

John Mulvihill Duplex  
1408-1410 Charles Street  
St. Joseph  
Buchanan County  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1886

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## JOHN MULVIHILL DUPLEX

HABS No. MO-1886

**Location:** 1408-1410 Charles Street  
Lots 5-6, Block 24, Carter's Addition  
St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

**Present Owner:** Irene E. Wineinger, deceased

**Present Use:** Vacant

**Significance:** The John Mulvihill duplex residence, 1408-1410 Charles Street, is moderately significant as a contributing property in the Museum Hill National Register Historic District (listed 03-08-91) and the local Museum Hill Historic District (designated 01-06-86). The district is significant in the areas of commerce and architecture during the period ca. 1860-1931. The district retains its historic integrity of location and setting. Contributing buildings retain physical features indicative of period styles and design preferences. Contributing buildings convey a sense of the historic scene when St. Joseph's burgeoning economic prosperity was reflected in its equally robust residential growth.

Although it is altered and deteriorated, the building is a representative example of the duplex residence property type with characteristics of the Queen Anne architectural style. This type is significant in the areas of commerce, industry, and architecture according to the context statement and description of property types entitled, "Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri." Queen Anne was the predominant style for duplexes built during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a period known as the "Golden Age" of St. Joseph.

The duplex at 1408-1410 Charles is significant for its historical association with the development forces which played a major role in shaping St. Joseph. Duplexes of St. Joseph are 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." 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

Date of erection: 1887

Architect: Unknown

Original owner: John Mulvihill

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 their goods and interest in the post becoming sole proprietor. When the town plan was recorded in 1843, the population of the settlement was about 200 people. By December the population had increased to 500 as settlers learned of the establishment of a town.

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

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

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

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

#### Museum Hill Historic District

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

According to the National Register nomination, compared to the total of 280 properties and 246 eligible buildings, there are 37 duplex residential structures contributing to the district. "Duplex residential structures were primarily built as the outcome of three forces in St. Joseph: the desire for fashionable, but affordable, housing in established residential districts, a means of providing income producing property for the occupant/owners of the duplex, and the growing need among capitalists to find a profitable way to invest their wealth in the city.... Primarily these duplexes most tangibly reflect the middle class citizenry's aspirations in obtaining housing in the better established historic neighborhoods. The outward visual character of these properties commonly mimicked the styles of the larger mansions--many featuring stylistic allusions to the prestigious Queen Anne residences.

#### The Duplex Property Type in St. Joseph

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

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

This property type had many of the stylistic features of the surrounding single-family homes. The majority were two-story and constructed of brick, although there are isolated one-story and wood frame and weatherboard examples. The predominant style for those built during the 1880s and early 1890s was Queen Anne. These had features such as projecting bays, stained glass windows, gable end decoration, and elaborate cornice, window and door moldings. Much of the ornamentation was expressed in patterned brickwork, such as stringcoursing, dentils, and arched window lintels. The primary difference between this property type and the single family residences was that despite a varied and irregular wall surface treatment, the duplexes remained basically symmetrical with mirror-image units, while the single-family Queen Anne style residences were generally asymmetrical. Also, many of the duplexes were flat-roofed, as opposed to the multiple-pitched roofs of the single-family homes of the period. However, many duplexes utilized devices to avoid the appearance of a flat roof, such as false mansard fronts, or end gables over projecting bays. A few duplexes were constructed in other elaborate styles of the Victorian period.

#### The John Mulvihill Duplex Residence

A building permit for this property (\$1,900) was issued March 8, 1887 to John Mulvihill who never resided at this address. Instead, one of the first occupants from 1889 to 1891 was Edward C. Browne, section general manager of the Kansas City, St. Joseph and Council Bluffs Railroad and the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad.

PART II.           ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A.   General Statement

1.   Architectural Merit and Interest:   The John Mulvihill Duplex, 1408-1410 Charles Street, is an example of the duplex residence property type. Although it is altered and deteriorated, the building retains integrity of association, location, design, and materials. The facade arrangement, fenestration, and roof are intact. The building also retains ornamental characteristics distinguishing it as an example of the Queen Anne architectural style.
2.   Condition of fabric:            Poor (to be demolished). The building is deteriorated and has been vandalized, but the masonry walls and roof remain sound. The interior has been partially remodeled.

- B.   Summary Description:   The John Mulvihill duplex residence is a one-story rectangular brick masonry building with projecting front gable bays, recessed side entrances and a truncated hipped roof. It is approximately 30 feet wide from east to west and 45 feet long from north to south. There is a basement and brick foundation. The front facade is laid in running bond and the side and rear walls in common bond. Brick detailing ornaments the main facade. There is a raised brick water table and window sill belt course. A recessed brick panel is located between the front bays. Sawtooth brick courses punctuate the gable end bays. Above and behind the gable bays, there is a central decorative panel of wood shingles ornamenting the gable end of the main roof. All the masonry openings have segmental arched lintels; The windows in the front bays have raised label lintels. Generally, the walls are painted white with the ornamentation in front outlined in black.

An original wooden entrance porch remains on the west. It is supported on a single turned post. There is a wooden floor and an ornamental sawn porch frieze. The east porch has been altered; it has a concrete floor and a modern iron post. A full-length shed-roofed porch in the rear is supported on square posts with a modern wooden floor on parged brick piers. The basement entrance is a hatch in this floor. In the front there is a central interior brick chimney. Original paneled and glazed wooden entrance doors remain. There are 1/1 wooden double-hung windows. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

Interior. The individual dwelling units in this building were mirror image linear suites separated by a brick partition wall. From the porches there are entrances to the two front parlors in each unit. The second parlor opens to a bed-sitting room with a narrow closet along the interior wall. The kitchen and bathroom are located in the rear. The brick partition wall has been breached in the bedroom area. Although the front parlor and kitchen of the east unit have been remodeled with paneling and a dropped ceiling, most of the original woodwork remains. The baseboard is beaded and surmounted with a crown molding. The door and window casing has a central reeded profile and square corner blocks with circular medallions. The original wooden floor is exposed in the second parlor. The front rooms of the west dwelling unit have been gutted, but the configuration of the kitchen and bathroom is intact including the pantry in the kitchen. Original wooden wainscoting remains in the bathroom.

- C. Site: There is an alley to the east and the lot slopes west. This building is located in a residential neighborhood with a number of vacant lots in the vicinity.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### Bibliography:

Building Permit file: Lots 5-6, Block 24, Carter's Addition.

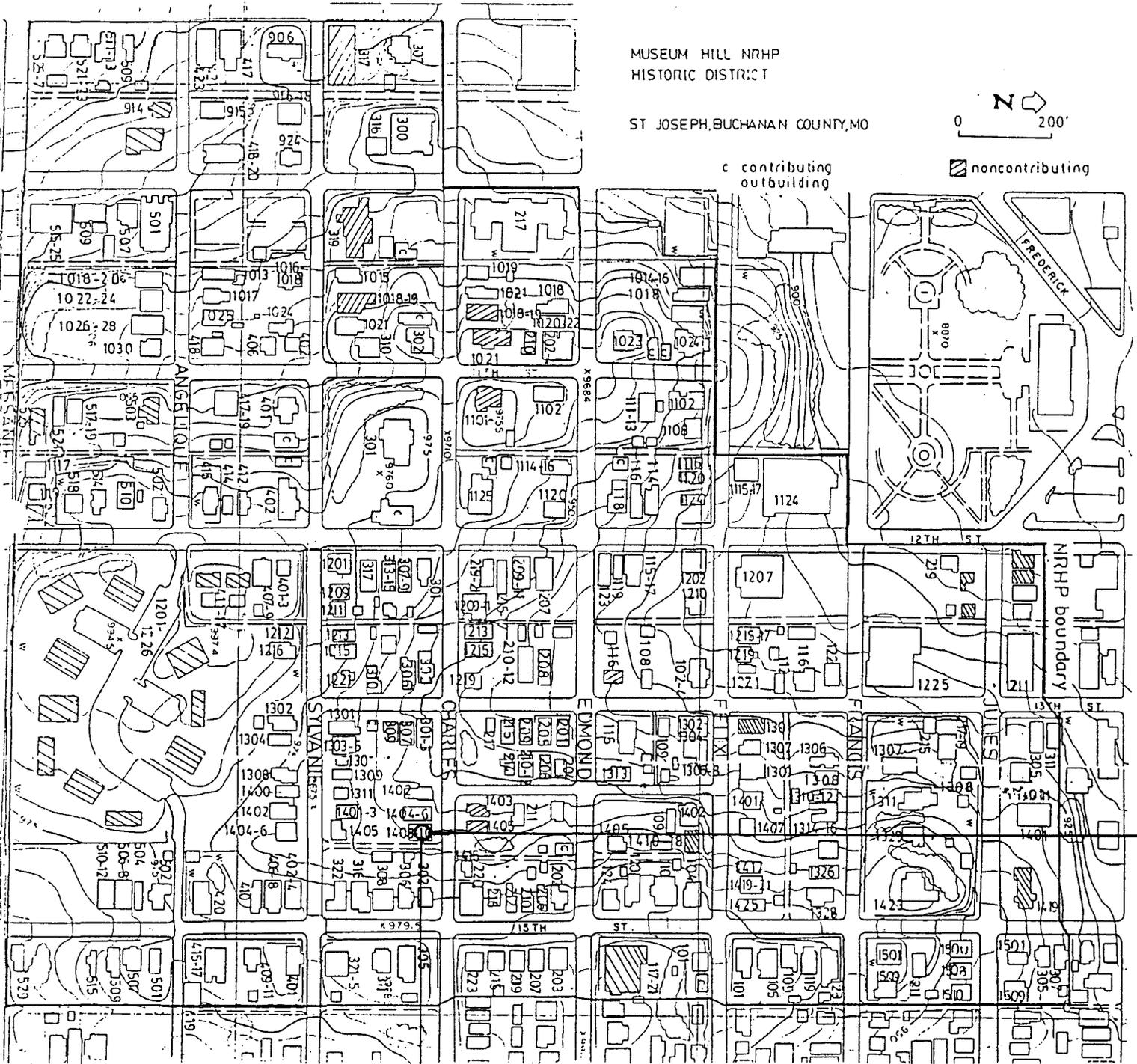
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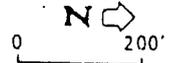
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MUSEUM HILL NRHP  
HISTORIC DISTRICT

ST JOSEPH, BUCHANAN COUNTY, MO



c contributing  
outbuilding

▨ noncontributing

NRHP boundary