

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY WEST
Inventory of Historic Buildings**

Preliminary Survey

1988

Prepared by Esley Hamilton

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RESEARCH METHODS

The western part of St. Louis County is a large, varied, and relatively unstudied area in comparison to others in St. Louis County. While the north and south county areas studied this year encompassed less than two congressional townships each, the twenty-five sites inventoried in west county lie in four congressional townships, and sites in three other townships could have been included had the inventory moved a little farther east. A complete congressional township is thirty-six square miles. In terms of the total number of resources, this large expanse of territory more than offsets the relatively less developed condition of the western part of it.

Within this territory a few historic buildings have been known for a long time but never studied in any depth. 100 Historic Buildings in St. Louis County, published in 1970, included six sites in this district. One of them, the A. P. Greensfelder Family Retreat, subsequently burned down, while Deep Springs Farm was incorporated into the Ramada Inn Six Flags. The building called the Wild Horse Creek School in that publication actually turned out on further investigation to be the Old Bethel Methodist Church; our knowledge of the remaining structures, the Pond Hotel, the Hoppenberg-Fick Store, and the Tyler House, has been greatly improved by the research that has been undertaken as part of the present inventory.

Some light has been shed on the west county in previous publications. J. Thomas Scharf's History of St. Louis City and County of 1883 includes the story of the failed town of Melrose and mentions Allenton and some other west county places. William L. Thomas's History of St. Louis County of 1911 includes some history of the west county in Volume I and biographies of several prominent farming families in Volume II. The history of St. Louis County published by the Watchman-Advocate in 1919 has an emphasis on businessmen rather than farmers and consequently gives short shrift to this part of the county, but a few references can be gleaned from the biographies of west county offspring who moved to other parts of the county. The U.S. Bicentennial inspired Creve Coeur and Ellisville to produce histories that included some west county sites, and Ellisville subsequently produced a second publication to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 1983.

Only one property in west county is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. That is Babler State Park, which was built in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is included in the large multiple-resource nomination, "Emergency Conservation Work (E.C.W.) Architecture in Missouri State Parks 1933-1942," listed in 1985. Kiwanis Camp Wyman, though never listed, was the subject of a detailed and useful nomination in 1980.

Aside from the sites that had already been identified in the sources listed above, the primary means of identifying structures for inclusion in the present survey was visual inspection. Most buildings in the survey had to be researched from primary sources, deeds and probate records, which meant that exact dating was not possible. This is a

common problem in rural surveys, particularly where land was held by one family for a long period of time. The existing house may have replaced an earlier one decades into the tenure of the land by the family, and only a family reminiscence can pinpoint the date of construction. Where educated guesses have been necessary in this survey, available documentation has been described as fully as possible, even where it might be somewhat earlier or later than the buildings themselves.

Even in available records, certain deficiencies became apparent in this inventory more clearly than had been the case in the preceding rural surveys. One was that many probate files have lost important pieces of information, typically either the will or the inventory. A related problem is that all court records of the present St. Louis County, that is after 1876, have been discarded. This can be particularly detrimental to historic research in cases which resulted in the partition of farms; usually the maps filed in these cases were one of a kind and can only be reconstructed, if at all, from written descriptions. To compensate for this loss of visual reference, recent descriptions of land in St. Louis County have tended to eliminate all references to earlier documents, in the process removing the clues that facilitate historic research. The newer land descriptions tend to be composed of more exact measurements (but often the obscure units of chains and links), complicated geometric angles, and references to surveyors' monuments that can only be understood on the site, and then often only by a skilled surveyor.

Another modern practice complicating the study of rural properties is the periodic change in title to avoid probate. Where properties at the turn of the century were usually recorded in the name of the husband only, now they are recorded in the name of both the husband and wife in such a way that if one dies, the property becomes the sole possession of the survivor and thus not subject to probate inventories. By adding the names of children to the deed, or by selling the property with life estate, or alternatively by setting up a living trust, property owners can prevent the property from appearing in public probate records for generations.

The following inventory forms have been arranged according to the street addresses of the properties, alphabetically and numerically. St. Louis County has extended its consistent house numbering system to rural areas in recent years, but earlier box numbers and rural route numbers have not yet been replaced in all county records. In some instances, too, errors have been made in numbering, so some properties in this inventory may have more than one address. For purposes of this inventory, municipal boundaries have been ignored, although some properties have recently been incorporated into the municipalities of Chesterfield, Clarkson Valley, and Eureka. Those boundaries are themselves currently subject to change, and with the expansion of this survey into adjacent areas, some modification of the present arrangement can be expected.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The western part of St. Louis County is the only part not bounded by water. To the north is the Missouri River and to the south the Meramec River, but to the west is the long straight border with Franklin County, corresponding with the north-south line between Ranges Two and Three East.

The Missouri River turns north and east as it meets St. Louis County, producing a wide valley with much rich bottom land on the St. Louis side. This area was called the Bonhomme Bottom in the early nineteenth century and Gumbo, after the crossroads settlement there, at the turn of the century, but an effort is now being made to give it the more fashionable designation of Chesterfield Valley. Interstate 64 (U.S. 40) cuts across this valley to one of the few bridges across the Missouri River into St. Charles County. The hills rimming this valley are nearly sheer cliffs in many places, so that the roads connecting the top and bottom are few. The line of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad runs along the foot of these hills, and it generated small settlements at Chesterfield and Centaur. Centaur is now only a memory at Eatherton and Centaur Roads. Chesterfield depot has no more than thirty buildings, but its name now designates the large municipality incorporated only this year, most of whose population is located east of here. The main artery of the hilltop district remains Wild Horse Creek Road, which follows the tops of the hills west from Chesterfield depot to the small creek for which it is named, and then follows that creek south looping back to the east at its southernmost point. Other roads in the vicinity of Wild Horse Creek are named for mid-nineteenth-century settlers: Eatherton, Bouquet, Puellman, Hardt, Ossenfort, Rieger. Melrose Road is named for the failed town of Melrose, from which only one building is still standing. Orrville, a more informal rural settlement on Old Eatherton Road, still has a handful of houses.

At the south edge of the west county, the Meramec River forms a landscape of steep bluffs, more gentle wooded hills, and wide, flat bottoms. The curving valley creates many outstandingly scenic points of view. Cutting in a nearly straight line through this winding valley is the Missouri Pacific Railroad line, paralleled through much of its length by Interstate 44, which was formerly the line of U. S. Route 66. Three communities that grew up along this line have survived: Eureka; Allenton, recently annexed by Eureka; and Pacific, which is largely in Franklin County but overlaps slightly into St. Louis County.

A glance at the map shows that a large portion of west county land between the rivers is in public ownership. To the north is Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park, 2,439 acres largely developed in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The State Department of Natural Resources refers to the topography of the park as "rugged Missouri River hills," a description that could be applied to the whole area. South of Babler the county-owned Greensfelder Park and the state-owned Rockwoods tracts intertwine. Greensfelder Park has 1,734 acres. North of it, the Rockwood Reservation has 1,898 acres, and south of the park is the Rockwood Range, another 1,600 acres. Both are operated by the State Department of Conservation, and offer a wide range of public programs.

The rectangular indentation in the east side of Greensfelder Park is Camp Wyman, owned and operated by the St. Louis Kiwanis Clubs. It occupies the narrow valley at the head of Forby Road.

Southeast of the survey area is another concentration of publicly owned areas, including the 1,780-acre Castlewood State Park straddling the Meramec River, Lone Elk and West Tyson, both county parks, The Washington University Research Center (called Tyson Valley), and the Louis D. Beaumont Boy Scout Reservation. Adjacent to these areas is the so-called Forest 44, a wooded privately-owned area that is currently the subject of an intense conservation effort.

Tucked into the space between Greensfelder Park and Allenton is Six Flags Over Mid-America, a privately-owned amusement park that is a major tourist attraction in the St. Louis area. Annexation of Six Flags was the primary goal in the City of Eureka's recent westward expansion.

While the western edge of the county, particularly west of the parks, contains many unspoiled acres, development pressures to the east is intense and is reflected in new highway projects. Manchester Road has been bypassed by a separately designated Missouri 100, and the bypass is currently being widened to four lanes. East of Eureka a new interchange is being built to connect Missouri 109 (Eatherton Road) to Interstate 44. This development is taking place most noticeably in the corridor of Missouri 100 west of Ellisville, throughout and to the west of the village of Clarkson Valley, and along Clarkson Road. The very noticeable jockeying for property along Interstate 64 suggests that this area will soon be transformed beyond recognition.

HISTORY

The settlement of west St. Louis County was generally less intense than in the northern or southern parts of the county. Farms were larger and roads were fewer. The west county was also much slower to be settled. E. Dupre's county atlas of 1838 shows many square miles still unclaimed, and Hutawa's 1847 atlas still shows many vacant sections. The first areas to be settled were along the rivers, particularly in the Bonhomme Bottom, the bottom land along the Missouri River. This was claimed by the Longs, the Cordells, the Caulks, the Conways, and other families who had settled in the 1790's in the Bonhomme area, which was the high ground at the west end of Conway Road, stretching roughly from Creve Coeur Lake to the present Chesterfield Mall. Land grants also reached into the interior along Bonhomme Creek and Wild Horse Creek. Louis Courtois, Senior, was granted over 6,000 acres on the Meramec at the west end of the county in 1800, and, according to testimony later given by Benito Vasquez to the U.S. land commissioners, Courtois and his family were to be seen traveling back and forth from this property as early as 1780.

The earliest readily identifiable structure in west county today, however, is the house on Laurey Lane built by William Tyler about 1837. It reflects the heritage of the Virginia tidewater country. Settlers of English background predominated in the early years of the century and particularly in the north part of the area. Few of their houses can now be indentified with certainty, however. The majority of surviving resources are associated with settlers of German descent, who started to arrive in the early 1840's. An interesting aspect of this settlement is that many of these Germans had come first to Franklin County, lured there by Gottfried von Duden's book describing the Missouri Valley as a second Rhine. They then drifted back across the county line as better farm land became available. These German families tended to stay put through the third and fourth generations; this was true of the Hardt, Ossenfort, Jaeger, Kreienkamp, Rieger, and Steines families, among others, and most of the roads in the region are named for them. Two instances have been found, however, in which rather well-established Germans moved back to the old country; Gustav Hoppenberg to Osnabruck and Lisette von Gruben to Hanover. Both of these locations were in the north central, predominantly Protestant, part of Germany.

Two of the old rural general stores have survived in this district: the Hoppenberg-Fick Store in Orrville, and Kreienkamp's Store in Melrose. Orrville was one of the unplanned "wide places in the road" that came to be thought of as villages. Several of these had more success than the planned communities. Chesterfield was laid out on Wild Horse Creek Road on top of the bluff just above Olive Street Road (now Chesterfield Airport Road), but over the years it shrank to nothing while growth occurred at the nearby junction of Olive and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad. This newer part of Chesterfield was largely laid out by Christian Burkhardt and his son Edward, beginning in the 1880's. The Catholic Church of the Ascension is associated with this village. The settlement of Gumbo grew up at the intersection of Olive and Long Roads, where Henry Wetzel had a general store and where St. John's German Evangelical Church was established. Wetzel's store is gone,

and the church building was radically modernized after the congregation moved to Wild Horse Creek Road; a few other old buildings survive in Gumbo, including the McDaniel-Steffan House.

The whistle-stop depot of Centaur, west of Chesterfield and Gumbo, once had a post office, but nothing of that is now visible. Railroad settlements along the Pacific Railroad were somewhat more successful. Eureka, the most permanent of them, awaits a further survey. Allenton had a good start, with a hotel and a mill, but it has dwindled. The original grid of streets is barely discernable. A few old houses survive in the town, and the home of Robert C. Allen is still standing (in ruined condition) west of the village. East of Eureka, the stations of Castlewood; Jedburg, also called Sherman; and Glencoe are worth further investigation.

Manchester Road was laid out following action by the state legislature in 1835 to provide a route to the state capital in Jefferson City. By that time Manchester, Ballwin, and Ellisville already existed in embryonic form. Crossroads settlements west of Ellisville included Grover, Pond and Fox Creek. The recent bypassing of Manchester Road by Missouri 100 has helped to preserve some vestiges of these communities, particularly at Pond, where the old hotel, the blacksmith-turned-service-station, and other old structures survive.

Kreienkamp's store is the last surviving building from the town of Melrose, which was founded by Charles H. Haven. The plat of "Central Melrose" was filed in 1853. It is significant in town planning history as an early example of a garden suburb, with curvilinear streets adapted to the terrain, and with parks and public buildings carefully placed. Haven imagined that settlers would take the train to Glencoe and from there proceed northwest on hilly Melrose Road to the town. People did come to look, and many lots were sold, but nothing was built except for the female seminary, which after many vicissitudes was still standing in 1911. In spite of the failure of Melrose, its plan was unusually well thought out, especially in view of its date. Llewellyn Park, in East Orange, New Jersey, the textbook example of the garden suburb, was started only one year earlier, and it lacks the civic, social, and economic amenities planned for Central Melrose. Frederick Law Olmsted's Riverside, Illinois, which closely resembles Central Melrose on a larger scale, was not laid out until 1869.

Ashland, another failed community, was a byword for futility in the late nineteenth century. William Scharf describes it in 1883: "Ashland, at the mouth of Fox Creek, on the north bank of the Meramec, was a purely paper town, laid off by a party from Pittsburgh at a very early date, with beautiful plats of steamboats, mills, hotels, etc., but never a building. Several of the owners of corner lots have visited the place and bewailed the scene, and although long ago sold out for taxes it has still an existence on the maps."

County retreats for St. Louis businessmen are a notable feature of many parts of St. Louis County, but they are absent from the west. This is not entirely because of distance, because Gray Summit and St. Albans, two fashionable retreats in the early twentieth century, are even

farther west in Franklin County. Glencoe and Castlewood, just east of the current survey area on the Missouri Pacific line, were resorts for the well-to-do in the nineteenth century, and Glencoe served as a haven for St. Louisans during the Civil War, at least as depicted in Winston Churchill's novel, The Crisis.

Suburbanization of the west county may be said to begin with the incorporation of Ellisville in 1932. More intensive development is of much more recent date. The construction of Chesterfield Mall in the 1970's was considered an adventurous action, located as it was so far west of most economic activity at the time. Today the land around Chesterfield Mall is considered to be the most valuable development property in the county. Similar development to the west can be no more than another decade away.

RECOMMENDATIONS

St. Louis County is currently considering a reorganization plan which would incorporate all the remaining unincorporated land in the county. The west part of the county would generally be divided between the municipalities of Chesterfield, Ellisville, and Eureka, with most of the south bank of the Meramec going to Fenton. The advantage of conducting further inventories in conjunction with these boundaries would be that the data could be used by the municipal governments for planning and preservation purposes. Unfortunately, these boundaries do not correspond closely to natural division, nor do they mesh with the historical lines of development of the areas to be annexed. Further, the reorganization plan is at present only a proposal to be presented to the voters sometime in 1989, and there is a good chance that it will never be implemented in its present form.

As a compromise, the following plan of work is proposed for fiscal 1989 and continuing into 1990.

1. Far west county, including everything west of Eatherton Road, which is designated as state route 109 and county route C. This would include all the least suburbanized parts of the county, including the environs of Babler and Greensfelder Park and the Rockwoods tracts. It would also take in the original town of Eureka, thereby providing a data base that could be used to encourage preservation in that municipality, which presently lacks either a preservation commission or an historical society.

2. The remainder of the new city of Chesterfield. Incorporated only in 1988, Chesterfield has already appointed a historic commission. Chesterfield extends east Woods Mill Road (Missouri Route 141) and encompasses much area that is already heavily suburbanized, but it has a certain historic continuity in that it corresponds generally with the early Bonhomme settlement. Faust Park, a County-owned facility, is currently assembling a village of old buildings from this area, and an inventory would help to put that restoration in context. The eastern part of Chesterfield already has a start on a survey in the bicentennial publication, Heritage of the Creve Coeur Area, edited by Gloria Dalton. Another useful resource will be the photographs which John Wickersham of Maryville College made a decade ago in anticipation of the current onslaught of development.

3. Ellisville and environs. This would include the proposed expansion of Ellisville to the west and south, including the crossroads settlement of Grover and the whistle-stop communities of Glencoe and Jedburg. Funds permitting the survey could be extended east to the city limits of Valley Park, which would include the southern hinterland of Ballwin and Manchester. A few sites in these areas have already been identified in previous county publications, but more needs to be done. Ellisville has published two books focusing on the community and its history: Ellisville Horizons, 1976, and Golden Anniversary of Ellisville, 1983. These contain some information on surviving historic sites.

4. The south bank of the Meramec River. This would extend from the old city of Fenton, founded before 1820, west to Crescent. Included in

this large area are five county parks, the Washington University Research Center, and the Beaumont Boy Scout Reservation, but also included are the many old roads running south into Jefferson County that have never been inventoried by the county.

One other recommendation seems appropriate at this point. Representatives of many of the old families are still to be found in this area, some of them still on the old family property. In another generation this will not be true. The wealth of family history from these sources needs to be collected now, while it is still available. This is usually the work of the local historical society, but no local society is currently active in this area. One possible vehicle for this effort is the Old Trails Historical Society, which has been active primarily in Manchester and Ballwin, but which has members and some collections relating to territory farther west.

ST. LOUIS COUNTY WEST
Inventory of Historic Buildings

1. Deep Springs Farm, Ramada Inn	Allenton Six Flags Road	1.
2. William Koch House	16651 Chesterfield Airport Road	2.
3. Farmers Bank of Chesterfield	16676-78 Chesterfield Airport Road	3.
4. Tyler House, Eatherton House	Laurey Lane near Wild Horse Creek Road	4.
5. Hardt Farm	18721 Highway T	5.
6. Engler-Froesel House	2453 Kehrs Mill Road	6.
7. Hardy-Purdy House	2460 Kehrs Mill Road at Clarkson Road	7.
8. McDaniel-Steffan House	120 Long Road	8.
9. Kern Service Station	17300 Manchester Road	9.
10. Pond Hotel	17301 Manchester Road	10.
11. Kreienkamp's Store	19160 Melrose Road	11.
12. Hoppenberg-Fick Store	526 Old Eatherton Road	12.
13. Ossenfort Farm	1139 Ossenfort Farm	13.
14. Jaeger Farm	1160 or 1161 Ossenfort Road	14.
15. "Overbrook", Frederick W. Steines Farm	1333 Pond Road	15.
16. Edward Rieger Farm	18405 Rieger Road	16.
17. Bernard-Rieger Farm	18520 Rieger Road	17.
18. Godfrey Chapel, Church of the Ascension	230 Santa Maria Drive	18.
19. Louisa Sander House	17107 Wild Horse Creek Road	19.
20. Stevens-Coleman House	17917 Wild Horse Creek Road	20.
21. Orr-Broemmelsick House	18060 Wild Horse Creek Road	21.
22. James J. Collins House	18061 Wild Horse Creek Road	22.
23. Eatherton Cottage	18332 Wild Horse Creek Road	23.
24. Old Bethel Methodist Church	25000 Wild Horse Creek Road	24.
25. Clarkson-Schmitz Farm	1825 Wilson Road	25.
26. Heinemann-Graeler Farm	2153 Wilson Road	26.