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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri

___ See continuation sheet

B. Associated Historic Contexts

The Courthouse Square in Liberty, 1858 - 1940

___ See continuation sheet

C. Geographical Data

The 1940 city of limits of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri

___ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Claire F. Blackwell
Signature of Certifying official
Claire F. Blackwell, Deputy SHPO
Department of Natural Resources

9 November 1992
Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Antoinette J. Lee
for Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

12/28/92
Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

_X_ See continuation sheet

F. Associated Property Types

The narrative of this section must be titled and clearly arranged using the following headings, in order, on continuation pages:

I. Name of Property Type

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

_X_ See continuation sheet(s)

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

_X_ See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

_X_ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

____State historic preservation office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
__X_Local government
____University
__X_Other

Specify Repository: Liberty City Hall; Clay County Archives

I. Form Prepared By

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Preface

The multiple property listing "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri" has focused on the center of trade for Liberty - the Clay County Courthouse and the town square. One historic context and two associated property types, presented in this submission(*), reflect this focus. Other historic contexts and property types have preliminarily been identified in a summary report of survey activities in Liberty (Wolfenbarger, September 1987). As these themes are outside the scope of this grant project, they remain yet to be developed. It is hoped that future amendments to this nomination will more fully develop these additional proposed contexts and associated property types, outlined below.

Exploration and Settlement in Clay County, 1817-1860.
- Log Buildings
- Greek Revival Residences
- Settlement Religious Buildings
- Vernacular Settlement Residences

* The Courthouse Square in Liberty: Commercial and Governmental Center of Clay County, 1858-1942.
- Two-Part Commercial Block
- Civic Buildings

The Real Estate "Boom" and Residential Growth in Liberty, 1866-1896.
- Victorian Residences
- National Folk Style Residences

Suburban Residential Growth in Liberty, 1896-1941.
- Revival Style Houses

The Education of Citizens: Liberty and Beyond.

Transportation in Clay County.
- The "Interurban" Electric Resources

Background

The first Europeans to explore the Missouri River Valley were the French. In the area which was to be known as Clay County, there is historic mention of a settlement of French trappers on the Randolph Bluffs in 1800 (History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri, 1885). As the French generally did not establish permanent

settlements in the area, no tangible traces remain today. After the War of 1812, migration into Missouri finally began in earnest. Actual exploration of the area was brief; permanent settlement of Liberty and its environs began soon after the first arrivals. The earliest groups of white settlers arrived in Clay County around 1817, when the Federal government established the first base lines from which local surveys could be made. This enabled property ownership to be recorded for the first time. A few more settlers arrived in 1818 and 1819. A heavy increase in migration began in 1820, and by 1821, there were 1,200 people in the area (Jackson, 1976). The majority of new immigrants to Clay County were settled at this time near the Missouri River.

Americans from the Upper South had begun to migrate into Missouri by the turn of the nineteenth century, settling among the hills along the north side of the Missouri River. This continued until a veritable flood of settlers from the Upper South eventually contributed to a majority of Missouri's population. Clay County and Liberty were a part of this Southern American settlement experience. The pioneers came mostly from the state of Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Maryland, and brought with them a decidedly southern culture. In fact, the county was named in honor of the Kentucky statesman, Henry Clay, when it was portioned off from Ray County in 1822 (The History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri, 1885).

The location for the county seat was selected shortly after the first session of the Clay County Court in February, 1822. A fifty-acre square tract of land that is generally around the current courthouse square in Liberty was selected. The town of Liberty was platted in the summer of 1822, and like most of Missouri's county seats, it utilized a central courthouse square plan (Ohman, 1985). Again, as with the majority of central courthouse square plan county seats in Missouri, Liberty features a "Shelbyville" square, named after an area in Tennessee where this plan was prevalent (Ibid.). A Shelbyville square has two streets entering at each corner, with a total of eight entrances to the central courthouse square. This central square was a designated open space, upon which the key public building in the county seat - the county courthouse - was built. Historically, the principal business district forms the perimeter of the central square. The blocks in the original plat of Liberty were 210 feet square, and were arranged around the central square. The lots north and south of the central square were 70 feet by 140 feet; on the streets surrounding the square, 59 1/2 feet wide; and on all other streets, 50 feet wide (Ibid.). The first sale of lots was held on July 4,

1822 (Withers, 1922). The most popular lots, as evidenced by their higher price and quick sales, were those around the square.

The location for the county seat was chosen because of its healthful location, being high and well drained, and for having an excellent water supply, typified by the springs near the center of town (Ibid.). The rolling uplands and hills surrounding the town were well-timbered, providing a ready supply of oak, walnut, ash, and hickory. Less than four miles away was Liberty Landing, which eventually became a prosperous commercial site on the river (see 1877 map of Clay County, page 14). Initially, ferry landings were extremely important to insure trade with the communities south of the Missouri River. As western Missouri continued to grow, steamboats from the east provided additional commercial opportunities for these "landings". Allen's Landing, south of Liberty, was succeeded by Liberty Landing, which in turn served as the main port for northwest Missouri for several decades (Ohman, 1985). By 1830, steamboats from St. Louis were making regular trips to Liberty Landing (The History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri, 1885). Liberty Landing probably reached its peak in the 1850's, when as many as five steamers would move up the river daily, with at least one docking at Liberty Landing (Jackson, 1976). It remained an important site for steamboat traffic until railroad transportation became more prevalent in the 1860's (Withers, 1922).

As important as the River was to early commerce in Clay County, the Missouri was prone to frequent and violent flooding. The devastation after the flood of 1826 prompted many entrepreneurs to move their businesses to higher ground, rather than risk annual destruction (The History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri, 1885). Although the site of the town of Liberty was some distance from the river, the commercial establishments of the town were still able to take advantage of the river trade. The steamboats travelling from St. Louis on the Missouri would fire a cannon when several miles away from Liberty Landing in order to allow merchants and residents of Liberty time to reach the river (Jackson, 1976). This gave the town of Liberty many of the commercial benefits associated with river traffic, without the disadvantages of being located in a floodplain.

In 1828, the Clay County Court authorized construction of a courthouse for the new county seat. However, construction of the first courthouse was not completed until 1833, on the same site as the present building (Ibid.). This building was destroyed by fire in 1857, and was replaced by a more elaborate building in 1858.

Liberty was incorporated as a town in 1829, and was granted its first charter in 1851 (Withers, 1922). The town encompassed one square mile, with the courthouse as the physical center. During this early period, road districts were established, as well as a post office. Commercial activity naturally grew with the population of Clay County. Prior to 1821, there were no stores or trading posts in the county from which to purchase supplies (Jackson, 1976). In 1822, however, the first county clerk, William L. Smith, began selling a few goods out of his home in Liberty. That same year, the county collector licensed only six stores over the entire county (Withers, 1922). Two other stores started in Liberty in 1822, one run by Essex & Hough, and the other by Robert Hood. A tanyard opened in 1825, a distillery in 1826, and a harness shop in 1827. Earlier, in 1821, a grain mill had already been built near Liberty (Norris, 1918).

When Fort Leavenworth was established in Kansas in 1827, commercial activities began to expand more rapidly in town, with construction materials, labor, and supplies being supplied by Liberty and the surrounding area. Not only were goods shipped northwest to the Fort from Liberty (generally by steamboat), the nearby military post brought increased commercial traffic to the town itself. The federal trade generated by Fort Leavenworth, coupled with the river trade mentioned earlier, led to the establishment of the first dram-shop in 1828, adding to two taverns established earlier (one by Leonard Searcy in 1826, and another by Laban Garrett in 1827). Another tavern was added by John Chauncey in 1832 (Ibid.). The increased trade and traffic in the town generated business in other areas of commerce as well. The Green Hotel, on the north end of the east side of the square, was a popular retreat in the 1830's for military men on weekend leave from the Fort, as Liberty was the closest town to the east (Jackson, 1976).

The founding of the Liberty Tribune in 1846 did much to legitimize the town of Liberty. At the time of its first issue on April 4, 1846, it was one of the few newspapers west of the Mississippi River which was regularly published (Ibid.) By this date, leading merchants in Liberty included T.G. Slaughter, J.A.H. Garlichs, and E.C. Hale. Garlichs and Hale operated a drugstore in partnership on the south side of the square. Other establishments at this time were Schild & Siegel and Christy & Kyle, a dry goods business on the west side of the square. Dr. E.S. Ferguson was a physician and obstetrician with an office on the square. Two attorneys' offices were also located on the square. They were joined in 1847 by Liberty's first permanent dentists, H.E. Peebles and Joel Ball (Ibid.)

A few short years later, in 1849, Liberty had not only several commercial establishments within its boundaries, but industrial concerns as well. There were eight dry goods stores, two drug stores, eight taverns, three cabinet shops, four blacksmith shops, five tailors, four saddlers, four carriage manufacturers, one tinner, two hatter shops, three shoemakers, three groceries, one bakery, one silversmith, one tanner, one gunsmith, two stonemasons, one brick mason, two plasterers, one carding machine, one oil mill, one circular saw mill, one printing office, one rope manufacturer, one livery stable, nine lawyers, seven physicians, and one dentist (Withers, 1922). Nearly all of the commercial enterprises were on the square, and the industrial or manufacturing concerns were located to the south and east of the square.

As mentioned earlier, Liberty's proximity to Liberty Landing, as well as its serving as the county seat, did much to attract business and trade to the town. Starting in the 1840's, however, Liberty's reputation as an educational center began to grow, which in turn had a beneficial effect on the business climate of the town. Liberty was particularly respected for the educational opportunities it provided women, as well as for the quality of higher education found at William Jewell College. Several of Liberty's educational establishments were established before the Civil War. In 1841, the Liberty Male and Female Seminary was opened. Soon afterwards, the most significant educational institute in Liberty, William Jewell College, had its charter approved by the Missouri Legislature in 1849. In 1852, the Liberty Female Institute was founded, and re-opened in 1855 as the Liberty Female College. James Love founded the Clay Seminary in 1855. After it was destroyed by fire, another school, the Hawthorne Institute was opened in 1883. Also providing higher education for women throughout the region was the Liberty Ladies College, opened in the fall of 1890 (Withers, 1922).

The decade before the Civil War was a time of great unrest in western Missouri. Clay County experienced this turmoil over the issues of slavery and free soil states. In 1850, the population of Clay County was 9,426, of which approximately 27% were slaves. Liberty's Negro population at this time comprised just over 20% of the total population of 827. At this time, there were only 14 free Negroes in the entire county. Guerrilla border warfare plagued Liberty and its environs both before and after the Civil War, with some of its more infamous "citizens" giving it a nationwide reputation for lawlessness. As late as 1879, promotional literature prepared about Clay County still found it necessary to refute the "popular prejudice against Missouri, and Clay County

particularly" by insisting that the whole region was not "UNDER MORTGAGE TO THE JAMES BOYS", and in fact, this opinion was "A GRAND MISTAKE" ("Clay County, Missouri", 28 August 1879). It was true, however, that at one point in 1864, business in Liberty came to a standstill due to the ruthlessness of the bushwackers (Jackson, 1976). However, the most infamous incident of this period occurred shortly after the war. The first daylight bank robbery during peace time in the nation took place on February 13, 1866, at the Clay County Savings Bank on the northeast corner of the square (Ibid.).

The Courthouse Square in Liberty: Commercial and Governmental Center of Clay County, 1858-1942.

The decade of the 1850's had seen the construction of number of large, imposing structures on the square. Whereas the earliest buildings on the square were constructed of wood (and often served the dual purpose as a dwelling), the structures built in the 1850's were usually of brick. The Arthur House, on the southeast corner of Water and Kansas streets, was known as the finest hotel west of the Mississippi when it was built in the first part of the 1850's. It was an imposing three-story structure, and was the site of many of Liberty's social events until it burned in 1903 (Ibid.). 1858, in particular, saw the construction of more buildings on the square in that year than had been undertaken during much of the previous part of the decade (Liberty Tribune, 8 October 1958). The most prominent of these on the square were the Clay County Courthouse (replacing one which had burned in 1857) and the Liberty branch of the Farmer's Bank of Missouri at Lexington (later the Clay County Savings Association). The 1858 Clay County Courthouse was physical evidence of the county's and town's affluence by this time. It was an ornately featured structure, which to this date is still fondly remembered in the community. Its cross-shaped plan was oriented so that the four points faced the intersections of the four streets on the perimeter of the public square. The Courthouse featured a prominent dome with a heroic-sized bronze above. A classically inspired portico was on the main facade.

By the 1850's, the central courthouse square truly served as the focus of governmental, commercial, and social activity in Liberty. Originally, the county court was held in various homes. The first courthouse was finally constructed in 1833 in the central public square, and it has occupied this site from that date. As stated earlier, the lots around the square were the first to sell, and the first to contain retail enterprises in Liberty. The four streets which form the perimeter around the Courthouse have always been a

place of vitality, as evidenced by the intense level of development, and the wide variety of goods and services provided. Saloons and hotels, but one indicator of social life, were located in buildings around the courthouse, and even in the courthouse itself. Fraternal organizations started to meet in buildings around the square during this period, and eventually constructed their own buildings facing the courthouse. Among the businesses in and around the square in 1858, were two carriage shops, three blacksmiths, a wagon shop, five tailor shops, three cabinet shops, two tinsmiths, one cooper, a gunsmith shop, five milliners, two liveries, three boot and shoe stores, and two saddlers (Liberty Tribune, 22 October 1858). The high level of construction activity in the late 1850's is evidenced by the four carpentry shops, and the numerous painters, paperers, bricklayers, plasterers, and stone masons cited in local newspapers of the period (Ibid.).

The Civil War interrupted nearly all facets of life in Clay County, as virtually all construction activity was halted in Liberty during this period. After a few years, however, life returned to normal, and the town began to pick up the pace of commercial development which had been started in the 1850's. The commercial buildings around the square in the 1860's and early 1870's, for the most part, remained much the same as they were immediately preceding the Civil War. Photographs from this period reveal the these commercial structures were brick, one to two stories in height, and featured gable roofs. All of the brick for these first masonry commercial buildings were manufactured within the town. A few of the commercial buildings were constructed of the soft bricks taken from the demolished Liberty Arsenal, which was constructed in 1832, but abandoned at the close of the War and sold to a private owner in 1868 (Jackson, 1976). The ridge line of the roofs paralleled the street, and the roof slopes were frequently pierced by dormers and chimneys. From this period, only the Clay County Savings Association remains, located on the northeast corner of E. Franklin and Water Streets.

As with many small midwestern communities, Liberty's growth after the Civil War was aided by the arrival of the railroad lines. Local citizens realized the importance of railroads to their town's future. However, as the state of Missouri was deep in debt as a result of the War, it was up to the local governments to attract financiers as well as the railroad companies. As a result, several committees in Liberty were formed to promote the area for railroads. They were rewarded in 1867 when the Hannibal & St. Joseph (later the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy) made Liberty a stop on the line from Kansas City to Cameron, Missouri (Jackson,

1976). In 1868, the Wabash, St. Louis, and Pacific Railroad passed through the south part of Liberty. By the turn of the century, six to eight passenger trains passed through or stopped in Liberty each day (Piland, 1985). Ironically, the coming of the railroad to Liberty, so necessary for a town's survival, probably also led to a halt in any further commercial expansion in the town. The construction of a railroad bridge across the Missouri River, which allowed the connection to Kansas City, helped that city emerge as the dominant railroad town in the region. This, coupled with the ending of the steamboat era in nearby Liberty Landing, led to shift in commercial enterprises. Businesses in Liberty focused on serving the town and the surrounding area, rather than on trade for the larger region.

The coming of the rail lines to Liberty did not effect the physical development of the town to any great extent, and certainly did not diminish the importance of the square. The railroad line was located south of Mill Street, a block south of the square. A small industrial area, with two woolen and flour mills and two wagon and carriage factories, had already been established close to the rails. Also located just off the square, due to the nature of the businesses, were several livery stables and a stockyard. A few commercial structures were constructed just adjacent to the square on the four roads leading away from the courthouse. However, the vast majority of commerce was conducted in the structures facing the courthouse. The commercial and service enterprises of Liberty remained centered around the square, just as they were before the War and the coming of the railroads (Sanborn Maps, 1883, 1889, 1894, 1899).

After it was apparent that Kansas City would serve as the regional center for commerce and trade, the town of Liberty began to cultivate an atmosphere of gentility, emphasizing service over trade and manufacturing. Although commercial businesses were obviously established to serve the town and the nearby farmland, regionally Liberty was more noted for education, religion, quality journalism, culture, and temperance (for a short period). Saloons had been fixtures in Liberty nearly from its inception. The first courthouse, built in 1833, even contained a public bar which was renovated at public expense (Jackson, 1976). In 1873, however, with five saloons located around the square in Liberty, the County Court voted to no longer grant saloon licenses. By 1880, all of the saloons and dram shops in Clay County were gone (Ibid.). Liberty had associations with the temperance movement nationwide, as well. Carry Nation, a famous leader of the Woman's Christian

Temperance Union, had been a student at the Clay Seminary in Liberty, when she was known as Amelia Moore.

By 1883, all types of commercial establishments which were necessary to small town life were found immediately on the square - two clothing stores, two furniture stores, three harness stores, three barber shops, the Post Office, a photographer, a paint store, tinner, four dry goods establishments, five druggists, a hardware store, two books & stationery stores, two confectioneries, a newspaper office, general office space, and a skating rink (Sanborn Map, 1883).

Commerce in general prospered in Liberty in the decade of the 1880's, and several new commercial buildings were constructed on the square in this period. In the first six months of 1885, five commercial buildings were completed on the square, and other merchants were "talking confidently of building" (Liberty Tribune, 31 July 1885). All of these new buildings were constructed in a similar manner - they all filled up the entire lot, were built of brick, and had their facades organized in a distinct two-zone pattern. For the first time, the buildings on the square were quite distinct in their construction from the residential buildings of the period. In short, they were representative of the Two-Part Commercial Block property type, which was prevalent throughout the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century (Longstreth, 1987).

The late 1880's brought the "Great Boom" in Clay County real estate. Until this point, Liberty had experienced steady growth since the 1850's, when the population was around 800. In 1860, it was 1,300; in 1870, 1,700; and in 1880, it had actually dropped slightly to 1,500. In 1890 though, the population had jumped to 2,600 residents. The first year of the boom is variously placed in 1887 or 1889. In one year during this short period, the value of real property transfers in Clay County was reported at $6,074,176.00 (Jackson, 1976). The "boom" was reflected in not only the dollar amounts of real estate transfers, but by the amount of construction taking place in Liberty. Particularly around the square, the 1880's was the decade of the greatest amount of construction. A survey of 89 buildings surrounding the square revealed that 23 buildings were constructed in the 1880's - over twice the number of any other decade in the survey area (Piland, 1985).

Almost immediately, the "boom" turned to a "bust", leaving many in the area in financial distress. This in turn must have affected

business on the square. However, except for one vacant spot in the center of the east side of the square (along Water Street), all of the lots facing the courthouse by this point already contained two- to three- story brick commercial buildings (Sanborn Map, 1889). The physical appearance of the square was thus, for the most part, already confirmed.

At the turn of the century, there were sweeping technological changes which seemed to have more effect on the residential development of the town than on Liberty's square. The Electric Light Company was formed in 1887, but by the turn of the century, customers were still only allowed one light bulb. The few street lights in town were turned on only when the moon was not shining (Jackson, 1976). In 1906, Liberty's waterworks system began operation, and the sewer system was completed in 1909. The first telephone company was started in 1896 (Withers, 1922). Other phone companies were formed and competed for business until 1917, when all the systems were bought by the Liberty Telephone Company (Jackson, 1976). This enabled Liberty to have connections with the long distance lines operating in Kansas City.

Other advances led to Liberty and Clay County becoming more closely tied to the development of the Kansas City area. In 1911, the Armour-Swift-Burlington (A.S.B.) Bridge opened for traffic, connecting Liberty to Kansas City over the Missouri River. The opening of this bridge led to the formation of the Kansas City, Clay County and St. Joseph Electric Railroad (the "Interurban"). Liberty had two stops on the branch from Kansas City to Excelsior Springs, and the trains to Kansas City came at forty-five minute intervals (Jackson, 1976).

The electric interurban trains had a brief but important impact on Liberty's development. The train allowed people to commute to Kansas City to work. The fare, however, was high enough that only the middle to upper class could afford to do so. Thus the town soon became desirable for its quiet residential character and its quality, middle class homes. The electric trains did not last long, as they were soon supplanted by the automobile. The paving of Highway 10, the A.S.B. Bridge, and later the Liberty Landing Bridge (opened in 1929), made the automobile the preferred mode of transportation to Kansas City. In addition, a bus line started hourly service from Liberty's square to downtown Kansas City in 1923 (Ibid.). However, even this fare was considered high for the day, and owning an automobile was still a luxury of the middle class. As the city made no real attempt to attract industry in this period, most of Liberty's residential growth at this time was

limited to those who could afford to move here and commute to Kansas City.

The business establishments of Liberty thus remained fairly stable from the turn of the century to the second World War. By 1899, nearly all of the commercial buildings facing the courthouse square were in place. A comparison of business types shown on various Sanborn Maps also reveals that, especially on the west and south sides of the square, not only were the buildings in place, but most of the business establishments themselves remained constant from the 1880's through the 1920's (Sanborn Maps, 1883, 1889, 1894, 1899, 1906, 1913, 1924). In 1922, the following businesses were on the square: three banks, five grocery stores, five clothing stores, two dry goods stores, a Red Cross Rest Room, three shoe stores, two meat markets, two jewelers, a millinery, an undertaker, five drugstores, two barber shops, a book store, a tea company, three hardware stores, a furniture store, a "Five to Twenty-five Cent Store", a cafe, a tailor, as well as offices for various professionals (Withers, 1922). Also on the square were the lodges for three fraternal organizations, the post office, and the printing press for the newspaper. These businesses do not represent much change from those found on the square in the 1880's. Most industrial enterprises were still located near the railroad, just to the south of the square. However, one "light" manufacturing plant was situated on the second floor of two buildings on the north side of the square (Sanborn Map, 1924). The Mother Goose Toy Shop in 1922 employed fifteen women, and made fabric "cuddle" toys, Mother Goose character dolls, and animal souvenirs for conventions. These toys were sent around the world (Withers, 1922).

The most visible change in the physical appearance in the square in the first decades of the twentieth century occurred when two new bank structures were constructed on Kansas Street, and a third bank "modernized" their original building. In 1914, a new group of commercial buildings was built on the southeast corner of East Kansas and Water streets, on the former site of the Author House, and had a bank as the anchor building on the corner (Sanborn Map, 1924). During 1915, the Commercial Bank completely remodeled their building at the southwest corner of East Kansas and Water streets ("The First 100 Years.", 1967). In 1923-1924, the First National Bank constructed a new building on the southwest corner of West Kansas and Main streets, and vacated their former building on North Main Street (Ibid.). At this point in time, then, all four corners of the square were occupied by bank buildings, or at least, buildings which at one point had contained a bank.

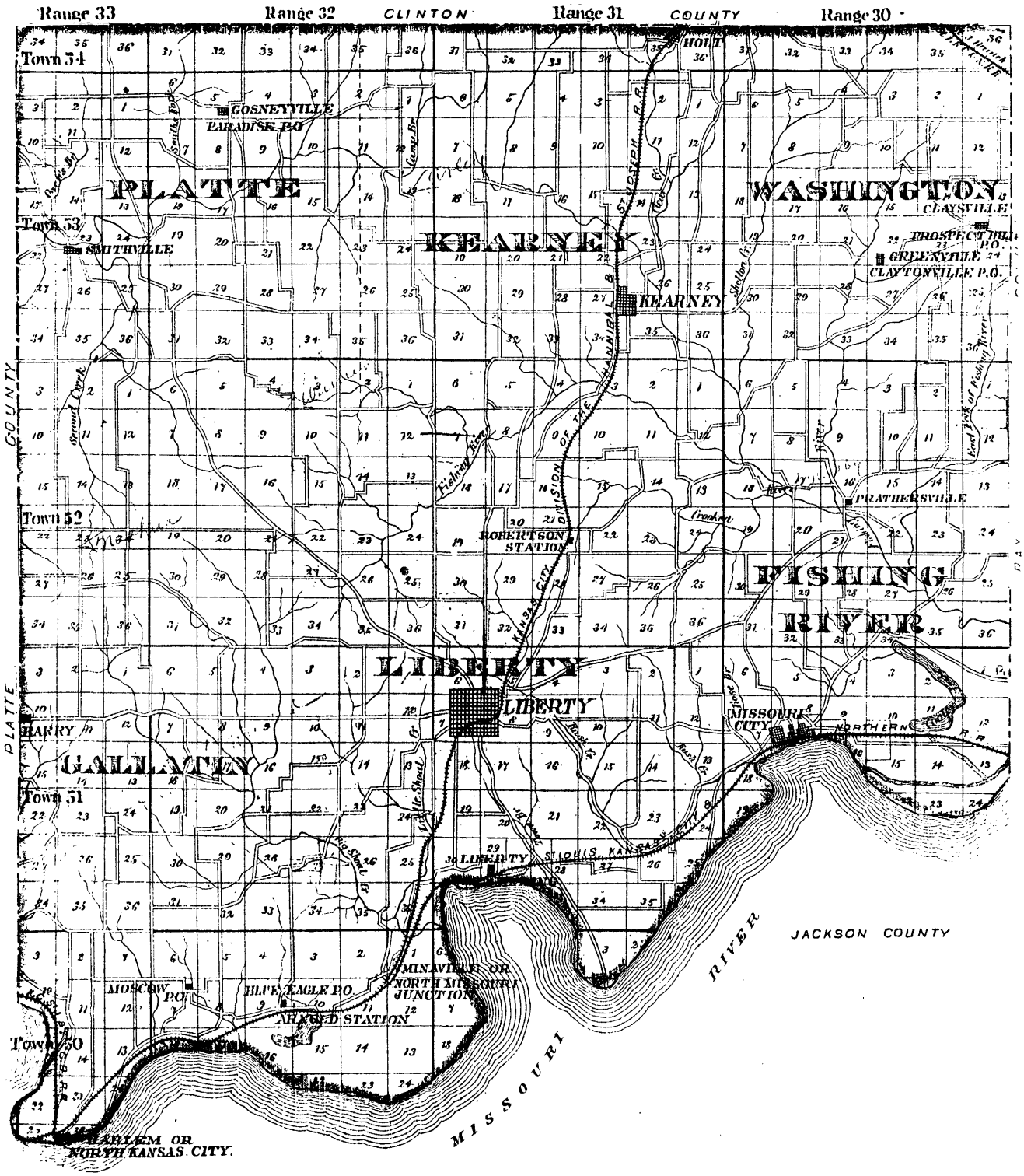
On the square itself, the only construction activity after 1929 occurred with the "modernization" of the existing structures or the replacement of buildings lost to fires. Interestingly, although the Depression brought a virtual halt to construction in Liberty (which wasn't truly revived until after World War II), the only building permits issued during the height of the Depression was for plate glass storefronts on some commercial structures around the square (Building Permits). Business was steady enough that entrepreneurs were willing to expend money to update the appearance of their store. Another reason given for the number of storefront alterations at this time was the construction of the new county courthouse. Merchants felt it necessary to modernize their storefronts ". . . in order to have the four sides of the square conform as nearly as possible to the new building." (Piland, 1985).

Since all of the lots facing the county courthouse already contained a building, new commercial construction during the 1920's took place on the streets leading away from the square. From 1920 to 1929, twenty-one buildings were constructed around the central courthouse square, and the majority of these were just "off" the square (Piland, 1985). Some of this new construction involved examples of the Civic Buildings property type. These differentiated from Two-part Commercial Blocks in their function, which in turn was reflected in the design of the buildings. First and foremost, as a reflection of their importance to the community, Civic Buildings were freestanding, and set within an open space. Two-part Commercial Blocks, on the other hand, abutted the street and occupied the entire lot upon which they were set. The surrounding open space gave the Civic Buildings an importance which was not accorded to single commercial structures, and reflected their standing in the community. In accordance with Liberty's size, however, only few of these structures were constructed. The most significant of these, however, was also the largest single construction project in the city of the period.

Prior to 1934, there had long been a recognition of the need for a new county courthouse. Finally, in the spring of 1934, bonds were voted for the construction of a new courthouse, with P.W.A. providing additional funds. The total cost of the structure was $275,000.00, and its design reflects the prevailing Art Deco/Moderne styles. The cornerstone was laid in 1935, with Senator Harry S. Truman taking part in the ceremony by the Masonic Grand Lodge of Missouri (Jackson, 1976). Today, the Clay County Courthouse serves as the prime example of a Civic Building property type in Liberty.

Other new commercial construction on and around the square occurred over the years, however, in response to disasters, primarily major fires. On August 10, 1934, a fire started in an old mule barn on "Jockey Row" between Mill and Kansas, and quickly spread until almost that entire block was destroyed (Sun Special Edition, 1991). The fire was especially disastrous, as Liberty's fire station was next door to the barn. It, too, was damaged, and consequently delayed the city's response to the fire. Substantial damage was also done to other buildings along Kansas Street, and to the Plaza Theatre located on Water Street, just south of Kansas.

Liberty's courthouse square has continued to play a key role in commerce, government, and social activities in town through the present date. A need for expansion of Clay County government offices in the 1980's led to a recommitment to the courthouse square, with new facilities constructed on the southeast corner of East Kansas and Water streets. In this same decade, the City of Liberty constructed a new City Hall on this block as well. However, due to the arbitrary fifty-year rule, the period of significance for this nomination ends with 1942.



Map of Clay County, Missouri. From the Illustrated Historical Atlas of Clay County, Missouri (1877).

I. Name of Property Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

II. Description

Historically, Two-Part Commercial Blocks were the most common property type (based on facade arrangement) for small and moderate-sized commercial buildings throughout the country (Longstreth, 1987). They were prevalent from the 1850's to the 1950's across America, but in Liberty, were constructed primarily after the Civil War to the turn of the century. Extant examples of this property type, which still retain their historic integrity, can be found on Liberty's central courthouse square dating from 1868 through 1923, although later examples exist as well.

In Liberty, Two-Part Commercial Blocks are two stories in height, sometimes with an exposed basement level on corner lots where the street drops in elevation. The prime defining characteristic is a horizontal division of the facade into two distinct zones (Ibid.). The lower zone, at the first-story, indicates public use, such as a retail store or bank. The upper zone suggests more private spaces, which in Liberty were generally offices, rooms for let, or meeting halls. The first and second story zones may either be similar in architectural treatment, or different in character, but still reflect the differences in use.

The four main streets surrounding the public courthouse square served as the anchors for the location of Two-Part Commercial Blocks in Liberty, although a few were constructed on the streets leading away from the square. Around the square, however, the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings not only abutted the sidewalk, but the adjacent building as well. This utilized all of the available land fronting the square, which was a valuable and scarce commodity, and as noted in Section E, the prime location for commercial activities in Liberty. All of the lots around the square are narrow and rectangular in dimension, and are deeper than they are wide. Thus it was the lots around the central courthouse square which were the determinant of the size and floorplan of this property type. Except for the four corner lots on the square, all of the Two-Part Commercial Blocks are found within a row, with common walls.

In many respects, the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings differed not only from the preceding commercial buildings on Liberty's square, but from the nearby residential buildings as well. In addition to being two stories in height, the Two-Part Commercial

Blocks were all constructed of brick. Previously, many of the commercial buildings on the square had been of log or wood frame construction. Also after the Civil War, this property type featured flat, rather than gable roofs. Several decorative architectural features, found only on commercial buildings, also became prevalent in the late 19th century. The cornice was accentuated and more ornate, serving as an elaborate terminus to the building. Most typically, the cornice projected outwards from the plane of the front elevation, and featured either a wood or metal entablature with brackets, or elaborate patterns of corbelled brick. A late example of a Two-Part Commercial Block in Liberty from the 1920's still finds an emphasis on the cornice, although in this case it doesn't project outward from the wall. Instead, a parapet roof and two-dimensional patterns in brick provide a focus on the roofline.

From the 1870's to the turn of the century, an increased amount of ornamentation, and a greater variety of design elements and materials, were utilized on the facades of Two-Part Commercial Blocks. A larger portion of the wall surface was covered with decorative patterns of brick, wood, stone, cast iron, terra cotta, etc. New technological advances allowed for mass manufacturing of ornamentation, flat roofs, larger panes of glass, and the casting of iron. As this latter material was thought to be fire-proof, entire storefronts were sometimes constructed of cast iron.

Retail stores, in particular, utilized the new technology of glass manufacturing. Large windows were the perfect means by which to display merchandise. Often, the entire storefront was of glass, divided only by window frames and cast-iron columns supporting the wall above. Since these buildings were usually part of a row of connecting buildings, the availability of light was greatly decreased. Buildings owners compensated for this lack of light with not only the large display windows, but with transom lights above these. The first-story, storefront section was then usually topped by its own cornice, further delineating the first story from the second. A few buildings accentuated the division between the two floors with a brick or stone stringcourse.

The second-story windows were tall and narrow, and more closely resembled those of residential buildings in that they were usually double-hung, rather than fixed panes of glass. As was also common with residential architecture during the Victorian era in America, a variety of fenestration openings were utilized in order to provide visual interest. While the second story windows were usually tall and narrow, they were often of varying shapes and

sizes. They were frequently embellished by decorative surrounds or caps, and were sometimes set within arched, recessed openings. The second story windows on Two-Part Commercial Blocks were arranged in regularly-spaced patterns across the facade, although every window opening on one building was not necessarily identical. Combinations of paired and single windows were typical. Oriel windows were sometimes added to break up the pattern of the wall surface.

As mentioned earlier, there was often a continuous lintel or other horizontal device separating the two floors. In addition, many buildings had decorative vertical treatments on the sides, serving to enframe either the first floor only, or sometimes the entire structure. The first and second story of one building usually featured slightly different forms of architectural treatment, to further emphasize the distinction between the two zones of the facade. However, the design of banks was generally distinguished by having a greater consistency in the treatment of all the stories (Ibid). Fraternal halls, or buildings with meeting halls and theaters above, were sometimes taller than the norm. Usually, though, retail shops were included as part of fraternal hall buildings in order to generate additional revenue, and therefore differed little in overall visual appearance from their commercial neighbors, save for an embellished entry or sign (Ibid.).

The architectural details of Liberty's Two-Part Commercial Block buildings' facades were typical of those found across the United States in this period. The underlying desire was for these commercial structures to look urban, even if the amount and/or lavishness of detailing may have been restricted by the available resources in Liberty. The Two-Part Commercial Blocks built from 1868 to the turn of the century reflect the influence of the variety of architectural styles prevalent during the Victorian era. They run the gamut from simple vernacular expressions, to high-style representatives, some of which were designed by professional architects. During the late 19th century, the most common architectural design elements on Two-Part Commercial Blocks in Liberty come from the Italianate, Romanesque, and Queen Anne styles. Often, architectural features from a variety of styles are utilized in an eclectic manner.

Few Two-Part Commercial Block Buildings were constructed on Liberty's square after the turn of the century. Those that were rarely contain any references to past periods, and therefore are quite plain. However, the division between upper and lower stories is still quite pronounced. Retail storefronts are often little

more than a wall of plate glass, made possible by the development of steel and concrete frame construction and lightweight steel trusses (Ibid.). The prevailing commercial architectural styles in the early part of the twentieth century were the Art Deco or Moderne styles. These influences avoided the use of historical references, but still composed the facades in the same manner as their Victorian predecessors. Rectilinear geometric forms were prevalent, and verticality was emphasized by engaged piers, usually of brick. Abstract relief ornament was often used as embellishment. Some Art Deco buildings emphasized horizontality instead of verticality, with decorative banding, smooth wall surfaces, and long stretches of windows adding to the feeling of horizontality (Ibid.).

III. Significance

Commercial block structures in Liberty are significant in the areas of either COMMERCE or ARCHITECTURE, or both. Under COMMERCE, the buildings are directly associated with Liberty's period of commercial expansion around the central courthouse square. The buildings contained a variety of commercial enterprises which served not only Liberty, but Clay County residents as well. From hardware stores to banks to doctors' offices, these properties represent the range of business which was conducted around the square from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century. They are tangible links to a period of great economic growth in Liberty, and represent the success of commerce at this time. They are therefore eligible under Criterion A for their association with this period of development in Liberty.

Two-part Commercial Block buildings in Liberty were constructed as early as 1868. Prior to this, the earliest commercial buildings actually were a combination of residential and commercial uses, housed within a single log building. There were few features to distinguish the special functions of the building. The rapid growth of commerce in Liberty led to alterations of existing shop-house buildings, and eventually, to their supplantation by more substantial structures on the four streets which faced the courthouse square. However, these replacement buildings still often combined residential with commercial quarters. In these cases, the upper section of the building retained a domestic character, while the first-story gained a more commercial appearance. Historic photographs dating from the 1860's and 1870's, when a few of these earlier buildings were still extant, reveal that these buildings were either frame or brick, one to two

stories in height, and featured gable roofs. The ridge line of the roofs paralleled the street, and the roof slopes were frequently pierced by dormers and chimneys. Double-hung sash windows, usually 6/1, were common.

As the commercial trade in Liberty grew with the population, the combination shop-houses were no longer functional. The lots facing the central courthouse square were too valuable to waste with dwellings. As happened across most of the country, Two-Part Commercial Block buildings eventually dominated the streets in Liberty immediately bordering the central courthouse square. A visual distinction could be seen between the commercial district in Liberty and the nearby residential areas.

The arrangement of the facades, including both the distinction between the first and second story, and the distinction between commercial and residential structures, was born out of practical considerations. Entrepreneurs, in Liberty as well as other towns across the country, wanted their building to serve as an "advertisement" for their business. Strangers to the town should be able to recognize the structure as a commercial structure, simply based on the building type and the arrangement of its facade. An accentuated entry door, transom lights above to allow for light (as there were generally no side windows), and large display windows for merchandise, all let the passerbys know of the purpose of the building. Thus, not only are Two-Part Commercial Blocks representative of the changes in commerce on Liberty's square, but also of a property type which came to dominate small-town commercial landscapes for nearly a century (Ibid.). They are therefore significant under Criterion C in ARCHITECTURE as physical illustrations of the Two-Part Commercial Block property type.

Many of Liberty's Two-Part Commercial Block buildings are also good examples of a specific architectural style or type, particularly the Italianate, Romanesque, and Queen Anne style. They are typical of level of stylistic treatment accorded to small-town commercial buildings. Although similar in many respects, the individual Two-Part Commercial Blocks remain distinct from adjacent properties due to stylistic or ornamental treatment. The general public's enthusiasm for architectural decoration in the Victorian period is reflected in this property type, which served as ornaments for the entire community. These examples would also be eligible under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE. Also eligible under Criterion C would be the relatively rare examples in Liberty of early twentieth century architectural styles, such as the Art Deco or Moderne styles.

IV. Registration Requirements

To be eligible under Criterion A, the resources must retain a strong association with the growth and development of commerce in Liberty and Clay County. A variety of commercial enterprises were found on the central courthouse square in Liberty, typical of those necessary for small town life before the turn of the century. The historic associations will obviously vary from building to building; some businesses stayed in the same location for over ninety years, and some buildings housed a variety of differing enterprises over the years. In addition, as the key physical elements of the built environment of the square, it is essential that there be a high degree of integrity in location, setting, and feeling.

Two-Part Commercial Blocks were constructed in Liberty from just after the Civil War, up through the 1950's. However, most examples of this property type were constructed on the square by the 1920's. A variety of architectural styles is thus represented, but all examples should retain their integrity of basic design composition of their facade in order to be eligible, both under Criterion A or C. The facades are the key element by which these structures are evaluated, as that is how commercial buildings in the late 19th and early 20th century were designed to be viewed (Ibid.). These property types were not conceived as free-standing objects.

For those buildings eligible within a historic district, the distinction between the first and second stories is the primary design feature which should be retained. This distinction includes a well-defined storefront, with features reflecting its public use. These public features include an entry door, usually single but sometimes double in width and often recessed, and large display windows. The second stories, generally containing more private functions, should retain their regularly spaced fenestrations, usually with some form of detailing. An accentuated cornice line should also be retained. The basic rectangular building form, two-story height, and flat roof should also be retained.

It is typical in small town commercial buildings for some sort of alteration to occur over the years, either with a change in function, ownership, or merely in a desire to "keep up with appearances". Liberty's square was no exception to this phenomenon. However, these alterations may not affect the building's individual eligibility, providing a high degree of integrity in overall building design remains, and the integrity of

materials on the second story is still evident. First-story storefronts are the most likely area to have undergone changes over time; the rare building which retains its original storefront, is clearly individually eligible under both Criteria A and C. Buildings whose storefronts have been altered may still be individually eligible, however, if the arrangement of the storefront design features remains, such as pattern of fenestrations, and proportion of window to bulkhead and transom area. The distinction between first and second story should also still be clearly represented by architectural features.

Alterations to non-street or square-facing elevations, including subsidiary additions, will not prevent the example from being eligible. Particularly important for individually eligible structures is the retention of cornice line decorations and other second story features. The pattern of fenestration should be retained on the second story, as well as any decorative window surrounds or embellishments. Again, however, most significant is that the facade is divided into distinct sections or zones. Materials, design features (such as doors, windows, and cornices), decorative details and stylistic features are secondary characteristics by which these buildings are evaluated, and are not as critical for Criterion A.

Under Criterion C, however, the secondary characteristics noted above take on a greater significance. Again, of primary concern for eligibility is integrity of location, association, feeling, and design. Basic integrity of design is met with a facade that is divided into distinct sections or zones. Materials, individual design elements (such as doors, windows, and cornices), decorative details and stylistic features are secondary, but important nonetheless for designation under Criterion C. These secondary characteristics are critical for identifying those buildings which exhibit a particular architectural style, and usually, for identifying the period of construction (or alteration). The division of the building into distinct zones is the underlying similarity that ties all of the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings together. The "secondary characteristics", on the other hand, are what help to distinguish one building from another.

Under Criterion C, therefore, the resource must at the minimum be a typical example of a Two-Part Commercial Block building. Again, the distinction between the storefront and the second story is vital. The upper story should retain the original fenestration patterns, cornice line treatment, and exterior wall cladding material. In addition, as a good representative of a particular

style of commercial architecture, the building should possess an integrity of materials. Specific architectural design elements which represent the particular style should be present, such as arched window surrounds, brackets, brick corbelling, or cast-iron storefront piers. The pattern of recessed store entry, large display glass windows, bulkhead, and transom area should be retained, as well as some original element of the storefront. This, at the minimum, could be represented by the enframing elements at the side and cornice line of the first story.

I. Name of Property Type: Civic Buildings

II. Description

After the turn of the century, Liberty settled into its role of a quality residential community which provided services and amenities to its residents. As such, the citizens desired civic and public buildings which represented the high ideals of the community. A few of these buildings were constructed on or around the courthouse square in Liberty. Some were the result of city bond issues and public works funds, such as the Clay County Courthouse, while others were the result of philanthropic donations, such as the Frank Hughes Memorial Libary. These two examples of this property type were constructed in the mid to late 1930's; others were constructed in the first decades after the turn of the century.

As opposed to Two-part Commercial Block buildings, which filled the entire lot and abutted the street, Civic Buildings were designed as freestanding objects. Their importance to the community was demarcated by the surrounding open space (Longstreth, 1987). Civic and public structures ranged in height from one to three stories. As they were usually meant to represent lasting qualities of the community, the exterior wall cladding was usually brick or stone, giving an appearance of permanence. The Clay County Courthouse, in particular, visually dominates the entire square through not only its size, but its choice of material and design.

The style of the Civic Building property type varies greatly, and was chosen according to the use and location of the facility. The structures just off the square, on the fringe of the commercial district and closer to the residential neighborhoods, were often constructed in a style which would be complementary to the adjacent homes. This can be seen in the Frank Hughes Memorial Library, whose Neo-classical style, brick construction, and gable roof complements the nearby residential neighborhood. The larger scale Civic Buildings, such as the Courthouse mentioned earlier, utilized an architectural style which emphasized the monumentality of the building. Very often the style for these structures carried some sort of symbolic association which corresponded with the original use. The styles tend to differ markedly from the design of the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings.

All of the Civic Buildings retain some stylistic influences from the period in which they were constructed. Representatives range from the Art Deco/Moderne style to Neoclassic Revival. The main

feature which distinguishes these from Two-Part Commercial Block buildings is the lack of a clearly defined storefront space. While the first floor may still be differentiated from an upper story, it does not contain typical storefront references.

III. Significance

Civic Buildings may be significant under either Criterion A or C, or both. They may be significant in the area of ARCHITECTURE, or in the areas which relate specifically to the resource's historic use, specifically SOCIAL HISTORY, EDUCATION, LAW, and POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT. To be significant in these areas, the building must have been constructed as a civic or public building, and must contribute to an understanding of this area in Liberty's history.

An analysis of these structures provides a more complete understanding of the growth and development of Liberty beyond the area of commerce. As the county seat, Liberty provided services not only to the residents of the community, but to a greater number of citizens of the county. Although travel to Kansas City was greatly facilitated after the turn of the century, the vast majority of needs of local residents were met within the city limits of Liberty. Civic Buildings played an important role in the day-to-day lives of Liberty citizens. Representatives of this property type are thus eligible under Criterion A for their association with the broad patterns development of Liberty's history.

As many of these resources were built for use by the entire community, a great deal of care was taken in their construction and/or design. Well-known professional architectural firms, usually from Kansas City, were employed. Some may thus be eligible under Criterion C as not only a typical examples of a Civic Building property type, but also as excellent representatives of a particular style of architecture.

IV. Registration Requirements

To qualify for listing under Criterion A or C, the resource must retain its integrity in location and association. As the courthouse square represented the focal point of commercial, governmental, and civic activity in town, these resources reflect the importance of being "on" or "near the square". The building should also retain its integrity of design and materials, and be

recognizable to the time it was constructed. Of particular importance is the retention of stylistic features which identify the various post-1900 styles. These include window and door openings, roof shapes, exterior wall cladding, and various distinguishing decorative features.

To qualify as significant under Criterion C., the resource must be a well-preserved example of a style, and must be recognizable to the time it was constructed. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are of particular importance. A greater amount of original historic fabric should be retained than for the resources eligible under Criterion A. The architectural features which are most typically associated with a particular style are the most critical.

The multiple property listing, "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri", is based upon survey efforts conducted by the City of Liberty from 1984 to 1987. As a Certified Local Government, the City of Liberty received funding for the survey through the Historic Preservation Program, Missouri Department of Natural Resources. To date, an intensive level survey of the following areas in Liberty has been completed: the courthouse square area containing historic commercial structures, and residential neighborhoods in all four directions from the square. The majority of structures surveyed date from the late nineteenth century, although one residential survey district dates from the early twentieth century. An analysis of the survey efforts, "Liberty Survey Summary Report", was completed in 1987. This multiple property listing is based upon that analysis, and the survey documentation of approximately 600 structures.

In order to begin the registration process in Liberty, it was decided to focus on the most visible and public potential district in the city - the courthouse square. City and Missouri Historic Preservation Program staff members reviewed the aforementioned documentation and developed the boundaries for two commercial districts and the list of five individual commercial/public structures. Thus the context and property type analysis was limited to a focus on commercial activities and structures. For future listings of additional structures and districts, this document will be amended to expand both the context development and the property type analysis to included historic residential properties.

The typology of associated property types is based on function (commercial/public use), form, style, and association with the historic context. Integrity requirements are based on National Register standards for assisting integrity (NPS Bulletin 16), the survey data base and the "Liberty Survey Summary Report", and the scarcity of a particular property type in Liberty.

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