

618-20 SOUTH NINTH STREET, DUPLEX
St. Joseph
Buchanan County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1885

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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

618-620 SOUTH NINTH STREET, DUPLEX

HABS No. MO-1885

Location: 618-620 South 9th Street, Duplex
North half Lot 7, Block 2, Patee Addition
St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

Present Owner: Clint & Betty Larson

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: This duplex residence, 618-620 South 9th Street, has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing property in a potential extension of the Museum Hill Historic District. Although the structure is vacant and deteriorated, it retains sufficient integrity of design and association to demonstrate a sense of time and place and thus is significant as a potential element of the district.

The building is moderately significant as a representative example of the Queen Anne style duplex property type. This was the predominant style for duplexes built during the 1880s and 1890s. The property type was described in the multiple property context statement "Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri."

Duplexes are significant in the areas of commerce and architecture. The 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 618-620 South 9th Street, are 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: 1893

Architect: Unknown

Owner: Bartley Wiedmaier

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 progressed steadily from frontier days through the industrialization period to the early twentieth century, serving as one of the largest and most profitable commercial centers in the region. 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.

Patee's Addition (now PENN Neighborhood)

The duplex residence at 618-620 South 9th is associated with the development of St. Joseph in the late nineteenth century. When the property was determined to be eligible for the National Register, it was considered architecturally significant as a contributing property in a potential extension of the proposed Museum Hill Historic District. Since then the deterioration of buildings in the area has continued and the Museum Hill District has been listed without including any properties in the area south of Messanie Street.

When the historic preservation survey of this area was performed in 1988, it became apparent that much of the neighborhood had been in a state of continuous decline for decades. Demolition of numerous buildings had resulted in gaps in the streetscape that diminished, at least in parts, the ambiance that historically was present. This decline was most obvious on 9th and 10th Streets. Overall, the survey area probably never was considered one of the more prominent or economically viable sections of St. Joseph.

Located in Patee's Addition, an amalgamation of four successive plats, this residence is typical of the modest single-family or multi-unit dwellings common in the area. In his inaugural speech of 1858 Mayor Jeff Thompson specified that a market be located in the south ward of the city for the convenience of the working class so it would be close to areas where land was affordable to them. This remark gives the impression that early in the city's history there was a trend toward a lower social/economic class neighborhood here than in the areas on the hills north of Messanie Street (i.e. Museum Hill, Cathedral Hill, Hall Street, and Robidoux Hill). By the early 1880s, industrial and commercial areas were well-established along the south and west periphery of Patee's Addition. This presence and the preference for housing on the higher land north and northeast of "Pateetown" by the more affluent citizens had a noticeable effect on the architectural character of this area.

The building at 602-604 South 9th Street was constructed only four blocks north of the Patee Market. Also, the property was not far from the Union Railroad Depot at 6th and Mitchell Streets. The city's main passenger depot was completed in 1882, burned and rebuilt in 1895. It was the major structure in a sprawling railroad-industrial district west of 9th Street paralleling the Missouri River. Most of the residents of Patee's Addition had economic associations with this district as employees or business owners.

The Duplex Residence Property Type in St. Joseph

During the "Golden Age" in St. Joseph, the 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. If the duplex was the owner's primary residence, it represented a vehicle by which an aspiring member of the middle class could afford a more elaborate home in a fashionable district. In Patee's Addition a more important factor was the fact that the city's burgeoning population put a strain on the existing housing stock and duplexes were a cost efficient way of providing residences for the growing middle class.

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 building, frequently just next door. The wealth earned by those associated with wholesaling and related industries allowed them to invest in other areas of the local economy. Real estate was a favored form of investment in St. Joseph, both directly through the construction of income-producing properties 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 in St. Joseph were established after 1880, so most duplexes were constructed after this date.

This property type is usually part of a district and has many of the stylistic features of the surrounding single-family homes. The majority of duplexes were two-story and constructed of brick, although there are isolated one-story and wood frame and weatherboard examples. 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 have the same setback as the residences. This setback is often within ten feet of the property line.

To be architecturally significant, examples of this property type should retain integrity of association and location as well as design and materials. The facade arrangement and fenestration is especially important. The original roof shape and exterior building materials should remain intact. Architectural features characteristic of the Queen Ann style which are evidenced in the front facade at 618-620 South 9th Street include the mock mansard roof with shingled wall dormers and the free classical porch detailing.

Of the 194 contributing residential buildings in the survey area, 139 were single-family dwellings, 46 were duplexes, and 9 were multi-family buildings. The largest group of residences (95), including this example, was constructed between 1891 and 1915. The next largest group (57) was constructed between 1865 and 1890, and another significant group (36) was constructed before 1865. In terms of style, the Queen Anne was relatively common with 24 single-family residences and 10 duplexes represented.

618-620 South 9th Street

Construction of this building was indicated by a building permit for a residence (valued at \$4,000) issued June 7, 1893 to B. Wiedmaier. Bartley or Bartholomew Wiedmaier, as the name was variously recorded, was listed in the 1869-70 city directory as a partner in Wiedmaier and Wildberger, wagon manufacturers. The business was located at the northwest corner of 7th and Messanie. Wiedmaier's residence was listed on the west side of 9th Street between Locust and Messanie. In 1889 and 1894 Wiedmaier's address was recorded as 612 South 9th Street.

The duplex at 618-620 South 9th probably was constructed by Wiedmaier next to his residence as an income and investment property. According to the 1883 and 1888 Sanborn maps, the large brick duplex replaced a smaller one-story residence. The property remained in the family because Mrs. B. Wiedmaier received a building permit April 7, 1906 for construction of a porch (\$200). As for the tenants, they were middle class workers consistent with the general social structure of the neighborhood. In 1899 George M. Good, a clerk in the city engineer's office occupied 618 South 9th while Joseph Shackelford, a salesman for the H-F Dry Goods Company, shared the south half of the duplex with W.S. August, a clerk for the McDonald Hardware Company.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. **Architectural Merit and Interest:** The duplex residence located at 618-620 South 9th Street, has moderate significance as a contributing building in a potential extension of a proposed historic district. The building is a representative example of the duplex residential property type. It has architectural features characteristic of the Queen Anne style with free classical detail.
2. **Condition of fabric:** Poor (to be demolished). The building is vacant and deteriorated.

B. Summary Description:

618-620 South 9th Street

This is a rectangular two-story brick masonry building with a nearly flat roof sloping to the rear. There are two adjacent front and rear entrances. The building is approximately 35 feet wide from north to south and 50 feet from east to west. It has a basement and brick foundation. There is a corbeled brick belt course at the eave in front and extending along both side walls. The side parapet walls of the building step down to the rear in three bays. The west front and side walls are laid in running bond; the rear wall is laid in common bond. There is a full-length hipped-roof entrance porch on wooden columns with a molded entablature cornice and dentil ornamentation. In the rear two hipped-roof screened porches are separated by a double flight of wooden stairs. The rear porches are supported on square posts and ornamented by a frieze of square spindles. There are chimneys in the side walls and another serving each unit in the rear wall.

The front four-bay facade is symmetrical. On the first floor the central entrances are flanked by wide fixed windows with transoms. There are transoms over the front entrances. On the second floor there are single wooden double-hung windows above the entrances and paired windows above the lower fixed windows. A number of the window sashes appear to be replacements. Openings in the front facade have flat brick arches; openings in the side walls have segmental arches. The openings have smooth-cut stone sills painted white. Two rear openings in the north side wall have been altered and reduced.

The building has a built-up asphalt roof. The principal ornamental feature of the front facade is a mock mansard roof with a central gable vent dormer and projecting side gable wall dormers. There is a broad metal parapet cap. The dormers are ornamented with fish-scale shingle courses and there are large semicircular windows in the projecting wall dormers. An ornamental metal crest remains on the vent and south wall dormer.

Interior

Both units of this duplex residence have similar mirror-image interior plans. There is an interior hall with front and rear stairs next to the partition wall between the units. The first floor rooms are arranged in a linear plan with a front parlor, parlor, dining room, and rear kitchen. On the second floor there are three bedrooms, a bathroom and two rooms in the rear. In both units the second floor rooms have been altered to accommodate additional apartments. A modern kitchen has been installed in the center room to the north and in the rear of the south unit.

The stair balustrade has a molded railing, square chamfered newel posts, and turned spindles. There is wood flooring throughout the building, but it has been covered with linoleum in the rear kitchens and on the second floor. The walls and ceilings are lath and plaster in deteriorated condition. There are wooden four-panel doors and 1/1 wooden double-hung windows.

Decorative features include mantelpieces in the two front parlors, baseboard with a crown molding cap, as well as beaded and beveled door and window casings with molded base blocks and medallion corner blocks crowned with a pediment detail. There are finished segmental arched plaster openings between the parlors.

C. Site

This property is located on a level lot on a major north-south street in a neighborhood with numerous deteriorated buildings and vacant lots. The neighborhood is situated between the historic commercial/industrial district to the west near the Missouri River and residential development to the east on higher land.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Bibliography:

Building Permit file: North half Lot 7, Block 2, Patee Addition.

St. Joseph City Directories: 1869-70, 1889, 1894, 1899.

Sanborn Insurance Company maps. City of St. Joseph (1883, 1888, 1911).

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