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National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

X New Submission __ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of Sweet Springs, Saline County, MO

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Railroad Growth and Development in Sweet Springs, 1870-1899
Sweet Springs as a Popular Spa in Western Missouri, 1877-1896
Twentieth Century Redevelopment in Sweet Springs, 1900-1930

C. Form Prepared by

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city or town Warrensburg state Missouri zip code 64093

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 and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Claire F. Blackwell 20 October 1997

Signature and title of certifying official Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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.

Beth Boland 12/10/97

Signature of the Keeper Date

Introduction

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (cover document) titled "Historic and Architectural Resources of Sweet Springs, Saline County, Missouri," is designed to facilitate the nomination of eligible commercial and residential properties constructed in Sweet Springs from circa 1870 through 1930. No properties associated with the community's pioneer years (prior to circa 1870) have been identified. The three historic contexts developed for this multiple property listing are appropriate for the majority of architecturally significant Sweet Springs properties, but future amendments may develop other contexts or themes to facilitate the nomination of additional property types. The following historic contexts and associated property types (note that some property types are associated with more than one context) have been developed for this listing:

Context: Railroad Growth and Development in Sweet Springs, 1870-1899

Property Type: Early Commercial Buildings
Property Type: Victorian Period Residences
Property Type: Vernacular Residences (Victorian Period)

Context: Sweet Springs as a Popular Spa in Western Missouri, 1877-1896

Property Type: Resort Cottages
Property Type: Early Commercial Buildings
Property Type: Victorian Period Residences
Subtype: Vernacular Residences (Victorian Period)

Context: Twentieth Century Redevelopment in Sweet Springs, 1900-1930

Property Type: Late Commercial Buildings
Property Type: Modern and Eclectic Residences

Historical Background

Sweet Springs, located in Saline County in west central Missouri, is the third largest city in Saline County. Platted as Brownsville in 1838 and renamed Sweet Springs in 1887, Sweet Springs is the only city in Salt Pond Township. Davis Creek and the Blackwater River are west and south of portions of Sweet Springs. The city is bounded by Interstate 70 on the north and is bisected from north to south by Missouri Highway 127 (Locust Street). Marshall, the county seat, is approximately 16 miles to the northeast. Sweet Springs is approximately 50 miles east of Kansas City.

Petitions for statehood were being circulated, but Missouri was still a territory with a large Indian population when the first settlers arrived in the vicinity of what became Sweet Springs. Traveling mainly by flatboat, the slave-owning family of Edward Reavis arrived at Boonville from Barren County, Kentucky,

in circa 1818, three years before Missouri was admitted as the twenty-fourth state. The Reavis family of six, plus seven slaves, continued inland from newly platted Boonville, settling at Westbrook Ford (apparently two or three miles south of present day Sweet Springs) on the Blackwater River. The Indian wars were over but pioneers like Reavis, some say, must have traded with local Indians. Other very early settlers in the general area of Sweet Springs included the Prigmore, Mayse, Montgomery and Owens families and John McAllister, soon to discover four springs where a small resort community bearing his name (McAllister Springs) eventually would be established east and slightly to the south of Sweet Springs. Most of these pioneers were from Kentucky and other areas of the Upland South.[1]

In 1834 or 1835, Asa B. Pennington purchased 40 acres south of what became Main Street in Sweet Springs, started a blacksmith shop and established grist and saw mills on Davis Creek. Pennington, described by the 1881 county history as an "old bachelor" from Kentucky, is said to have named this pre-Brownsville/Sweet Springs hamlet Clayville. The path between Pennington's grist mill and blacksmith shop reputedly evolved into today's Main Street. In 1836 and 1837, John Berry and James Fitzpatrick arrived and entered land north and east of Pennington's tract. Fitzpatrick, a Kentuckian, is said to have opened the town's first dry goods store on "Main Street."[2]

Stephen G. Wentworth, a New Englander, is generally credited with platting the original town of Brownsville. In 1838, Wentworth--who later moved to Lexington where he founded Wentworth Military Academy--bought Pennington's land and laid out 14 lots along Main Street between Davis Creek and what is now West Street. The platted area included land owned by William Brown (Wentworth's uncle), after whom the town reputedly was named, and George W. Hill. When Brownsville was platted, Salt Pond Township was twice as large as today and still very sparsely populated, with fewer than 40 eligible voters. Two years later, in 1840, the Brownsville post office was established.[3]

Lifestyles were modified and privations were endured, but the Civil War was relatively nondestructive in Saline County. Arrow Rock and slaveholding families in the eastern part of the county probably suffered the most due to their Southern sympathies.[4] But, with the exception of Marshall, where Shelby's Confederates fought their way out of a Union "dragnet" in October 1863, no major engagements were fought in the county, and Brownsville and most of the county's other settlements were basically spared from the main violences of war.[5] As in the rest of Missouri, however, the threat of unorganized partisan or guerrilla forces was always present. Federal troops were stationed at Brownsville during part of the war, and it can be assumed that resentment was high since many inhabitants of the area were ex-Southerners. But despite the Southern orientation, "many of the people of (Salt Pond) township were opposed to secession, opposed to the Confederacy, and warmly attached to the old Federal Union."[6] But people with warm attachments of this nature were likely targets for bushwhackers, who were active and often ruthless in Saline County. In what must have been one of the worst atrocities, thirty-five Brownsville area Germans who were sympathetic to the Union were shot or burned to death in their homes by bushwhackers on October 6, 1864.[7]

When Brownsville was incorporated on May 3, 1870, the population of Salt Pond Township, of which Brownsville was the only town, was 2,895.

AREA MAP

SWEET SPRINGS
Kansas City
Columbia
Jefferson City
ATCHISON
NODAWAY
WORTH
HARRISON
MERCER
PUTNAM
SCHUYLER
SCOTLAND
CLARK
HOLT
ANDREW
GENTRY
DAVIESS
GRUNDY
SULLIVAN
ADAIR
KNOX
LEWIS
DEKALB
LIVINGSTON
LINN
MACON
SHELBY
MARION
BUCHANAN
CLINTON
CALDWELL
CHARITON
RANDOLPH
MONROE
RALLS
PLATTE
CLAY
RAY
CARROLL
PIKE
AUDRAIN
SALINE
HOWARD
LINCOLN
JACKSON
LAFAYETTE
BOONE
MONTGOMERY
WARREN
ST. CHARLES
ST. LOUIS
ST. LOUIS CITY
COOPER
CALLAWAY
MONITEAU
JOHNSON
PETTIS
CASS
COLE
OSAGE
GASCONADE
FRANKLIN
JEFFERSON
HENRY
MORGAN
BENTON
MILLER
MARIES
BATES
ST. CLAIR
CAMDEN
HICKORY
CRAWFORD
WASHINGTON
ST. FRANCOIS
STE. GENEVIEVE
PERRY
VERNON
PULASKI
PHELPS
CEDAR
DALLAS
LACLEDE
POLK
DENT
IRON
MADISON
BOLLINGER
CAPE GIRARDEAU
BARTON
DADE
REYNOLDS
TEXAS
WEBSTER
WRIGHT
GREENE
JASPER
LAWRENCE
SHANNON
WAYNE
SCOTT
CHRISTIAN
CARTER
NEWTON
DOUGLAS
STODDARD
MISSISSIPPI
BARRY
STONE
TANEY
OZARK
HOWELL
OREGON
RIPLEY
BUTLER
MCDONALD
NEW MADRID
DUNKLIN
PEMISCOT

Historic Context: Railroad Growth and Development in Sweet Springs, 1870-1899

Brownsville had been growing, although very slowly, for several years before a railroad arrived and reshaped the community, essentially transforming it from a small agricultural village with limited prospects into a viable trade center and, simultaneously, fostering the development of local mineral springs into a popular health spa.

Unless an area town was situated on the Missouri River or served by a railroad, its potential for growth and development as a mercantile center was extremely limited. On the eve of the Civil War, the population of Brownsville was only a few hundred and the town faced an uncertain future despite being the largest community in southwestern Saline County.[8] Local access to a railroad had been anticipated since the 1850s but the Pacific Railroad's route across Missouri was not even through Saline County much less Brownsville, and the Blackwater River which meanders around the south portion of town was inadequate for commerce. When the Pacific Railroad was completed in 1865, Brownsville area farmers began driving cattle and hauling grain to LaMonte, in Pettis County. Eleven miles to the south, LaMonte was the nearest shipping point on the new railroad.[9]

After the Civil War, a proposal was revived for a branch line connecting Lexington with the main line of the Pacific Railroad Company less than 50 miles away at Sedalia. Construction of the Lexington & St. Louis Railroad began in 1869, with only a slight northward jog needed for the line to go through Brownsville. The first segment between Brownsville and Sedalia began operating in December 1871. The next segment passed through the northern edge of Brownsville, continued across Salt Pond Township and was completed to Lexington in 1872. In 1878, the Lexington & St. Louis Railroad was leased to the Missouri Pacific Railway, which had taken over the foreclosed Pacific Railroad, and two years later the railroads consolidated with the line becoming known as the Lexington Branch of the Missouri Pacific. Promoters of Brownsville happily proclaimed rail connections with all points north, south, east and west.[10]

As expected, the railroad's impact was considerable. Brownsville became an agricultural shipping center, with stockyards, grain storage warehouses, a mill, an elevator and other agriculture-oriented facilities developed along the right-of-way. Hemp had been an important Saline County crop prior to the Civil War, and in 1872 it comprised approximately a third of the agricultural produce shipped from Brownsville by rail. But corn was the primary local crop and in 1875, a bumper year, 1,955 railroad carloads were shipped from Brownsville during a five-month period.[11] Hemp production soon faded but livestock production and the production of such staples as corn, wheat, oats and potatoes continued as important crops in the southwestern Saline County area served by Brownsville.[12]

The railroad also was responsible for an immediate reshaping of the commercial center. Several merchants shifted their businesses northward, from Main Street, toward the right-of-way along Lexington Avenue, a distance of about two blocks. The passenger depot was parallel to the south side of the tracks at Spring Street (formerly Bridge Street), approximately 100 feet north of Lexington Avenue.[13] Miller Street was subsequently developed from Lexington Avenue southward to Main, and this is the configuration that persists today.[14]

In 1874, Campbell's Gazetteer of Missouri listed Brownsville as "an important shipping point" by virtue of its location on the Lexington branch of the Pacific Railroad. With a population estimated (probably overestimated) at 1,000, it contained two banks, 40 stores, two mills, three churches, and "good schools." Springs "remarkable for their medicinal values" were nearby and attracting visitors, and a company had been formed to develop the springs into an attraction that, it was hoped, would rival other, much better-known spas.[15] Early businesses provided groceries and meats, dry goods and clothing, agricultural implements and hardware, furniture, drugs and jewelry, and there were hotels and sleeping rooms, banks, restaurants, lodge halls, millineries, offices, carpenter and harness shops, blacksmiths, barber shops, a billiard parlor and probably a saloon or two.[16]

The arrival of the railroad greatly facilitated Brownsville's development as a health resort. Most visitors arrived and departed by train, and mineral water itself became an important export item. Beginning in 1872, two-gallon containers of mineral water were shipped "in every direction, to every express office within 500 miles." The bottles could be returned to Brownsville for refilling and a clientele developed. The exportation of mineral water is said to have been started by James Henry, the first station agent, although a bottling works apparently was constructed at the sweet spring at about this time by the Missouri Mineral Water Co. Brownsville's fullest development as a health resort was still a few years away, but shipment of mineral water during this period "commenced (its) favorable notoriety."[17]

The railroad "brought Brownsville and the Sweet Spring into the busy world. The one sprung up into a thriving modern town, the other became a universal favorite of health and pleasure seekers."[18] Eventually four passenger trains were scheduled daily, two in each direction.

Several railroad-generated buildings are extant on Lexington Avenue, just south of where the Lexington Branch right-of-way crossed the city at a slight angle from east to west. These are fragile, two-story brick buildings with early Queen Anne styling, generally with decorative brickwork cornices, cast iron posts and enhancement of second floor windows. Some buildings which were rebuilt after sustaining tornado damage in 1882 are among those extant today. With the development of Miller Street during the High Victorian period, Queen Anne buildings with ornate stamped metal cornices as well as cast iron posts were constructed.

Residences erected during this period ranged from modest vernacular buildings in various forms, often with Victorian or more specifically Queen Anne elements and occasionally with light to moderate Italianate styling, to larger, more complex dwellings reflecting these and other styles. Among the vernacular dwellings were a few central passage, single pile plans with Greek Revival-influenced entrances. Resort cottages made of wood and bedecked with Queen Anne elements also were constructed during this period, mainly on former parkland south of the original town which has since been added to the city. Resort cottages usually were of one story.

Brownsville was growing slowly before the railroad arrived, but the railroad introduced a period of more rapid growth. In 1887, with high hopes of continued growth in connection with the local health spa, the city changed its name to Sweet Springs. Although Sweet Springs' carrying capacity turned out to be

much less than anticipated by the business community, a population level sufficient to at least maintain viability despite the ultimate loss of the railroad seems to have been reached, and many buildings constructed during the years of railroad prosperity are extant.

Historic Context: Sweet Springs as a Popular Spa in Western Missouri, 1877-1896

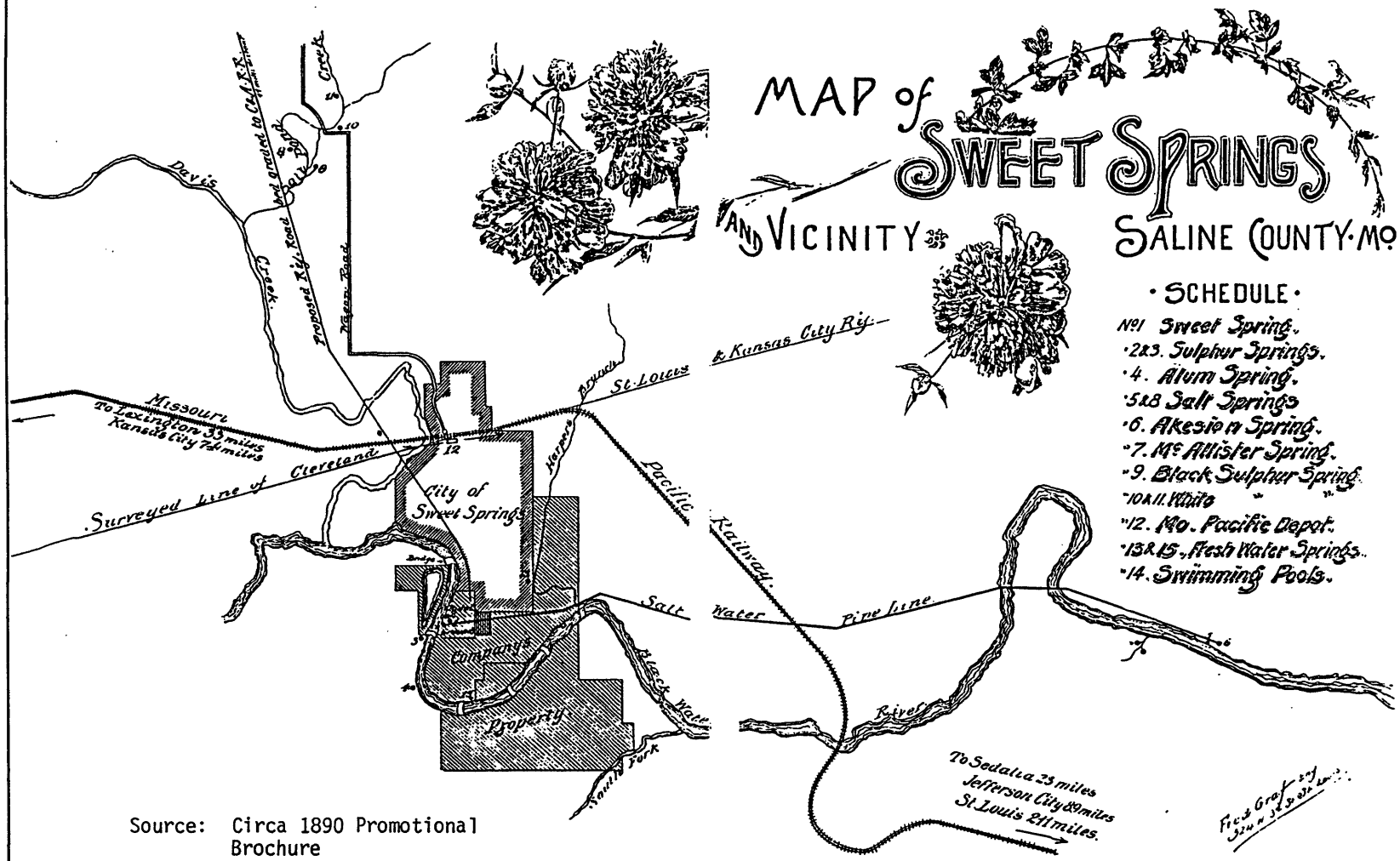
"When the dog star rages and the drone of the mosquito makes night hideous the dusty citizen begins to long for change, and the question comes, 'Where shall we go this summer?'"

So began a promotional brochure of the Missouri Pacific Railway, circa 1882. The brochure suggested that an excellent choice for Missourians seeking a summer retreat would be the "Sweet Springs" at Brownsville where "all the charms of scenery, healthful air and country pastimes (are combined) with all the gayeties and pleasures of the city."

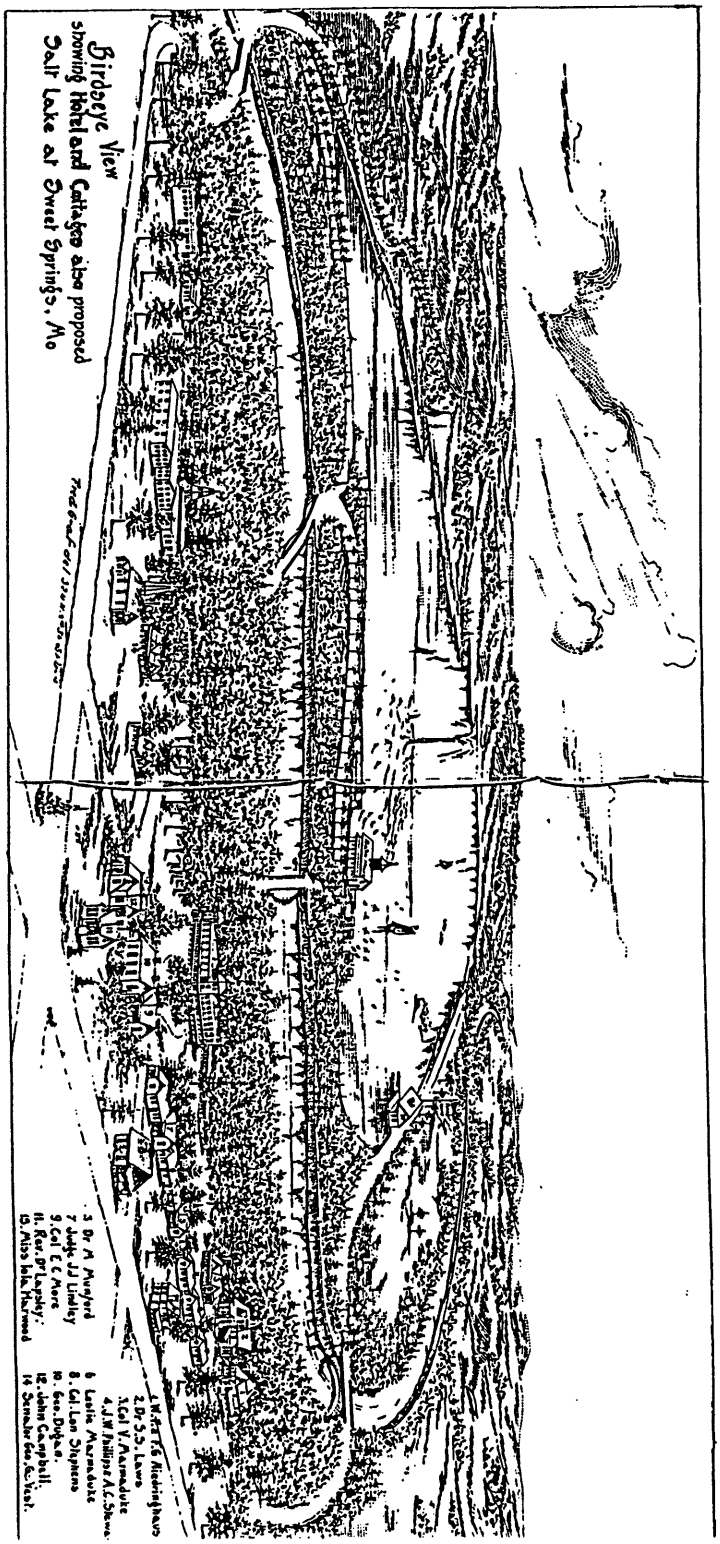
Railroads sought to capitalize on the health reform movement, which appealed to Missourians and other Americans during the late nineteenth century, by carrying passengers to and from spas such as the one at Brownsville/Sweet Springs from the 1870s until 1896. On summer weekends during peak years in the 1880s, the Missouri Pacific ran special trains to Brownsville from Kansas City and St. Louis. As might be inferred from its name, Saline County had numerous mineral springs and salt licks. To a lesser degree, area springs also were developed for the resort trade at nearby McAllister Springs and, in Johnson County, at Pertle Springs and Electric Springs in Warrensburg. Missouri's principal spa, at Excelsior Springs in Clay County, is a functioning resort today.

The health reform movement was fueled, and the establishment of health resorts at natural springs was fostered, by the belief that many diseases could be cured or prevented by a proper regimen of diet, exercise and relaxation. At the spas, various mineral waters with highly-touted medicinal virtues were available for drinking and bathing and the guests could exercise or entertain themselves while breathing "country air" and relaxing away from the stresses of everyday life.

Since mineral water varied from spring to spring, it was carefully analyzed and specific curative properties were ascribed according to the elements present. The main spring at Brownsville, containing high percentages of sodium, magnesium and calcium chloride along with potassium, iron, lime and other ingredients, was "noted for curing Dyspepsia, Sick Stomach, Kidney and Bladder Diseases, including Diabetes and Bright's Disease; also Diarrhoea of Children and Cholora Infantum (and) Nervous Prostration, Hysteria, Paralysis, and Diseases of Women." Other nearby springs had "great power in diseases of the Liver and Skin...Constipation and Biliousness."[19] Compared to local sulphur and salt water springs, the main spring water was considered sweet and hence the name of the spring, followed by the renaming of Brownsville in 1887.



Source: Circa 1890 Promotional Brochure



Source: Circa 1890 promotional brochure

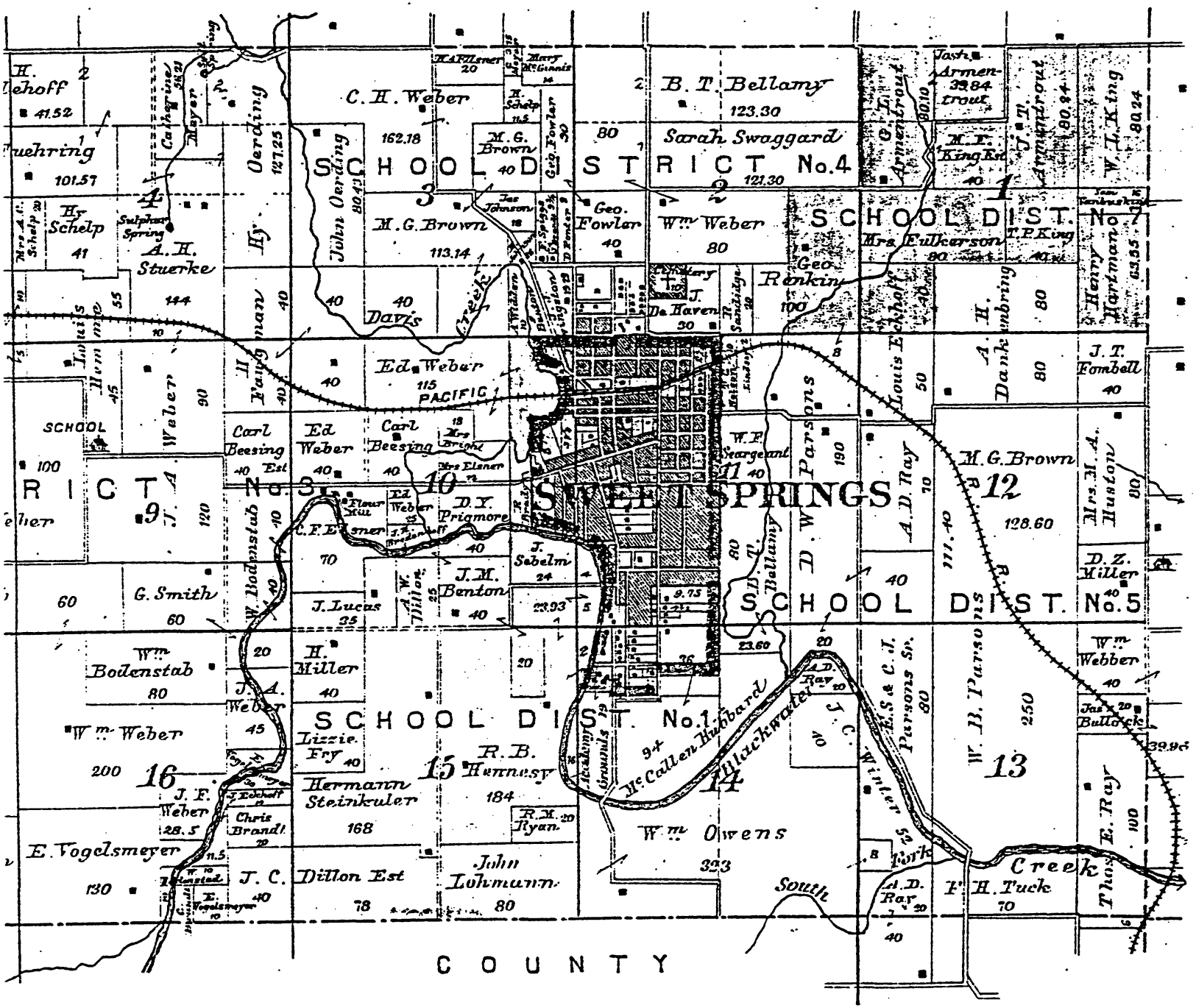
Early visitors came to partake of the purportedly healing waters, and then the resort developers (who published brochures of their own, seeking investors as well as customers) perceived a much larger market if the existing facilities could be expanded to include greater opportunities for recreation and entertainment. The first resort development company was organized in August 1874, in St. Louis. Soon the Sweet Springs Company, driven largely by Darwin and Leslie Marmaduke, brothers of governor-to-be John S. Marmaduke, purchased 30 acres including the original "sweet spring" from Dr. John Yantis.[20] By 1877, a hotel with accommodations for 400 guests, a pagoda, bathhouse, bowling alley, billiards hall, livery stable and other recreational facilities to attract a broader spectrum of visitors were under construction or proposed by the Sweet Springs Company. Water for the bathhouse came from an artesian well at nearby McAllister Springs, through a two-mile system of cedar pipes. The new resort formally opened on Sunday, June 19, 1881.[21]

In 1875, an article important in the resort's early development was published in a St. Louis magazine, Ware's Valley Monthly: A Journal of Western Thought and Life. Author J. M. Pelot, M.D., a Brownsville physician and surgeon, extolled the virtues of the spring water in fine prose complete with a classic testimonial about a seemingly miraculous cure. Pelot told how the original facilities had been outgrown and described the formation of a joint stock company with such a group of prominent, solid investors that "success is assured and fraud is out of the question."[22]

Accounts of how the "curative" powers of Sweet Springs water came to be discovered focus on the Yantis family. In 1841 Eliza Ann Yantis (Mrs. John L. Yantis) of Howard County, suffering from what had been diagnosed as tuberculosis in an advanced stage, reportedly regained her health after spending a few days sipping from a spring that she discovered while riding her pony. "In three days," wrote Pelot, "she discovered, to her great surprise, that she had a good appetite, to which she had for years been a stranger, and day by day felt the joy of returning health. Her cough disappeared, perfect digestion dismissed the ever-present stomach from her mind, hypochondria gave place to bouyant spirits, the rose returned to her cheeks, and her health was perfectly and absolutely restored."[23] Whether fact, fiction or something in between, Pelot's elixir tale presumably had a significant impact on development of the spa. The spring found by Mrs. Yantis became the main "sweet spring."

Two years later, in 1848, with his wife's health again failing and Yantis himself "succumbing to nervous attacks," Yantis purchased the land surrounding the spring for $10 an acre. He operated a school for boys at the site for a few years before ultimately selling the springs and most of the acreage to the Marmadukes for development as a resort.[24]

Sweet Springs and Vicinity, Circa 1896
SOURCE: 1896 Saline County Atlas



When the new Sweet Springs Health Resort opened in 1881, the Brownsville Herald published the names of more than 50 purchasers of lots on the project grounds. Most of the buyers were St. Louisans who planned to erect summer cottages.[25] Other guests stayed in the city hotels and boarding houses as well as at the resort hotel, which is depicted in at least one historic drawing as a grand, three-story building with a double-deck porch around two elevations and four-story corner towers with steep tapering roofs. The resort reportedly attracted some 6,000 visitors in 1881. More than a million gallons of mineral water "although unadvertised" were reportedly shipped by rail that year.[26]

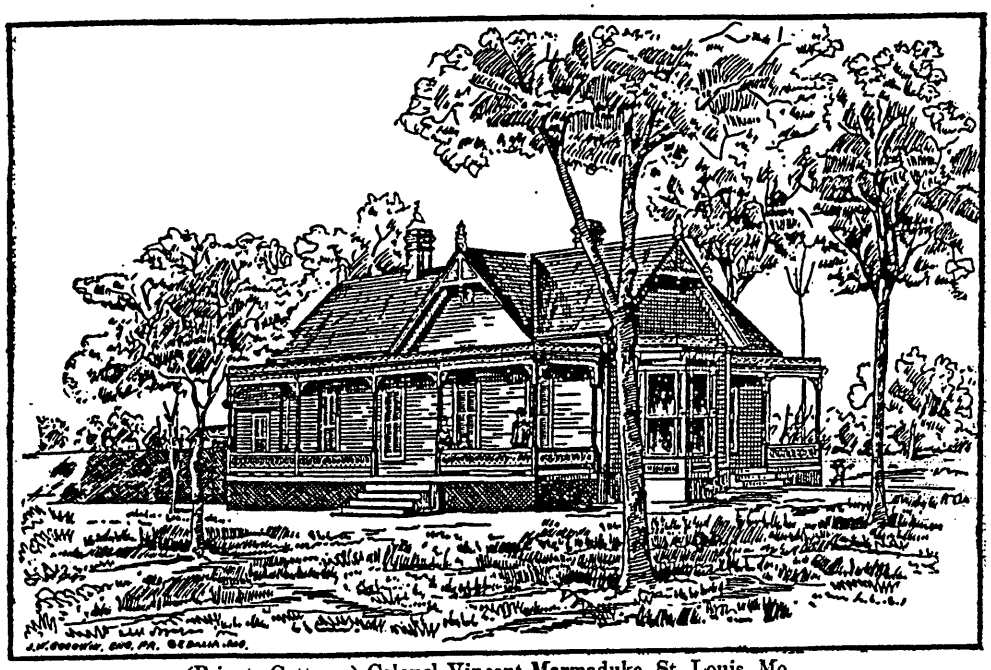
Resort guests could avail themselves of "bowling alleys, billiard rooms, a shooting gallery, a livery stable where excellent horses can be obtained for either riding or driving, lawn tennis and croquet grounds, a bicycle and roller skating rink, rowing and fishing on the picturesque Black River (sic), and dancing to content the most ardent devotee." In addition to medicinal baths, there was swimming: "The pools for gentlemen and ladies are separated, but during each day one hour will be set apart, when they may bathe together, as at the sea shore." Lawns were illuminated with gas so the games could continue after dark, musicians imported from St. Louis played on the hotel porch and there was dancing.[27]

In 1886, the Winner Investment Company of Kansas City acquired 700 acres on both sides of the Blackwater River and embarked on a grandiose plan for additional development of the resort. A dam was proposed across the river below the springs to create a water recreation area that would be equipped with steamboats and yachts. A boulevard 100 feet wide and four miles long was proposed along the Blackwater River. The extent of the actual Winner developments is unclear but in 1887, Brownsville renamed itself Sweet Springs. No resort buildings are extant, and copies of the local newspaper which would have shed light on the Winner developments apparently have not survived for the period between late 1884 and early 1904.[28]

The resort years were golden in the sense that some of Missouri's most socially and politically prominent citizens visited the spa, built summer cottages and frequented the business establishments. Prosperity could not be sustained, but for several years Brownsville/Sweet Springs merchants benefited immensely from their location in a popular resort town with a railroad: "Each train brought guests. The railroad station bustled with activity. The hack service did a thriving business transporting people from the station to the resort three quarters of a mile away. Business in the town flourished because of the resort."[29]

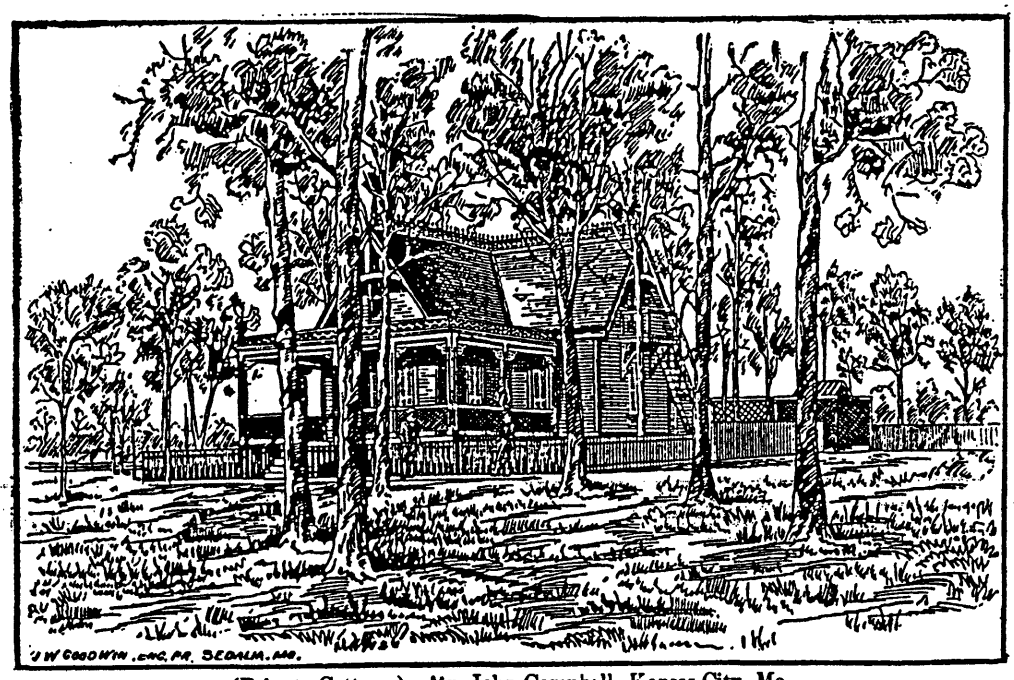
Resort promoters touted the local springs as the equal of other, much better known springs, calling it such things as "White Sulphur Springs of the West." This was hyperbole but for awhile in the late nineteenth century, Sweet Springs was a very special place. Many socially and politically prominent citizens from St. Louis, Kansas City, Jefferson City and other areas of Missouri visited the resort and sampled the attractions, and it was basically this group that built the summer cottages. "It was a resort for many well-known Missourians in those days, the play place for those socially and politically prominent in the State's affairs. Much political history was made in the little group of cottages and at the Sweet Springs Hotel.....It was a favorite meeting place between St. Louis and Kansas City."[30]

Source: Promotional Brochure, circa 1887



(Private Cottage,) Colonel Vincent Marmaduke, St. Louis, Mo.

Typical Cottages at Sweet Springs Resort



(Private Cottage.) Mr. John Campbell, Kansas City, Mo.

The resort's social register included Governors John S. Marmaduke and Thomas T. Crittenden, as well as future governor Lon V. Stevens. Governor Marmaduke had a cottage "where practically the whole of his political campaign was fought. Governor Crittenden...spent much time at Sweet Springs and won many of his political scalps there." After his election and until his death in office in 1887, Governor Marmaduke made the resort his summer retreat. Other notables who owned cottages there included Senators George G. Vest and Francis M. Cockrell, Dr. S. S. Laws of the University of Missouri, F. G. and William F. Niedringhaus of St. Louis, Judge J. W. Henry and Col. J. B. Price of Jefferson City, Judge W. T. Wood of Kansas City, Judge W. C. Jones and Judge S. T. Glover of St. Louis, Dr. G. M. B. Maugh, Dr. T. F. Prewitt, Dr. R. McCausland and Dr. C. T. Widney of St. Louis, Bishop Bowman of St. Louis, Dr. Morrison Munford of the Kansas City Times, Walton H. Holmes of Kansas City, and many others. Senator Vest continued spending summers in his Sweet Springs cottage until his death in 1904.[31]

Summer cottages obviously were associated with the health resort, and commercial buildings on Lexington Avenue obviously were constructed to take advantage of the railroad. Many other buildings which were constructed in the city during this period were associated with the general development of Brownsville/Sweet Springs, with resort development as well as the railroad as factors. But without specific information about builders or other circumstances of construction, it is difficult or impossible to link many buildings erected during this period with one influence more than another.

Somewhat ironically, considering the thousands of resort visitors who walked the streets of the city each year, Sweet Springs lost population during what seemingly was its most prosperous decade, 1880-90. By the 1890s, the resort itself was in decline. Interest in country spas had dwindled and other area spas were siphoning off some of the already limited trade. Under new ownership in September 1891, however, the resort facilities were given a dual role as a military academy in a brilliant attempt to maintain viability. Marmaduke Military Academy, named after Governor John S. Marmaduke, was said to be patterned after West Point. After improvements including the installation of water facilities on every floor, steam heating, gas and electricity for lighting, the resort hotel became the barracks for approximately 70 cadets. During the resort season when the cadets went home for summer vacation, the hotel was opened to guests as usual. While this arrangement might have continued indefinitely, it ended abruptly on March 1, 1896, when the barracks/hotel was destroyed by fire.[32]

When the facilities were not rebuilt, Sweet Springs' loss became Lexington's gain. The academy's military training equipment was sold to Wentworth Military Academy at Lexington, which meanwhile gained full recognition by the Army and prospered.[33]

Loss of the military academy/resort hotel scarcely affected the established residents who built cottages and returned to them each summer for an interlude of relative solitude. But several cottages apparently were sold and moved into the city when they were offered for sale at bargain prices, following the fire, and the business community suffered from the loss of scores of weekenders and summer resort visitors, along with the cadets. Possible restoration of the resort was discussed but apparently nothing transpired until several years later, and the resort never truly reopened.

Historic Context: Twentieth Century Redevelopment in Sweet Springs, 1900-1930

Although the losses were not dramatic, the population of Sweet Springs was going down rather than up at the turn of the century. The downward trend became apparent when the census enumerator counted only 1,137 residents in 1890, a loss of almost four per cent since 1880. The population fell another five per cent in 1900, to 1,080, before rebounding slightly to 1,122 in 1910. With prospects for Sweet Springs' future growth seemingly limited unless something unforeseen happened, a small group of local entrepreneurs headed by Charles K. Smith sought to turn things around.

Smith, a son of local lumber dealer George Washington Smith, had left home in the early 1900s to manage shoe factories in St. Louis and Milwaukee. Upon returning to Sweet Springs, he reportedly declared that he would "put Sweet Springs on the map, or go broke."[34] Smith's business partners apparently included his brother George and other members of the Smith family as well as such established Sweet Springs merchants as Herman Renken and T. C. Andrew, real estate dealer John H. McGuire and others.

Probably recalling a not too distant past when downtown Sweet Springs bustled with activity, Smith and his associates believed the town could be revitalized by attracting new shoppers and luring former shoppers back. Their solution was to construct new, shopper-friendly stores in the commercial center and to encourage facelifts of existing buildings. The distinctly Twentieth century buildings which were constructed along the east side of South Miller Street, incorporating new construction techniques, significantly changed the look of downtown Sweet Springs. The Smith Stores Co., consisting of three adjacent, individual two-story buildings which share a colonnaded front, is particularly impressive considering that the town's population was under 1,200 when it was constructed in 1911. Initially, the Herald simply referred to it as "the new Smith-Renken-Andrew buildings."[35] But Smith was "the prime mover in this enterprise."[36]

With this early version of a shopping center and other buildings under construction, the Sweet Springs Herald proclaimed the venture an important step toward "weathering the evils of fossilism and inactivity." Said the Herald:

> Sweet Springs has a territory of 400 square miles from which she draws the great majority of the trade, and there is no reason why she should not get all of it. With her five rural routes radiating in every direction and with few competing points in that territory, and with the additional drawing capacity made more effective by the present and prospective attractions to the buying public, Sweet Springs has but to make renewed efforts by fair dealing.....(to) confidently expect a material growth in trade and business of all kinds in the future."[37]

Probably many cities with stagnating populations expected to grow during this period, but few approached the problem as directly as did Sweet Springs. In addition to the colonnaded shopping complex, ground also was broken in 1911 for a luxury hotel which was described as "another evidence of the enterprising spirit that C. K. Smith and his coterie of business associates possess, and that they are willing to invest their money in the city and believe in doing things that will build up the town as well as securing for

themselves profitable investments." The attractive new hotel would be "one of the best trade drawers a town can possess."[38] Other Smith investments included a new bank and an ice plant. Some existing downtown buildings apparently were modernized with new storefronts during this period.

Meanwhile, although overgrown and scarcely used, the former health resort still tantalized. Smith apparently did not become significantly involved in plans for its revitalization, but in 1909 a group of investors headed by Kansas City alderman Baylis Steele formed a company with the intention of restoring the spa to its former glory. A new resort hotel was planned. Other proposed attractions included a lake fed by water from an artesian well ("The Gusher") which had been drilled near the resort a couple of years earlier by oil prospectors. The "first annual" Chautauqua was staged on the resort grounds that summer, from July 23 through August 1, with Wisconsin Senator Robert M. LaFollette, the Royal Hungarian Orchestra, Carrie Nation and Mascot the Educated Horse among the impressive roster of attractions.

The restoration proposal was well-received, and the Kansas City Times wondered why the resort had ever fallen into disuse: "It has never been quite clear just why Sweet Springs was allowed to languish, unless the decline may be attributed to the destruction of the big hotel. In undertaking the revival of the place at this time, the promoters have an especial advantage in being able to work along practically original lines."[39] How much restoration actually occurred is unknown, but the resort hotel was not rebuilt and the Chautauqua did not come back. Today the area around the spring (no longer flowing) is parkland although a modern version of a pagoda and markers have been installed to remind visitors of what once had been.

In redefining the shopping strip on South Miller Street, Smith and his associates clearly did more than anyone to pull Sweet Springs out of its doldrums. But Smith's enterprises plus the somewhat-restored resort and other developments failed to achieve the desired results. Smith's well-advertised colonnaded shopping complex opened on schedule but his new luxury hotel did not, probably because he knew or feared that it would be severely under used. By the time the hotel finally opened after World War One, Smith was no longer the owner.

Ultimately, Sweet Springs' service area probably was insufficiently populated to support the developments. While Sweet Springs undoubtedly attracted shoppers from such regional communities as Alma, Houstonia, Hughesville, Blackburn, Mount Leonard, Aullville and LaMonte, larger cities such as Marshall, Warrensburg and Sedalia had become readily accessible to shoppers newly liberated by the automobile. Even Smith eventually became content to leave to others the continued development of his hometown. He began disposing of his commercial real estate and, by January 1918, owned only the ice plant and some property on the west side of South Miller Street which he hoped to trade, the Herald reported.

Smith traded his still-unopened Colonnade Hotel to S. H. Covington for a farm near Glasgow. He is said to have left town "minus $100,000 and his enthusiasm."[40] (In 1937, after some 18 years of operation, the Colonnade was destroyed by fire.)[41]

Smith's abdication must have discouraged other potential risk-takers. Despite the lifting of wartime restrictions, little construction occurred in the commercial center during the 1920s and the resort was largely a memory. In September 1919, the heart of the old resort grounds--overgrown with weeds since the attempted revival a decade earlier--was sold at a trustee's auction. Little of the resort's historic fabric remained except for an empty building used briefly in the late 1890s as a sanitarium (the Mayfield Sanitarium), and a dance hall/auditorium. The buyer was W. E. Vanarsdall but whatever his plans for the property, the resort was not reactivated. The city eventually acquired the tract which it retains today.[42] Meanwhile, the Gusher's sulphur-rich water created a small lake which served as a swimming pool for several years. Today a handful of former cottages are the only extant resort properties.

Residences, like commercial construction in Sweet Springs during the early Twentieth century, reflected newly popular forms. Bungalows with Craftsman styling became popular in Sweet Springs during this period, and this form was applied to the large, relatively expensive homes constructed by the cream of Sweet Springs society as well as to simpler worker housing. Prairie and Colonial Revival styles also were popular locally, particular on variations of the American Four Square. These were relatively modern houses equipped from the start with indoor plumbing, electricity and some form of central heating system.

The 1920 census again reported a population count, 1,177, that was disappointing and puzzling. Despite a decade which included significant new construction and an addition, the census showed a gain of only 55 people. The Herald described the slight increase as "quite disappointing as a new addition has been taken in and many new homes have been built in the last 10 years...the city has lost no business but gained several and many of the older concerns...have enlarged during the last decade."[43] Growth occurred in Gilliam, Malta Bend, Marshall, Nelson and Slater, along with Sweet Springs, but overall Saline County lost population between 1910-20. Population losses occurred in the old river towns of Arrow Rock and Miami, both lacking railroads, and in Blackburn even though Blackburn was on a supposedly life-giving railroad.

Actually, the population of Brownsville/Sweet Springs has been remarkably stable over the past 110 years or so. The highest official population was 1,716, recorded in 1970. Sanborn map estimates of 1,700 for November 1883 and 2,000 for September 1888 are surely exaggerated, but it would be interesting to know what the transient population was during a summer weekend in the early 1880s. The second highest official population was 1,694, reached in 1980. The city's first census (of Brownsville, prior to its renaming as Sweet Springs) was in 1880, when the population was 1,182. Estimates for 1870 range from 600 to 1,000. The population in other census years was: 1890, 1,137; 1900, 1,080; 1910, 1,122; 1920, 1,177; 1930, 1,641; 1940, 1,413; 1950, 1,439; 1960, 1,452; and 1990, 1,595.

Sweet Springs lacked an employer large enough to significantly impact its population until 1922, when the International Shoe Company converted Smith's ice plant into a shoe factory. This development furnished employment for 300 and was "largely responsible for bringing Sweet Springs out of the decline which it suffered in the early 1900s." International Shoe departed from Sweet Springs several years ago but left behind an almost-new factory building which was subsequently acquired by Rival Manufacturing, the current tenant.[44] Rival, however, has announced a major layoff effective in January 1997.

Various plans for reopening the resort or otherwise developing the property were periodically aired. The lake created by the artesian well or "Gusher" remained a favorite of bathers who enjoyed it for recreation as well as for its reported medicinal qualities until accumulated sand and silt choked off the flow. A circa 1920s photograph of bathers has racetrack bleachers (no longer extant) in the background. In 1926, N. L. Taylor leased the property from the city with ideas of constructing an amusement park.[45] Today the site of the sweet spring is part of an attractive, well-maintained city park. Despite the misfortunes, miscalculations and various failed dreams that have denied Sweet Springs from recapturing its glory years, the population appears to have stabilized at approximately 1,600. Today Sweet Springs is a viable community with a strong interest in its past, which is still clearly reflected in its historic architecture.

ENDNOTES

[1]History of Saline County, Missouri (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Company, 1881), pp. 500-501; History of Saline County, Missouri (Marcelline, Mo.: Walsworth Publishing Co., 1967), p. 341; Pelot, J. M., "Sweet Springs," Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society, July 1955 (condensed version, originally published in a St. Louis publication titled Ware's Valley Monthly, A Journal of Western thought and Life, May 1875), p. 365.

[2]History of Saline County, Missouri (1881), Ibid.; History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), Ibid.; and Napton, William Barclay, Past and Present of Saline County, Missouri (Indianapolis and Chicago: B. F. Bowen & Company, 1910), pp. 375-376.

[3]History of Saline County, Missouri (1881), Ibid.; History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), Ibid.; and Lexington, Mo., 1822-1972, Official Commemorative Book (Higginsville, Mo.: The Higginsville Advance, 1972), pp. 33-34.

[4]At the outbreak of hostilities, the 4,876 slaves in Saline County accounted for nearly a third of the county's population of 15,699.

[5]Edwards, John N., Shelby and His Men: The War in the West. Waverly, Mo., 1993 reprint, pp. 211-225; Morrow, Lynn, "An Historic Preservation Survey in the Town of Marshall, Missouri," 1984, p. 50.

[6]History of Saline County, Missouri (1881), op cit., p. 502.

[7]Sweet Springs Herald, May 3, 1907.

[8]In 1860, the population of Salt Pond Township was 796.

[9]History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), Ibid.

[10]History of Saline County, Missouri (1881), op cit., pp. 502-503; History of Sweet Springs 1818 to 1992 (Sweet Springs, 1992), pp. 48-49; Campbell, R. A., Campbell's Gazetteer of Missouri (St. Louis, 1874), p. 584.

[11]History of Saline County, Missouri (1881), op cit., pp. 502-503.

[12]History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), op cit., p. 12.

[13]Sanborn Map & Publishing Co., Limited (New York: 1883-1929).

[14]History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), Ibid.

[15]Campbell, R. A., op cit.; Brownsville Herald, December 3, 1874. Campbell's population estimate seems too high.

[16]The 1883 Sanborn fire insurance map for Brownsville provides an early depiction of downtown business types.

[17]History of Saline County, Missouri (1881), op cit., p. 503; Sweet Springs Herald, September 10, 1953.

[18]Pelot, op cit., p. 368.

[19]"Sweet Springs, Saline County, Missouri" (St. Louis: Times Printing House, 1882), p. 11. (Brochure published by General Passenger Department, Missouri Pacific Railway.)

[20]History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), op cit., p. 343.

[21]Brownsville Herald, June 24, 1881; "Saratoga of the West," unsigned "Missouriana" segment in Missouri Historical Review, October 1942.

[22]Pelot, op cit., pp. 364-370.

[23]Pelot, Ibid.

[24]History of Sweet Springs 1818 to 1992, op cit., pp. 2-3.

[25]Brownsville Herald, January 21 and March 18, 1881.

[26]Missouri Pacific Railway, "Sweet Springs, Saline County, Missouri" (Promotional brochure published in St. Louis, 1882).

[27]Ibid.

[28]"Missouriana: Saratoga of the West," Missouri Historical Review, October 1942, pp. 62-64. In addition to invaluable issues of the Brownsville/Sweet Springs newspapers and other related historic material, the State Historical Society of Missouri has in its collection several promotional brochures which are specific for the resort from the 1880s and early 1890s, as well as a brochure for 1909, the year of the Chautauqua.

[29]History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), op cit.

[30]Missouri Pacific-Iron Mountain Railway, "Sweet Springs, Missouri: Health Resort, Playground and Chautauqua Center,"
promotional brochure published at St. Louis in 1909.

[31]Sweet Springs Herald, March 18, 1881 and May 14, 1909; History of Saline County, Missouri (1967), op cit.; Morrow, Lynn, "An Historic Preservation Survey in the Town of Marshall, Missouri," 1984, pp. 58-59; "Prospectus of the Sweet Springs Property," circa 1890 brochure; and "Sweet Springs, Missouri: Health Resort, Playground and Chautauqua Center," op cit.

[32]"Missouriana: Saratoga of the West," Missouri Historical Review, op cit., pp. 64-66.

[33]Lexington, Missouri, 1822-1972, Official Commemorative Book (Higginsville, Missouri: The Higginsville Advance, 1972), p. 34.

[34]History of Sweet Springs 1818 to 1991, op cit., p. 32.

[35]Sweet Springs Herald, November 18, 1910.

[36]Sweet Springs Herald, February 3, 1911.

[37]Sweet Springs Herald, January 13, 1911.

[38]Sweet Springs Herald, April 28, 1911.

[39]Sweet Springs Herald, April 9 and May 14, 1909; "Sweet Springs, Missouri: Health Resort, Playground and Chautauqua Center," op cit.

[40]Sweet Springs Herald, January 11, 1918, and History of Sweet Springs 1818 to 1992 (op cit.), p. 32. The Colonnade ultimately opened, but not before the Herald--lamenting the lack of hotel facilities in 1919--editorialized on February 14, 1919, that although "ready and immaculately finished," it was still "only an ornament." The Herald noted that the old Commercial Hotel on Main Street had been sold and dismantled, while the City Hotel on Lexington Avenue catered only to "roomers" and served no meals. As for the Colonnade, the newspaper opined that "its very beauty and grandeur seems to deter hotel men from taking a chance on it."

[41]Sweet Springs Herald, December 10, 1937; History of Sweet Springs 1818 to 1992, op cit., p. 38.

[42]Sweet Springs Herald, September 5, 1919.

[43]Sweet Springs Herald, June 11, 1920.

[44]History of Sweet Springs 1818 to 1992, op cit., p. 39.

[45]Sweet Springs Herald, June 11, 1926.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Property Type: Early Commercial Buildings

Description

Early Commercial Buildings were constructed from circa 1870 through circa 1899, a period during which Brownsville/Sweet Springs gained importance as a shipping point on the Lexington branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and catered to summer visitors at the local health spa. The city's earliest commercial buildings, made of wood, have not survived. By 1872 when the railroad arrived, brick was becoming the material of choice for most new buildings constructed in the commercial center. Sweet Springs continued as a railroad trade center well into the 20th century, but the health resort did not survive the 19th century.

Main Street was the primary business street before the railroad arrived and then Lexington Avenue was also developed for business purposes. By 1883, with the exception of two vacant lots, both sides of Lexington Avenue were filled with unbroken groups of primarily two-story brick buildings in the block between Spring Street and Miller Street. By 1888, the vacant lots were no longer vacant. Meanwhile construction continued on Main Street during this period and included the city's first three-story building, the Central Hotel, probably constructed soon after the arrival of the railroad. Later this building was reconstructed as the two-story building which remains today. Beginning in the 1880s, Miller Street was developed as a business street for one longish block from Marshall Avenue southward to Main. One and two-story brick buildings constructed in the 1880s and 1890s are extant in the north portion of this block, as well as on Lexington Avenue.[1]

Queen Anne styling predominates on Early Commercial Buildings. Several buildings retain original storefronts which in some cases include ornate stamped metal cornices and cast iron posts. The older (pre-1890) Queen Anne buildings generally have brickwork cornices, cast iron posts and enhancement of second floor windows but without the ornate stamped metal cornices and upper level sheathing found on later, High Victorian examples. Regardless of styling, most buildings follow a traditional rectangular plan in which interior walls are shared and individual storefronts have recessed entrances. Several of these buildings have good integrity but some are extremely fragile today.

The former Sweet Springs City Hall at 310 South Miller Street is an impressive High Victorian example from the 1890s. A good example of an earlier Queen Anne building, circa 1870s, is the former City Hotel at 210-212 Lexington Avenue.

Significance

Early Commercial Buildings are significant under criteria A and C in the areas of COMMERCE and ARCHITECTURE as the only tangible links to the primary period of Sweet Springs' development as a railroad town and agricultural trade center from circa 1870 through circa 1899. No pre-1870 properties have been identified in the commercial center. Their location illustrates the impact of railroad construction as the business community shifted toward the right-of-way in the early 1870s.

Under criterion A, the properties are significant for their association with the commercial development of Sweet Springs as it experienced early growth as an agricultural trade center and then, concurrently from about 1881-96, as the host town for a popular health resort in western Missouri. None of the extant commercial buildings is known to have been used specifically by the railroad or in conjunction with the resort, but it is unlikely that more than a few, if any, would have been constructed without the favorable economic climate they generated.

Under criterion C, several properties are significant as good examples of a type and method of construction retaining substantial amounts of their original historic materials. Reflecting the nationwide popularity of Queen Anne architecture in commercial as well as residential architecture, there are good individual examples with moderate Queen Anne styling (primarily on Lexington Avenue) and there are also good high style examples (on Miller Street). High style buildings feature original storefronts with ornate stamped metal cornices as well as cast iron posts.

Registration Requirements

To qualify for individual listing under criterion A, the property must retain sufficient stylistic and structural features to identify it with its period of significance, and must retain high levels of integrity overall. Because their numbers are few, buildings of this type generally will be contributing within a district provided that the original upper storefront is intact, regardless of additions or alterations to the lower storefront.

To be individually eligible under criterion C, the property must be an outstanding example of its type with integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The architectural features necessary to identify these properties as having been built during their period of significance must be intact. Queen Anne properties should retain their elaborate stamped metal cornices if these were originally present, as in the case of buildings constructed during the High Victorian period of the 1890s. Earlier vernacular buildings will normally lack ornate cornices and sheathing but both types should nonetheless have original storefronts with cast iron posts if these were originally present, and a majority of historic materials should be retained. Under criterion C, Early Commercial Buildings will be contributing within a district if at least their upper storefronts are intact and sufficient details remain for them to be identified with their period of significance.

Property Type: Resort Cottages

Description

Resort Cottages are summer dwellings constructed in association with the former health resort at Sweet Springs. Visitors had been coming for years for relaxation and to drink the local water, but facilities were limited until about 1881 when the original Sweet Springs resort was opened east of the Blackwater River and just beyond the south edge of Sweet Springs. Developers offered 50' x 100' lots for the erection of summer cottages on the resort grounds in the northwest corner of Section 14 of T48N R23W. Several dozen lots "fronting on spacious avenues, regularly laid out" apparently were sold and numerous cottages were constructed on them.[2] Most of the cottages appear to have been built on today's Columbia and Daisy Avenues plus a few short streets which today are nonexistent. Other cottages undoubtedly were constructed in the vicinity of, but independent of, the resort. Cottages were the most common type of

resort building at Sweet Springs but, apparently, only a few are extant. No other type of resort building is extant.[3]

Owners were free to erect whatever type of building they wished, and consequently the resort cottages at Sweet Springs were constructed in various forms. Usually, they were small frame buildings of one story. All but two of 19 resort cottages depicted on a circa 1890 "Birdseye View" are small, one-story buildings.[4] The other two are complex, multiple-storied Victorian buildings. Another extant cottage said to have been moved from its original location is a gabled ell building with a half story upstairs. Whether any cottages were constructed of masonry is unknown. The only known examples of this property type are frame.

Most of the cottages were vernacular buildings of various plans, with at least some degree of Queen Anne, Gothic Revival or Italianate styling. Typical plans apparently included gabled-ell, crossplan, hall and parlor with a rear wing, and gable front forms. Queen Anne styling is visible on extant buildings as delicate or turned porch supports, perhaps with lacy brackets. It also shows up in such things as bay windows, imbricated shingles, paneled window aprons and other devices to avoid a smooth-walled appearance. Gothic Revival elements include curvilinear vergeboards, finials and crossbracing. Italianate-style brackets are found on some properties.

Examples of resort cottages constructed on the original grounds in the 1880s or earlier are at 1100, 1109 and 1217 Columbia Avenue. The moved cottage, a fine Queen Anne example, is at 309 Main Street. Other resort cottages may be extant off the original grounds. If any resort cottages remain on the grounds, they have been extensively altered and are unrecognizable in their present form.

Significance

Resort cottages are significant under criteria A and C in the areas of RECREATION and ARCHITECTURE. They are the only extant properties associated with the popular spa that essentially put Sweet Springs on the map in the late 19th century. The properties are significant under criterion A in the area of RECREATION if they were built as summer residences for those who came to stay at the resort for reasons of health, hygiene and relaxation. Visitors including Governor Marmaduke and other Missouri notables drank the spring water while resting or availing themselves of various recreational pursuits in the parklike setting. Possibly, HEALTH/MEDICINE also could be an area of significance since health and hygiene were promoted by the resort operators and most guests assumed their health was being improved by drinking mineral water, taking health baths and generally relaxing in the parklike setting. The properties are significant under criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE if they are sufficiently intact, recognizable examples of cottages constructed as summer resort homes at or near the spa. Integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting and association should be retained.

Registration Requirements

To be individually eligible under criterion A, properties must have been constructed as summer resort cottages between the creation of the original health resort in 1877 through the termination of the primary resort era in Sweet Springs in 1896. Some extant examples of this property type can be identified on a circa 1890 artist's drawing which depicts then-existing as well as proposed resort developments. After the resort's demise, some cottages were sold and moved so that identification is difficult today. There was no

standard floor plan or stylistic treatment although most properties had Queen Anne, Gothic Revival or Italianate references. Additional research may lead to the identification of other cottages.

Because most cottages were designed for seasonal use, they tended to be smaller than regular dwellings and over the years have been susceptible to numerous additions. Because of their scarcity, some leeway should be granted but additions/alterations should not obscure the principal elevations or major features of design.

To be individually eligible under criterion C, for architectural significance, the property should be a good and representative example with most of its stylistic elements intact. Alterations are permissible but should be minimal, with original design elements largely intact. Additions are acceptable unless they overwhelm the form and design of the original building. Since no historic district is apparent that would involve cottages, only individual eligibility should be considered.

Moved properties may be eligible under Criteria Consideration B, provided they are significant for their architectural value. The setting should be sufficiently evocative to suggest something of the building's historic past.

Property Type: Victorian Period Residences

Description

Beginning in the 1870s, Brownsville/Sweet Springs experienced a period of railroad-generated growth which was accelerated in the 1880s with the development of a popular health resort with medicinal springs, just south of the city limits. During this period, many of the more prosperous merchants and professionals erected medium to large dwellings reflecting the architectural styles of the period as well as their own financial success. These architect-designed houses, perhaps selected from a plan book, usually were representative of the Victorian styles such as Queen Anne, Stick and Shingle. Italianate, Second Empire and Gothic Revival styles also were represented. Generally these properties were constructed near the commercial center on Marshall, Locust, Highland, Main, Bridge and other streets to the east and south. They were not of course limited to these streets.

Examples of the Victorian Period Residences property type include the B. T. Bellamy House at 200 Highland Street (Queen Anne, circa 1885); the John J. McGuire House at 103 East Marshall Street (Queen Anne, circa 1895); and the R. E. Smith House at 204 East Marshall Street (Italianate, circa 1890).

Subtype: Vernacular Residences (Victorian Period)

Description

In general, Vernacular Residences of this period have simpler floor plans and less ornamentation and were occupied by families with somewhat less or considerably less income than the city's movers and shakers. These properties were solid and well-constructed, but their form was clearly folk or vernacular and they cost less to build than Victorian Period Residences. These properties could be as large as Victorian Period Residences, but they were likely to be smaller. Vernacular affinities included the gabled

ell, pyramidal, American Four Square, I-House, crossplan, open gable, hall and parlor, central passage single pile, and other forms.

Despite their simpler forms, Vernacular Residences (Victorian Period) often were adorned with detailing. This trim could reflect a single style, such as Queen Anne, or some combination of Queen Anne, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, or other styles. Without building-specific research, this property type may be indistinguishable from the Resort Cottages property type, particularly with regard to relatively small examples. However, most of these properties were constructed north of the resort grounds.

Examples of this property type are found at 515 West Main Street, 715 South Locust Street, and 100 South Mulberry Street.

Significance

Victorian Period Residences and Vernacular Residences (Victorian Period) are significant under criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. Victorian Period Residences are indirectly associated with the city's commercial development from circa 1870 through 1899. These homes are tangible evidence of their builder's aspirations and commercial success as Sweet Springs became a railroad town and then enjoyed additional success as a popular resort community. The houses are architecturally significant if they are sufficiently good examples of the style or form in which they were constructed. Extant styles represent local interpretations of Queen Anne, Shingle, Stick and Italianate architecture as well as eclectic combinations.

Vernacular residences also are associated with the city's commercial development and are eligible under criterion C in that they represent local interpretations of national housing types.

Registration Requirements

To be individually eligible under criterion A, Victorian Period Residences should reflect the prominence of their original owners who prospered as Sweet Springs developed as a railroad/resort community during the last three decades of the 19th century. The original floor plan should be evident and appropriate stylistic features should be present. To be individually eligible for architecture under criterion C, the property should be an outstanding example of its type, displaying the appropriate characteristics of its style or form, and retaining integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting and location. Properties should retain a majority of original materials, original rooflines and porches, and be evocative of their period of significance.

To be individually eligible under criterion A, Vernacular Residences (Victorian Period) should retain integrity of association, location, design and materials. Under criterion C, architectural significance will usually depend on how closely these properties correspond to their original form and plan, and whether original design elements are still present. High quality is required.

Property Type: Late Commercial Buildings

Description

Few commercial buildings were constructed in Sweet Springs during the early 1900s, despite a perception that there was at least the possibility of an economic turnaround. But a revitalization effort was under way by 1911, concentrated on the east side of South Miller Street between the areas of pre-railroad and post-railroad development. Victorian shadings remained, but the major buildings constructed during this period, primarily from 1910 through 1920 or so, were designed to emphasize horizontal lines with bands of window openings, beltcourses and other devices which gave them a more modern appearance than buildings constructed locally during the Victorian era. The most impressive of these buildings, at 313-325 South Miller Street, featured a colonnaded facade.

Also during this period of revitalization, existing Sweet Springs buildings were given a 20th century facelift. Notable among these transformed Victorian buildings is the Bank of Sweet Springs, consisting of two buildings at 214-16 Lexington Avenue with a circa 1919 Classical Revival facade which extends across both fronts. Other existing buildings on Main Street were given new facades linking them architecturally with the main group of newly constructed buildings on South Miller Street.

Late Commercial Buildings are typically made of brick according to a rectangular plan and consist of one or two stories. Entrances are recessed as on most earlier buildings, but on the largest buildings the entire storefront is recessed under an overhanging upper floor.

A design hallmark of buildings associated with Smith was a colonnaded facade,Charles K. Smith, a native son whose family operated the local Smith Brothers Lumber Company, decided to invest heavily in Sweet Springs' future by developing several lots on the east side of South Miller Street. What Smith and others had in mind was a revitalization of downtown Sweet Springs, a transformation of the business center that would enable Sweet Springs to compete for shoppers that were increasingly being lost to Sedalia, Marshall, and other larger cities. such as the extant Smith Stores Co. buildings at 313-325 South Miller Street. Apart from their common front, these are free-standing buildings.

Significance

Late Commercial Buildings are significant under criteria A and C in the areas of COMMERCE and ARCHITECTURE. Under criterion A, Late Commercial Buildings are associated with a vigorous rebuilding effort as Sweet Springs merchants struggled to recapture business being lost, it was felt, to other regional cities. The resort from which the city took its name was gone but not forgotten, and there were proposals for a grand reopening with added facilities. The time seemed right for fresh investment in the business center and buildings were erected that significantly changed the downtown landscape. A grouping of three freestanding buildings which share a colonnaded front of a continuous, classical design is additionally significant as an early version of a shopping center, designed to enhance the shopping experience of its customers. Under criterion C, several of these distinctly 20th century buildings are architecturally significant examples incorporating new construction techniques in their facades and displaying a classical sense of order. The Smith Stores Co., designed with a colonnaded overhang for visual appeal and more comfortable shopping in inclement weather, is particularly impressive. Other architecturally significant Late Commercial Buildings include a unique local example of Classical Revival, and other buildings are good eclectic examples with integrity.

Registration Requirements

To be individually eligible under criterion A, Late Commercial Buildings must show a strong association with early 20th century construction or reconstruction in Sweet Springs. These buildings reflect the efforts of a few local businessmen who invested heavily in the city's future by continuing the development of South Miller Street, and of other merchants who modernized various existing buildings. The investors lost money when the buildings failed to achieve the desired results, but they were well-constructed and attractive, and a strong integrity of design and materials should be retained. To be contributing within a district, the roofline and upper storefront is all-important and should reasonably reflect its original appearance.

To be individually eligible under criterion C, Late Commercial Buildings including those refronted as part of the revitalization effort should be of exceptional architectural merit while retaining all or virtually all of their original features and historic materials. On an originally colonnaded building, presence of the colonnade with brick piers supporting the overhanging upper story is essential. Bands of stone trim and window groupings which contribute to the horizontal orientation of these buildings also should be intact. The presence of other original details which contribute to the classical order and balance of these buildings is important. Buildings built in a specific style, such as Classical Revival, should retain a sufficient number of features to clearly identify the style. Additions or subtractions are permitted in the rear of these buildings. Relatively unaltered lower storefronts are also required for individual eligibility under criterion C. Many buildings have relatively original lower storefronts but with the exception of colonnaded buildings this is not required for a building to be contributing within a historic district, provided that the upper level including the cornice and window fenestration is intact.

Property Type: Modern and Eclectic Residences

Description

After 1900 as a new generation of merchants and businessmen made Sweet Springs their home, dwellings were constructed in various styles of the early 20th century. Buildings with Craftsman, Prairie and other 20th century influences were particularly popular in Sweet Springs, as was Colonial Revival, actually a style introduced in the 19th century, and many of these buildings are extant today. These styles are present in relatively pure form as well as in eclectic mixtures, such as Craftsman/Colonial Revival. Prairie styling typically appeared on the American Four Square, a vernacular form which like the I-House was a carrier of many styles. A lingering Queen Anne influence is also reflected in a handful of houses constructed between 1900-10, and some properties are interesting Queen Anne/Craftsman mixtures. Some of these properties are probably "mail-order" houses selected from a Sears & Roebuck, Montgomery Ward or other company's catalog.

Craftsman bungalows typically feature overhanging eaves with exposed rafters and, frequently, beams and triangular knee braces. Porch supports, battered as in the purest examples or straight and resting upon massive piers, are another identifying element. Prairie Four Squares are usually square or rectangular cubelike buildings with wide, overhanging eaves and full-width front porchs. Colonial Revival examples have elaborated entrances, sometimes with pediments and a portico with a concave underside, and perhaps with round classical columns. Dutch Colonial Revival models have distinctive gambrel roofs. While there are "groupings" of early 20th century houses, many are intermixed with the older vernacular forms so that district potential is unlikely.

Good examples of Craftsman styling include the circa 1912 Herman Renken House at 406 Main Street and the circa 1920 Arthur Hagan House at 311 North Locust Street. Good American Four Square examples include a circa 1910 house at 208 Ray Street, with Prairie and Colonial Revival styling, and the circa 1905 Thomas Reavis House at 301 South Locust Street, with Prairie styling. The circa 1920 F. H. Tisdale House at 502 South Locust Street has Colonial Revival styling. Examples of possible mail order houses are at 605 Bridge Street, 113 Main Street and 506 Main Street.

Significance

Modern and Eclectic Residences are significant under criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. As life styles changed, so did American tastes in architecture and these properties, constructed from circa 1900 through the 1920s, are representative of 20th century trends in housing. Craftsman and Prairie styles were newly developed and Colonial Revival was being reinterpreted. Compared with most Victorian architecture, there was generally less ornamentation for the sake of ornamentation. Spatial arrangements tended to be different, typically involving fewer but larger rooms. In Sweet Springs, Craftsman architecture was an especially popular 20th century style. A wide and interesting assortment of Craftsman and other residential examples is extant in Sweet Springs, sometimes in eclectic combinations. Builders included the more prosperous merchants and other professionals, who sometimes had a house going up at the same time as a new building in the commercial center. The better examples display fine craftsmanship.

Registration Requirements

Properties will be individually eligible under criterion C if they are sufficiently good examples of one of the styles associated with the Modern and Eclectic Residences property type. Integrity of association, location, design, materials and workmanship should be retained. Especially in the case of Craftsman, there are many good examples so that only superior properties with minimal alterations should be considered for individual nominations.

Endnotes

[1]The layout of Brownsville's commercial center in 1883 is depicted on that year's Sanborn fire insurance map. Later development during this period may be traced on Sanborn maps for 1888 and 1900.

[2]Brownsville Herald, January 21 and March 18, 1881.

[3]Long gone are the hotel, sanitarium, pagoda, ballroom, bathhouses, bottling works, etc. However, a stable believed to have been part of the military academy complex (and possibly the resort prior to that) apparently was dismantled and reassembled at a location on the east side of Locust Street.

[4]The drawing, signed by Fred Graf of St. Louis, is contained in a circa 1890 brochure titled "Prospectus of the Sweet Springs Property in Saline County, Missouri" (St. Louis: Buxton-Skinner, Printers).

Geographical Data

The project area consists of the city of Sweet Springs, population 1,595, located near the southwest corner of Saline County in west central Missouri. Portions of Sweet Springs are bounded on the west and south by Davis Creek and the Blackwater River. The city is bounded by Interstate 70 on the north and is bisected from north to south by Missouri Highway 127 (Locust Street). Marshall, the county seat of Saline County, is approximately 16 miles to the northeast. Sweet Springs is approximately 50 road miles east of Kansas City.

Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The MPS titled "Historic and Architectural Resources of Sweet Springs, Saline County, Missouri" was preceded by an architectural survey of incorporated Saline County communities conducted by Show-Me Regional Planning Commission under the auspices of the Missouri Historic Preservation Program in 1994-95. The project was primarily financed by a matching Historic Preservation Fund grant.

Although 10 incorporated towns were surveyed, the focus was on Sweet Springs where considerable local interest had been expressed in a historic district in the commercial center. The entire city was surveyed in order to determine the range and quality of extant architectural resources, a draft nomination was prepared for a possible downtown district, and survey forms were completed for 102 Sweet Springs properties. Several of the downtown buildings appeared to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Various residential properties also appeared to be individually eligible for listing.

District potential in the commercial center was confirmed by the Missouri Historic Preservation Program staff, which reviewed streetscapes and other photographs as well as a site map in conjunction with the draft nomination. Boundaries for the potential district were adjusted after the review.

Sweet Springs officials and the local Brown County Historical Association received copies of the draft nomination to facilitate preparation of a National Register nomination for submission to the National Park Service.

When Sweet Springs indicated that it wanted Show-Me Regional Planning Commission to complete the National Register work, Show-Me applied for another matching grant which was awarded in 1996. Although the grant was awarded, several individual nominations proposed for residential properties, cottages and nearby commercial buildings in Sweet Springs were removed from the project. If these properties are subsequently nominated, the MPS cover document can be referenced.

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