

HABS
MO,
48-INDEP,
4-

Harvey M. Vaile Mansion
1500 North Liberty Street
Independence
Jackson County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1861

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HABS
MO,
48-INDE
4 -

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HARVEY M. VAILE MANSION

HABS No. MO-1861

Location: 1500 North Liberty Street, Independence, Jackson County,
Missouri

Present Owner: City of Independence

Present Occupant: Vaile Mansion-DeWitt Museum

Present Use: Museum

Significance: House is a locally significant example of Second Empire
Victorian architecture. The original owner, Col. Harvey M.
Vaile, played a significant role in the business and social
circles of turn-of-the-century Independence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1871
2. Architect: Asa Cross
3. Original owner: Col. Harvey M. Vaile
4. Subsequent owners: Mrs. J. Roger DeWitt
City of Independence
5. Contractor: William Randall
6. Alterations: Beginning in 1908, the house was used as a
sanitarium, with continuing minor interior alterations. The
city of Independence acquired the house in 1983 and began a
long-term restoration program. In 1988 this was still in
progress.

B. Historical Context:

According to tradition, Harvey M. Vaile and his wife saw a large house in Normandy in France which served as the inspiration for the structure. After achieving success in capitalist ventures, Vaile built the house as his showplace. He entertained notables of the 1880's and 1890's lavishly, including U.S. Senators and congressmen. After Vaile's death in 1895, several nieces and nephews engaged in a suit contesting Vaile's will. The suit lasted five years; in 1908, the house became a sanitarium and never again served as a private residence.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This house represents the popular Second Empire style, characterized by an imposing symmetrical square block with a tower extending above the rest of the structure. As in many structures of this type, the Vaile house contains tall, narrow doors and windows which emphasize verticality. The multi-colored slate roof and profusion of applied ornament also are typical of the Second Empire style.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Site:

The original Vaile estate included 630 acres and numerous outbuildings. The house now occupies a parcel of land which measures roughly 5.6 acres. As of 1969, the carriage house still existed under separate ownership. A greenhouse originally stood to the north of the house.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

National Register of Historic Places nomination form, "Col. Harvey M. Vaile Mansion," Jackson County, Missouri. Prepared by M. Patricia Holmes, June, 1969.

Telephone conversation with Frank Davis, Jackson County Historian, July 14, 1988.

Prepared by: Robert Buerglener
Historic American
Buildings Survey
July 14, 1988

ADDENDUM TO
HARVEY M. VAILE MANSION
1500 North Liberty Street
Independence
Jackson County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1861

HABS
MO,
48-INDEP,
4-

XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013