turn-of-the-century, the Progress Club became the headquarters for the Kansas City Musician's Union.

By 1910, all of the distinguished original families of Quality Hill had left the neighborhood. The exodus of the wealthy from Quality Hill was due in part to the city's rapid expansion southward from the river into newer and more fashionable areas such as the Hyde Park and Roanoke neighborhoods. The odors from the stockyards and increasing pollution from the rapidly industrialization in the West Bottoms below the bluffs, did not enhance Quality Hill as a desirable residential area. And, by the late 1880s, lack of space for expansion left no place for succeeding generations of the old families of Quality Hill to build.<sup>40</sup>

Within a decade, the once palatial Quality Hill mansions became private hospitals, missions, and apartment houses. During the period from 1900 to 1920, several fine family apartment hotels were built on Quality Hill. The Eleanore Apartments, designed by Kansas City architect, Matt O'Connell, was, at the time of construction in 1903, the tallest apartment building in Kansas City

and the first apartment building in the city to be serviced with an automatic elevator.<sup>41</sup> Other notable multi-family structures from this period include the St. John Flats (1900), the Jarboe Family Hotel (1914), designed by Frederick Gunn, and the Rio Vista Apartments (1919), designed by the prominent local woman architect, Nelle Peters.<sup>42</sup> In 1925, St Teresa's Academy relocated and sold its property to developers. The following year, the first stage of the development of the block began with the erection of two Jacobethan-style kitchenette apartments, the Wellington and the Stratford, both designed by Nelle Peters.<sup>43</sup> These buildings were followed by the construction of a Spanish Colonial Revival style store, apartment, and garage complex designed by the firm of Besecke and DeFoe. The block was completed with three additional apartment buildings also designed by architect Peters: the Surrey court, the Chimes, and the Normandy Apartments. These were one of the last major development projects of this area which attempted to revitalize the once fashionable neighborhood.

Several small commercial structures were constructed during this period. Two of particular note are the Crane Company Stables, erected in 1911 and designed by architect Louis Curtiss, and the Yates Ice Company buildings. Initially constructed in 1890, the Yates Ice Company was enlarged in 1902 and 1907 by its new owners, the Jones Dry Goods Company, for use as a warehouse. Both of these commercial structures served as auxiliary buildings to businesses located in the West Bottoms.<sup>44</sup>

As the business and industrial districts encroached on older neighborhoods and as overcrowding occurred in these areas as more and more working class people moved into the area to be closer to their place of employment, the whole character of Quality Hill changed and housing standards further declined.<sup>45</sup> By the end of World War II, Quality Hill was a prime target for urban blight programs and became the city's first phase of urban renewal. The focus of the program was the replacement of older buildings with modern structures in an effort to renew blighted neighborhoods. The western portion of the neighborhood took on a new look with the erection of the Quality Hill Towers — five identical ten-story apartment buildings in 1949-50; the eleven-story, 132 unit apartment building at 910 Penn in 1959, (at this time the largest apartment complex in the city); and the construction of the American Hereford Association building on 11th Street. But the greatest impact on the neighborhood was the loss, through planned demolition, of many of the city's finest nineteenth century residences. Only a few, those located south of tenth street, were spared and later renovated.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The historic buildings in the Quality Hill neighborhood, the majority of which were erected during the period from 1856 to 1929, reflect a variety of popular architectural designs spanning over seventy years of Kansas City development. Over one-half of the buildings were constructed during the 1880s.

The residential single-family housing of the neighborhood reflects the popular preferences in architecture of the burgeoning upper and upper-middle classes in the late nineteenth century.

Extant single family residences dating from the late nineteenth century are clustered near the center of the neighborhood. The greatest number and the most elaborate and refined single-family and town house designs were those found between 10th and 11th streets on Pennsylvania, Washington and Jefferson Avenues. Styles which predominate include Italianate, Queen Ann, and a large number of "builder's vernacular" late nineteenth century Queen Ann adaptations. The next largest number of property types present are the apartment hotels and apartment houses erected in the period from 1880 to 1920. A large number of these early twentieth century apartment buildings are from two to five stories in height and are clustered in the 500 block of 11th Street and on Pennsylvania near 11th and 10th streets and Washington and 10th. Larger apartment buildings and apartment hotels are more dispersed and tend to have corner locations, such as those found at 10th and Broadway and 12th and Pennsylvania. These buildings reflect a wide range in styles, all popular in at the turn-of-the-century and the first years of the twentieth century and include: Richardson Romanesque, Jacobethan Revival, Georgian Revival, Neo-Classical, Mission Revival and Tapestry Brick.

Due to location, size and setting, three ecclesiastical institutions play a dominant visual role in the area. The earliest and most spectacular is the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, erected in 1879-1881. This ornate English Rococo/Romanesque design features a central spire surfaced with 23 karat gold leaf. Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral, a Gothic design complex reflects French influences and features Tiffany windows. The facility was erected in three stages — a guild hall in 1888-89, a nave in 1891, and a spire addition in 1938. (A school building erected in the 1960s has been adjoined to the rear, west facade of the church.) The Gothic Revival Swedish Evangelical Church erected in the 1880s is the smallest and simplest of the churches in the neighborhood. Also of visual note due to size, mass and styling is the 1893 Progress Club, which despite alterations, still reflects the original Chateausque styling.

Interspersed throughout the area at street corners or in peripheral areas on the north and south are small two to three story commercial retail buildings and structures. Most are typical early twentieth century commercial styling. Several incorporate elements of Mission styling.

As noted in the previous discussion of the physical environment, the buildings are located on narrow city lots. Each property type — single-family, multiple-family — follows a uniform set back. Because like property types tend to be clustered in areas and along streetscapes, and are built of common materials, this presents the illusion of uniformity within a dense urban residential neighborhood.

**PART III    ENDNOTES**

1.     The buildings placed in nomination constituted the largest surviving portion of the original Quality Hill Neighborhood.
2.     A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri, (Boulder Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 7-9.
3.     George Ehrlich, Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History 1826-1990, Revised and Enlarged Edition, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), pp. 3-9.
4.     Ibid., pp. 4, 39.
5.     Brown and Dorsett, p. 41.
6.     Ibid., p. 9; The change to "Kansas City" officially occurred in 1889 with the adoption of a new city charter.
7.     Howard Wight Marshall, Folk Architecture in Little Dixie: A Regional Culture in Missouri, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), pp. 2, 30-33, 39, 41; and Ehrlich, p. 13.
8.     Ehrlich, p. 31.
9.     Brown and Dorsett, pp. 41-46, 50-53; and Ehrlich, p. 21.
10.    Brown and Dorsett, pp. 29-31.
11.    Ibid., p. 42.
12.    Ibid., pp. 45-46.
13.    Ibid., pp. 53-54.
14.    Ibid., p. 99.
15.    Ibid., pp. 104-105.
16.    Ibid., p. 41.
17.    Ibid., pp. 44-46, 53-54.
18.    Ehrlich, p. 36.

19. Ibid., pp. 58, 102.
20. Ibid., p. 58.
21. James Marsten Fitch, American Building The Historical Forces That Shaped It, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 242.
22. Brown and Dorsett, p. 172; and Ehrlich, p. 66.
23. The plan was completely implemented in 1915. Ehrlich, p. 66.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., pp. 58, 66-67. This preference may well reflect some characteristics inherent in the local building industry. Ehrlich notes that it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the history of speculative real estate development that shaped so much of the city's growth. However, he states, it is clear that prior to World War I, large buildings would either have been too difficult a project technically or too expensive for the resources of the existing construction and development businesses.
26. Ibid., p. 67.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 51; and Fitch, pp. 214, 228-229, 242-245.
29. Ehrlich, pp. 67, 84, 89; and Mobley and Harris, p. 291.
30. Brown and Dorsett, p. 187.
31. "Elegance of Old Quality Hill Lives in Shadows of Progress," Kansas City Star, (March 15, 1953) sec. E. p. 4.
32. The Lykins' residence was moved across Washington Street in 1889, later altered, and finally demolished in 1990.
33. "Eastern Culture at Home on Quality Hill," Kansas City Star, (June 4, 1950) sec. Cen. III, p. 2; and Kansas City Star, (March 15, 1953) sec. E, p. 4.
34. Pierre R. Porter. "Quality Hill - A Study in Heredity," The Missouri Historical Review, (July 1941), pp. 563, 568.
35. Kansas City Star. (March 15, 1953), Sec. E, p. 4.

36. Pearl Wilcox, Jackson County Pioneers, (Independence, MO.: N.P., 1975), p. 263; and Brown and Dorsett, p. 42.
37. Theodore S. Case, History of Kansas City, Missouri, (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason and Co., 1888), p. 301; and "Catholic Church Here Was Founded by French More Than a Century Ago," Kansas City Times, (June 5, 1939), p. 16.
38. "The Anniversary of St. Teresa's Recalls Early History of the City," Kansas City Star, (October 9, 1935), p. 11; "The Old St. Teresa Academy Block at Twelfth and Washington Has Been Transformed in the Last Year," Kansas City Star, (May 29, 1927), sec. D, p. 1; and "Builds on Convent Site," Kansas City Star, (August 14, 1927), sec. D, p. 1.
39. Carrie Eastlake Whitney, Kansas City: Its History and Its People, 1808-1908, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908), p. 234.
40. Clifford Naysmith, "Rebirth of Once Fashionable Home Site Happy Ending to Once Depressing Story," Jackson County Historical Society Journal, (Spring 1969), pp. 8, 15.
41. "Building Up of the West Side District," The Kansas City World, (November 29, 1903), p. 16.
42. Building Permits #12415 and #11284, Landmarks Commission, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri; and Water Permit #11796, Water Department, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
43. "The Old St. Teresa Academy Block at Twelfth and Washington Has Been Transformed In the Last Year," Kansas City Star, (May 29, 1927), Sec. D, p. 1.
44. Building Permit #10016; and Water Permit #10707.
45. Naysmith, p. 8.

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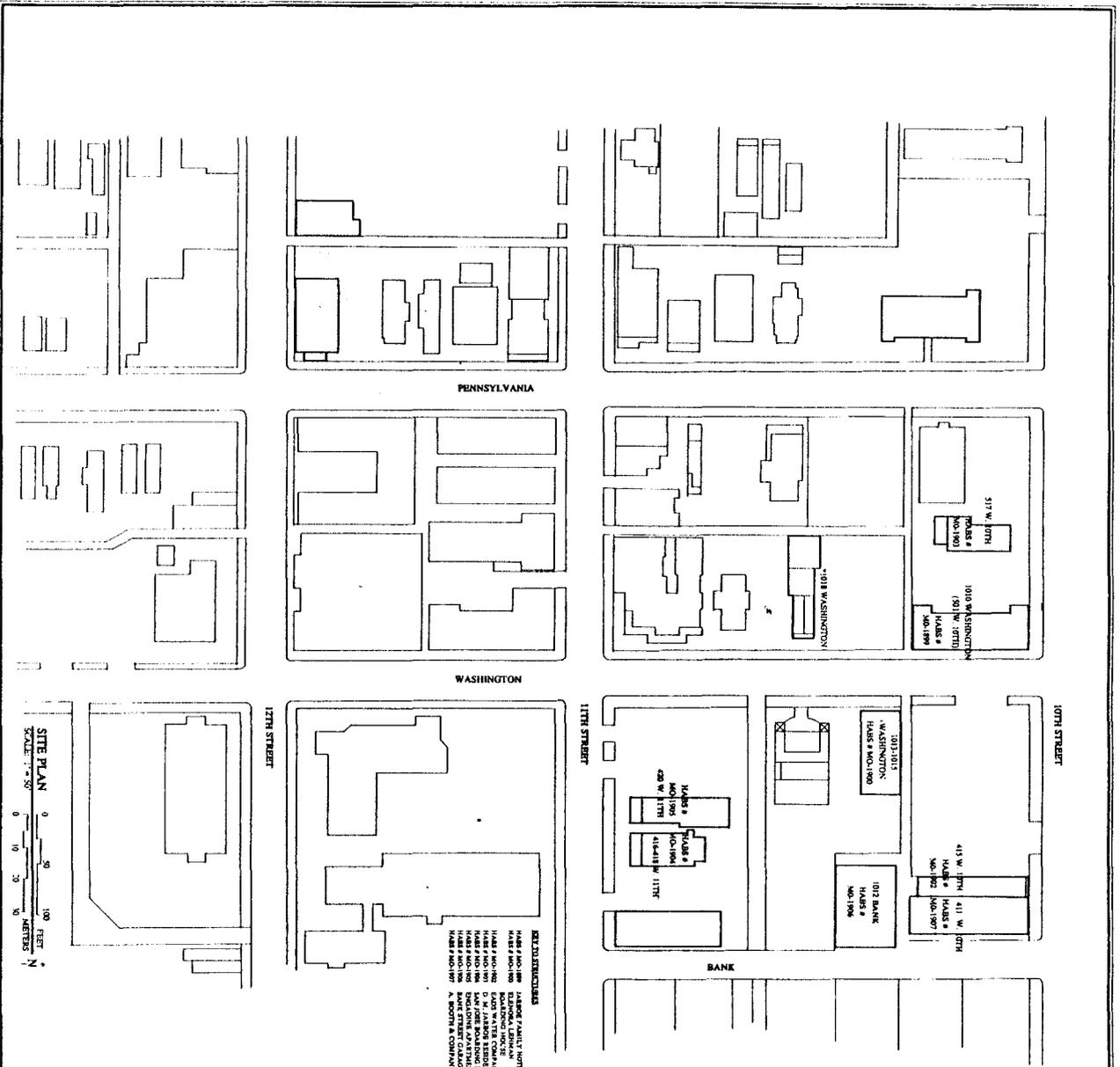
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PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the larger Quality Hill neighborhood and of the Quality Hill Historic District was developed during 1983-1992 under supervision of the Department of Housing and Community Development of Kansas City Missouri, with additional information provided by the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri and Historic Kansas City Foundation. The specific buildings that are the focus of this report were on land slated for redevelopment, prompting this HABS recordation. Also, a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Kansas City, the State of Missouri and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation requires a HABS recordation of these buildings, pursuant to compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. One structure was demolished prior to the Memorandum of Agreement, and consequently, no photos were taken for that recordation. Donald Henning of Kansas City, Missouri, conducted the field photography. Lisa Lassman Briscoe, Administrator, Kansas City Missouri Landmarks Commission, conducted historical research and analysis based on information from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Quality Hill District of Kansas City, Missouri, prepared by Linda Becker and Edward Mischuk of the Landmarks Commission in 1978. Sarah F. Schwenk, Executive Director, Historic Kansas City Foundation made additions to the documentation of the Quality Hill neighborhood and district.

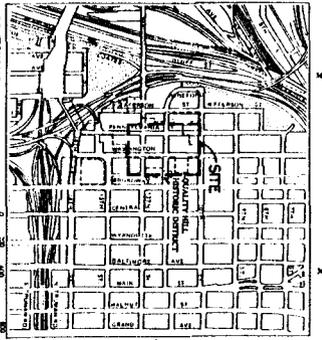


# QUALITY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

QUALITY HILL STRETCHES FROM 7TH STREET TO A VARIETY OF OTHER STREETS TO THE SOUTH AT ABOUT 17TH STREET. THE AREA BECAME A FASHIONABLE AND FAVORABLE NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE HIGH ELEVATION AND ATTRACTIVE BEAUTIFUL NEW RESIDENCES BECAME A VESTIBULE TO A QUICKLY GROWING DOWNTOWN. THE AREA REMAINED DESIRED AND QUIET, AND SOON BECAME A FAVORABLE NEIGHBORHOOD. MANY FAVORABLE KANSAS CITIANS BUILT THEIR HOMES ON QUALITY HILL. MANY HOMES WERE BUILT IN THE 1850S AND 1860S. THE AREA GREW QUICKLY, AND DURING THE GREAT REAL ESTATE BOOM OF THE 1870S, THE HILL REACHED ITS PEAK OF SOCIAL PROMINENCE. OVER THE COURSE OF THE 19TH CENTURY, THE NEIGHBORHOOD WAS CONSTRUCTED DURING THIS DECADE, AND AT ONE TIME IT CLAIMED 81 ARCHITECTURALLY AND HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS.

FAMILY HOTELS AND APARTMENT BUILDINGS WERE ALSO A SIGNIFICANT FEATURE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THESE OTHER KINDS OF BUILDINGS WERE BUILT FOR THE GROWING DOWNTOWN, AND THE BUILDING WEST WARD WAS COVERED WITH LOCAL COMMERCIAL EFFORTS AND THE ADVANCED WAREHOUSE DISTRICT. THE HILL NEIGHBORHOOD IS KNOWN FOR THE STREET FRONT WHICH THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS KNOWN FOR.

HOWEVER, BY THE EARLY 1900S, THE NEIGHBORHOOD BEGAN TO CHANGE. THE AREA WAS BEING DEVELOPED FOR INDUSTRIAL USE, FOLLOWED BY THE BUILDING OF MORE SKYSCRAPER LOTS ON WHICH TO BUILD THE UMBRELLA SHEDDING STEVEDORE AND MEAT PACKING PLANTS. THE DECLINE IN POPULATION AND PRICE. MANY HOMES WERE CUT UP INTO ROOMING HOUSES FOR THE WORKERS OF THE 1920S INDUSTRIAL BOOM. TODAY, AFTER SEVERAL DECADES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S INDUSTRIAL USE, THE AREA HAS BEEN REDEVELOPED INTO MODERN OLD BUILDINGS ARE FINDING NEW USES.



DOCUMENTATION OF THE QUALITY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT WAS DEVELOPED DURING 1981-1992 UNDER SUPERVISION OF THE KANSAS CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY. THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION OF KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, THE SPECIFIC BUILDINGS THAT ARE FOCUSED ON HERE WERE ON LAND ACQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC SOCIETY IN 1981. THE SOCIETY HAS ALSO A MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF KANSAS CITY, THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION REPORTS. A HAS MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF KANSAS CITY, THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AND THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT.

THIS STRUCTURE WAS DEMOLISHED PRIOR TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DISTRICT. CONSEQUENTLY, NOTATIONS WERE MADE TO INDICATE THIS RECONSTRUCTION.

ADDENDUM TO:  
QUALITY HILL

Bounded by Jefferson Street, Broadway Street, 10th Street, &  
Fourteenth Street  
Kansas City  
Jackson County  
Missouri

HABS MO-1250  
MO-1250

HABS  
MO-1250

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
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U.S. Department of the Interior  
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Washington, DC 20240-0001