



# Strawberry Hill

a neighborhood study

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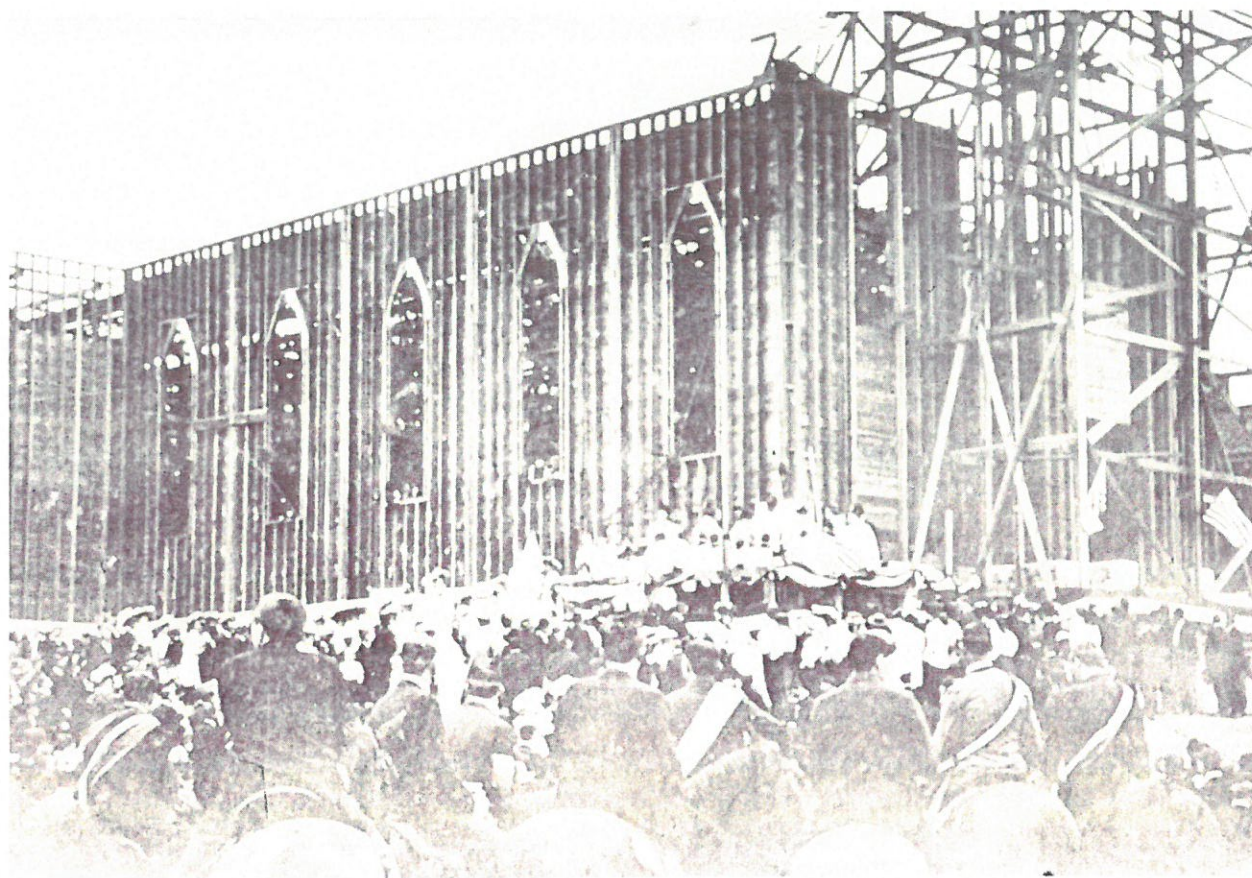
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STRAWBERRY HILL  
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*Laying the cornerstone at St. John the Baptist Church, May 15, 1904.*



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CITY OF KANSAS CITY KANSAS

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# Introduction

For too many years, we proceeded in this country as if the concept of the neighborhood was obsolete and the inner city disposable. In Kansas City, Kansas a tragic example of this attitude occurred in 1957 when 4½ blocks were demolished—219 households, a number of small shops and a neighborhood park—to make way for a new highway. It was progress, with little thought given to the social or environmental costs of the project, nor did the people directly affected have any say in what was being done to their neighborhood. The area where this happened is called Strawberry Hill.

Today this attitude is changing. There is a new interest in urban neighborhoods, and a new realization that their viability is critical to the survival of the city. The necessity of strong neighborhoods is now obvious, but the factors that can cause one neighborhood to flourish while another decays are less well understood. Strawberry Hill has maintained its vitality for over 70 years, despite the assaults of the Highway Department and commercial interests, while other areas with a presumably sounder physical and financial base have gone into decline. It is hoped that this study can provide some understanding of the factors that have enabled Strawberry Hill to survive.

And on Strawberry Hill, more than the social fabric has survived. To walk the streets of the Hill is to physically return to the early years of this century. The brick sidewalks along narrow, high curbed streets adjoin small yards, fenced or hedged, or else are paralleled by retaining walls of a multiplicity of textures and materials holding back high green terraces. The houses themselves are for the most part modest, punctuated by an occasional larger structure dating from the 1870's or 80's, while the towers of the four churches rise above the rest. Outstanding examples of architecture are generally lacking, but the perceptive eye soon realizes that here is a tightly knit physical environment that may be more important than a few isolated specimens could ever hope to be.

It is these closely interwoven factors, the social and physical environments, that we have attempted to identify in this study. The study itself was made possible only through the generous assistance of the people of Strawberry Hill, who shared with us their homes, their pictures, and their memories. We hope they approve of what we have done.







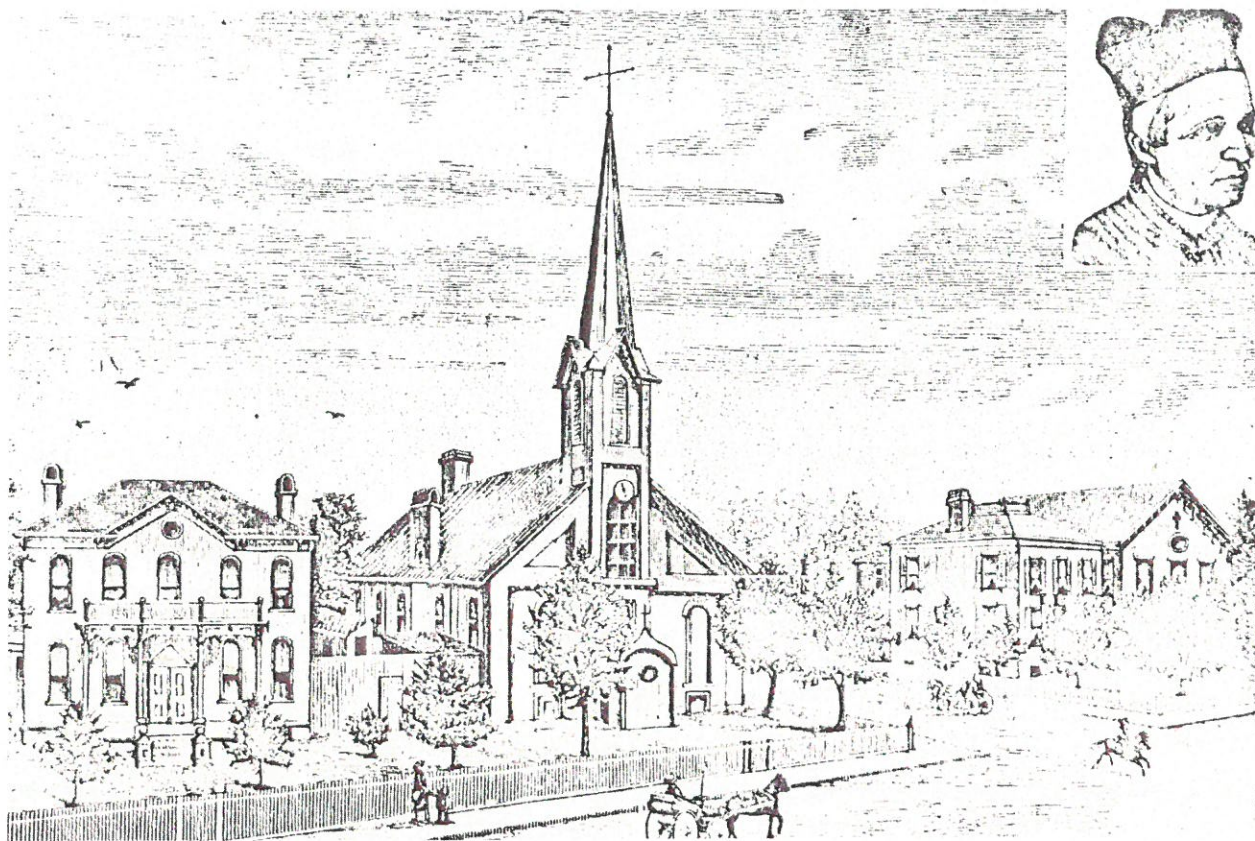
# A Neighborhood History

Reconstructing the history of the neighborhood was one of the primary objectives of the study. Small places like neighborhoods are often omitted or treated lightly in historical accounts, and this task was a challenging one. It is fortunate in this case that parish histories have been written for each of the four Catholic churches in the area, and these accounts supplied considerable pertinent information. Because Strawberry Hill is nearly as old as the City itself, historical documents do provide some mention of the people and events that shaped its early development. In more recent times, there have been a number of newspaper articles written about the area, and these too have added to an understanding of changes that have taken place (or in some cases, things that have remained unchanged). Finally, there have been several studies that have focused on the history of the various immigrant groups who have lived on Strawberry Hill and conditions under which they lived and worked at the time they first settled in Kansas City, Kansas.

The information derived from the survey of the sources described above provided a general, but incomplete, picture of historical and contemporary conditions in Strawberry Hill. In order to fill out the picture, reconcile inconsistencies in the findings, and gain insight into how to interpret the basic data from the survey, we talked at length with a number of people who have lived in the area a long time, and who have been involved in a variety of community activities. A number of the older residents in the area were among the original immigrants who came to Kansas City, Kansas from Croatia, Slovenia, and other Slavic regions. In many cases, their experiences have never been written down, but they are the true history of the present community. Enormous changes have taken place in this city during their lifetimes, and by documenting their experiences and observations during this period we can perhaps arrive at a better understanding of present conditions.

It is difficult to determine at what point in time the history of a neighborhood begins. It is the story of both a place and its people. The place has been there forever. The people inevitably change with the passage of time. The first official owners of the land now occupied by Strawberry Hill were the Delaware Indians, who had been relocated to Eastern Kansas as a result of the Indian Removal Policy





*St. Mary's Church, School, and Rectory, 5th and Ann, circa 1885.*

of 1830. The Delawares never actually occupied this land, however, and the Wyandot Indians should properly be considered to have been the neighborhood's first permanent residents. Founded in 1843, the original Wyandot settlement was located just north of Strawberry Hill. The company store that served these early settlers was at 3rd and Minnesota Avenue. At that time, all of Wyandotte County east of 72nd Street was owned by the Wyandots, but the conditions of land ownership in this area changed after 1854 when Kansas was made a territory. Although many Wyandots lost their land in this process, that section of the city which is now occupied by Strawberry Hill remained under the ownership of a Wyandot Indian—Mathias Splitlog. Splitlog was a wealthy man. He owned a saw mill and a great deal of land in the central city that would one day return him an even greater fortune. He lived in a fine brick house that still stands in good condition on Orchard Street across from Holy Family Church.

In 1865, Mathias Splitlog sold three acres of his land in the vicinity of 5th and Ann to the Reverend Anton Kuhls. This land was to be the site of a new building to house St. Mary's Church, the earliest Roman Catholic Church in Wyandotte County. St. Mary's was first established in 1857 at the corner of 9th and Ann (then a wilderness area). At that time there were very few Catholic families in Wyandotte City, and the church was mainly directed towards missionary activities among various Indian groups and serving the spiritual needs of a number of white Catholic families who were living in the Muncie area. When Reverend Kuhls arrived in Wyandotte City in 1864 to assume his first pastoral responsibilities, he found the situation little changed. There were only seven Catholic families in the town, and his new parishioners were so poor that he was barely able to physically sustain himself.

Father Kuhls took his vows of poverty with great seriousness and was undaunted by the situation that confronted him. He served as pastor of St. Mary's for over forty years, and it was during this period that most of the present structures were built on Strawberry Hill. As the city grew, his parish was divided many times to create new churches (many of them nationality-based) to accommodate the needs of the vast numbers of immigrants who came to Kansas City, Kansas from predominantly Roman Catholic countries. Within the relatively small area taken in by Strawberry Hill, three additional Catholic parishes were established between 1886 and 1908. In ways that are both symbolic and





*Right Reverend Monsignor Anton Kuhls, 1839-1923.*





*St. Anthony's Church, 7th and Barnett, 1886.*

concrete, these four churches have indelibly shaped the character of the neighborhood. Taken together, the contributions of these institutions and their parishioners past and present, comprise the history and the future of Strawberry Hill.

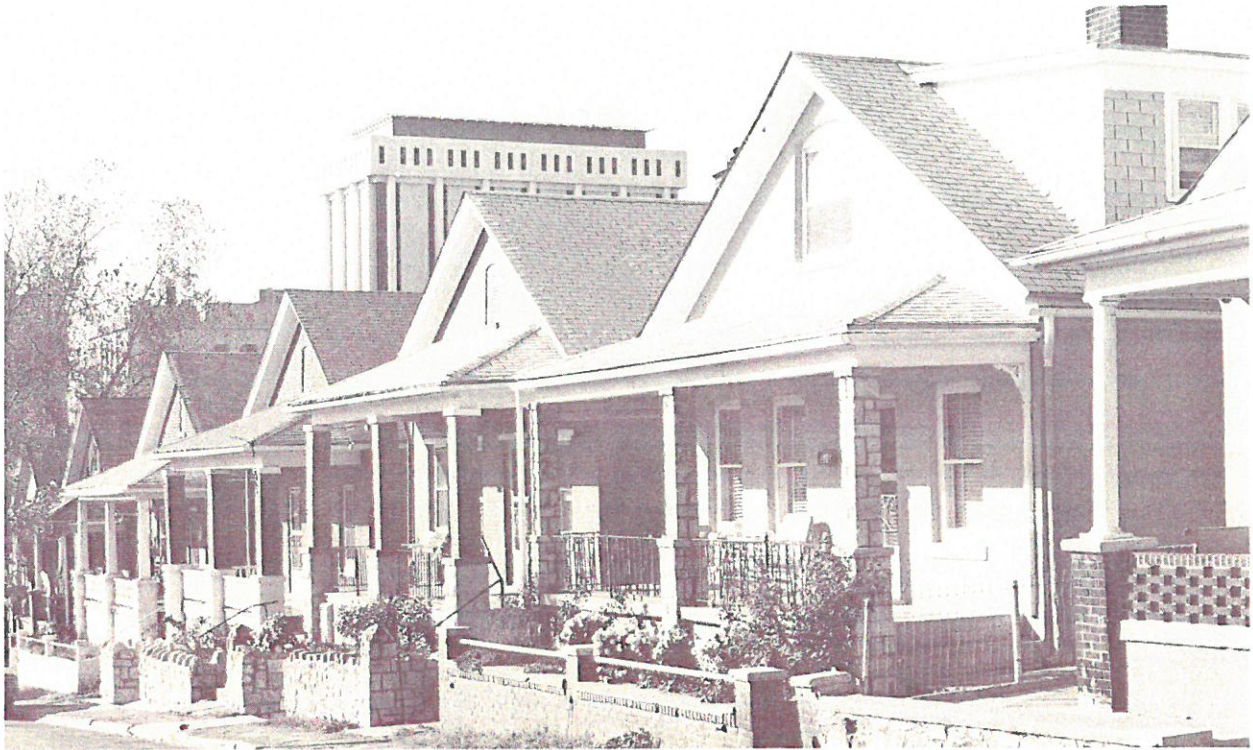
The meatpacking industry which dates to the early 1870's in Kansas City was the single most important factor responsible for the dramatic reversal in the proportion of Catholics in Kansas City, Kansas, compared with the numbers who were living here when Reverend Kuhls arrived. This industry had a particular significance for the development of Strawberry Hill, because it was the prospect of packinghouse employment that provided the basis for emigration for nearly all of the people who subsequently took up residence in the neighborhood. By 1890, five national meatpacking companies were operating plants in the west bottoms, which fans out in a broad flat plain at the confluence of the Kaw and Missouri Rivers. Several local companies also had operations in this area. These rapidly growing industries required large numbers of unskilled laborers. In the beginning the population of Kansas City, Kansas was too small to supply this labor force, and the companies came to rely increasingly on the labor of new and recent immigrants from Europe. The waves of immigration which provided for the labor needs of the meatpacking industry began in 1879, when a large number of Irish, German, and Swedish immigrants arrived in Kansas City, Kansas. Many came from Chicago, where they had previously worked in the stockyards of that city.

Few of these new arrivals found their first home on Strawberry Hill. At that time, in fact, there weren't many people of any description living on the Hill. The southern portion was occupied by the farmstead and mill which were still owned by Mathias Splitlog, although by then he was living in north-eastern Oklahoma. There were very few residential structures in this part of the area at that time. In the northern part, there was St. Mary's Church and a number of widely separated large homes. Minnesota Avenue, which was unpaved, was the only through street.

The new immigrants found shelter in the west bottoms, in ramshackle dwellings that were erected there in the midst of warehouses, railroad yards, and cattle pens. The west bottoms was the location of the first parish to be cut off from St. Mary's. Dedicated in 1879, St. Bridget's (Brigid's) was located at



what is now 1st and Reynolds. A Father Hayden was the first pastor, and nearly all of his parishioners were Irish. St. Mary's was also considered to be an Irish church. These national identities were consistent with the proportional representation of Catholics among the immigrant workers. Overall, the Germans were slightly more numerous, but whereas the Irish were nearly all Catholic, a substantial number of Germans were Protestant. The services at St. Bridget's and St. Mary's were in English, and for those Catholics who could speak only German, this was a problem. The Germans successfully



*Fowler block development, Tauromee Avenue, 1887.*

petitioned the Bishop to establish a German parish in Kansas City, Kansas, and in 1886 the first St. Anthony's Church was dedicated at 7th and Barnett. The parish experienced many financial difficulties in the early years. In 1889 the foundation was excavated for the present structure, but it was sixteen years before the church was completed. In the meantime the parishioners congregated in "the basement church".

At the time construction was getting underway on St. Anthony's, there was a great deal of housing construction going on within the city, and especially on Strawberry Hill. The city was growing at an incredible rate, in large part as a result of the arrival of immigrants to work in the packinghouses. In the northern part of the Hill, all of the area east of 6th Street and north of Ohio was platted. The building sites were twenty-five feet wide and shallow. In 1887, nearly all the lots had structures on them. (George Fowler, owner of Fowler's Packing Plant, developed the square block between 5th and 6th, Tauromee and Barnett.) Once the new immigrants in the west bottoms had begun to establish some savings, they were in a position to buy or rent better housing, and many moved to the new structures that were being built on Strawberry Hill. There were a number of Swedes, as well as Germans and Irish among these early inhabitants.

The boom of the 1880's was followed by a crash in the early 90's. The land speculators and developers were hard hit, but more severe burdens of this economic depression were felt among the families of workers who were now living in the small homes on Strawberry Hill. In 1893 the packing-house workers went out on strike. The strike failed, and the companies dealt harshly with those who had been involved. Loss of income and no possible prospects for future employment in the packing





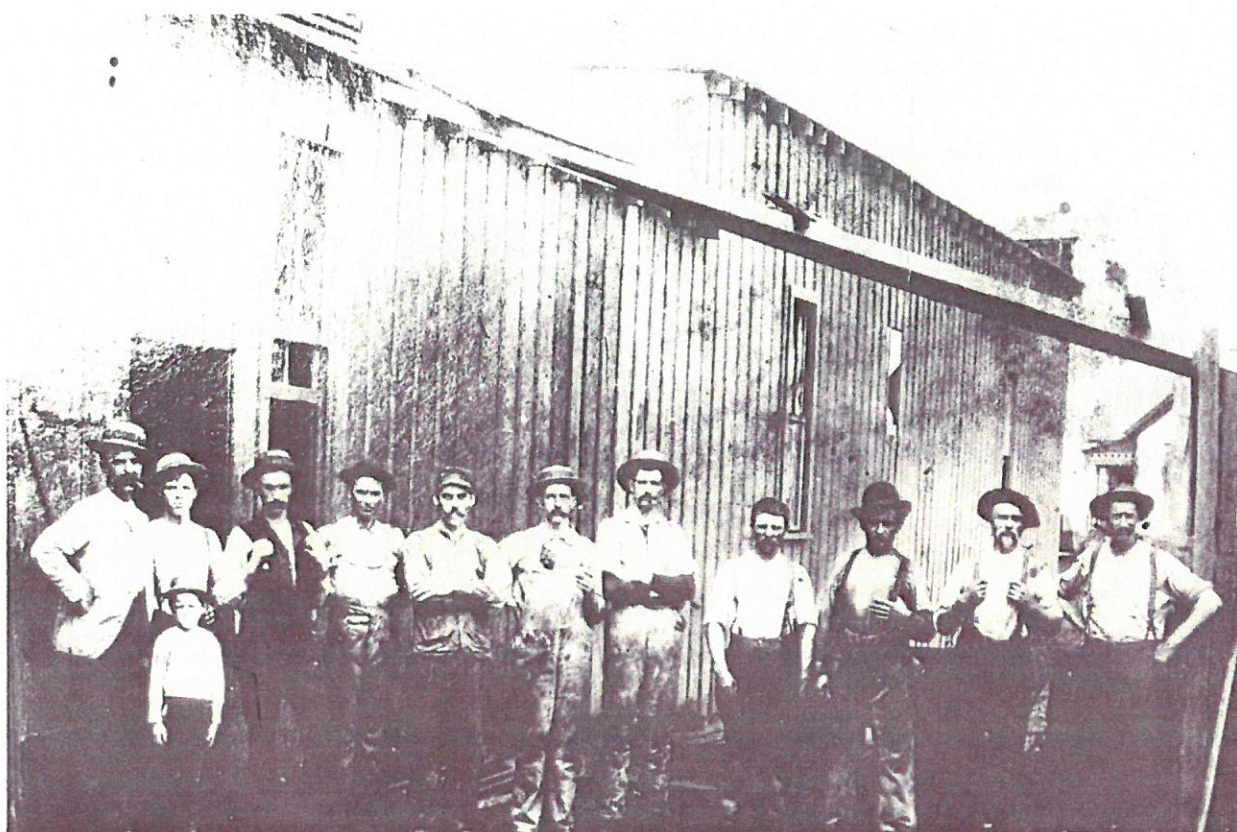
*Pork trimming room at Armour's, circa 1903.*

plants caused a substantial number of people to move from Strawberry Hill in the period that followed. Nearly all the Swedes left. They were primarily Baptists, and had no further institutional ties to the immediate area. Many of the Irish and Germans remained, however. The closeness of churches and schools was an incentive to stay, and among these groups, there were a large number of people who owned their homes. From the outset, Reverend Kuhls had counseled his parishioners to give high priority to home ownership, and those who were able had heeded his advice.

In the years just prior to and immediately following the strike, a new wave of immigrants entered Kansas City, Kansas. They came from all parts of southern and eastern Europe, but most particularly from the Balkans, Poland, and Russia. Like their northern European predecessors, they were drawn by the availability of jobs in the packinghouses. Also like their predecessors, they most often settled initially in the west bottoms. Armour and Company was the principal employer of new immigrant labor. In 1894, Armour developed a portion of the west bottoms that was located behind the plant as a settlement area for these most recent immigrants. This area was known as the **Patch**, and in 1910 an investigator from the Immigration Commission described it as "a veritable labyrinth of narrow, dirty passageways, flanked by the most nondescript sort of shacks."

These new employees were also given the most difficult, unpleasant, and low-paid work that was available in the plants. A woman who had come to Kansas City, Kansas from Croatia in the early part of the century recounted that she had left Europe at sixteen full of excitement and optimism. She had found a job immediately, but was only later to realize that 3½¢ per hour was not quite enough money to keep body and soul together. She worked on the hog kill line, from early morning sometimes into the late hours of the night. The stench was overpowering, and other workers taunted her for her inability to speak English. Weary in her bed each night, she wept silent tears for over three years. Families were separated, sometimes for years and sometimes forever; as sons, brothers, and husbands labored against odds to save enough to bring loved ones to Kansas City. The work was dangerous, and accidents were frequent. The companies showed little concern for disabled workers, and to the pain of injury was often added the desperate insecurity of unemployment.





*Employees at Wilson's, circa 1905.*

Today these stories are told without bitterness. These were things that happened long ago, and the mind has a way of smoothing over the rough edges of such memories. But more importantly, from these individual struggles there emerged a sense of mutual responsibility and sacrifice that made it possible to adjust to even the most deplorable conditions. In the Patch, the new immigrants found that by sticking together they could survive; and by not abandoning their traditional attachments to church, community, and cultural festivities, they would not lose their sense of values in the midst of the poverty that confronted them.

The earliest organizations in the Patch were the lodges, which had been formed among several of the nationality groups. Dues collected from the members were used to pay sick and death benefits. Lodge members were assigned to visit the families of sick or recently deceased members. They comforted bereaved and weary families by their presence and by the assistance provided with household tasks. The lodges also sponsored picnics and dances on Sunday afternoon. Traditional foods were prepared, and the music and dance sparked reminiscences of life in a place that was now left far behind.

At the time of their arrival, only the Poles had a church of their own. St. Joseph's had been established in 1887 by a group of immigrants who were representative of several Slavic nationalities. The first pastor was a Slovak. Nevertheless, the majority of this group were Polish, and St. Joseph's had a clear Polish identity by the time the new Slavic immigrants began to arrive in the 1890's. Despite the fact that St. Joseph's was located at a greater distance from the packinghouse district than St. Bridget's, St. Mary's, or St. Anthony's, the majority of Slavic Catholics preferred to worship there because the language and traditions were more familiar.

The majority of the Slavic immigrants were Croatian. There were also substantial numbers of Slovenians who had come from a part of southern Austria that was not far from the area of origin for the Croatians. In 1892, the Croatians and Slovenians had organized the Society of St. Joseph, a religious fraternal organization. The national boundary that had separated these two groups in Europe, however, was no less an obstacle to their unification in the new world. After a short time the partner-





*The west bottoms in the 1903 Flood.*

ship was dissolved, and the Croats established a separate charter.

From this new organization emerged the impetus to form a Croatian parish. In 1900, a committee was formed and action taken towards realizing this goal. With the assistance of Father Kulisek from St. Joseph's, the committee was able to persuade Bishop Fink to grant the request for a separate Croatian parish. The site selected for the new church was at 4th and Barnett. With the generous contributions of many parishioners, the land was purchased and the building begun. The ground was broken in 1900, and by 1902 the basement of the Church was sufficiently completed to permit services to be given. In that same year, Father Martin Davorin Krmpotic arrived from Croatia, providing the parish with its first permanent priest. Three years later the church was finished and "the dream of St. John the Baptist Church became a reality." In 1908, Monsignor Krmpotic arranged to have Oton Ivekovic, an artist from Zagreb, ornament the interior with beautiful frescos. (In 1932, a fire broke out in the church which did irreparable damage to many of the frescos.)

In 1903, flood waters ravaged the west bottoms, forcing the residents to evacuate their homes. Like those who came before them, the immigrants living in the west bottoms had been gradually moving to other parts of the city as they became financially able. The flood provided a pressing new motive to make this move. A large number of people moved to Strawberry Hill at that time. During the 1890's many additional houses had been built on Strawberry Hill. Nearly all the lots in the northern part were occupied, and the southern portion had also been developed. The departure of large numbers of Swedes, Germans, and Irish during this same period had also contributed to the greater availability of housing on Strawberry Hill.

More recent immigrants representing several nationalities selected Strawberry Hill as the site of their new home. The largest number of these were Croats, who were especially attracted to this area because of the location of St. John's. Among the other recent immigrants there were a sizable number of Germans who had come from Silesia, Galicia, and Bukovina; and many of them settled on Strawberry Hill at this time to be near St. Anthony's.

The majority of Slovenians also chose Strawberry Hill as their new home. The Slovenians





*Right Reverend Monsignor Martin Davorin Krmpotic, 1867-1931.*





*The Cruise-Scroggs house (St. John's Orphanage), circa 1900.*

comprised a relatively small group, less than fifty families. In the beginning, they attended other churches in the area, and once a year a Slovenian priest came to Kansas City, Kansas to offer services and hear confessions. In 1907, with the encouragement of Father Podgorsek of Frontenac, Kansas (located near Pittsburg) the Slovenians raised the sum of eighteen hundred dollars with the intention of establishing their own parish. Bishop Lillis discouraged this effort due to the relatively small number of families involved and their meager financial resources, which he felt would be insufficient to support a separate parish. Nevertheless, the Slovenians decided to pursue their goal. In 1908, they formed the Carnolian-Slovenic Catholic Church Society of St. Joseph's. In that same year, Father Joseph Kompare arrived from Europe and was able to purchase three lots between Fifth and Sixth on Ohio. The new real estate included two cottages, one of which was converted for use as the church, the other for the rectory. In the rear of the church, a hall was built to serve as a school and for meetings and social gatherings. In the years that followed, additional improvements and expansions took place, and in 1925 the cornerstone was laid for the present structure housing Holy Family at 276 North Orchard.

In the years that followed the flood, large numbers of immigrant families continued to move to Strawberry Hill from the west bottoms. The northern part of the Hill, in the area around St. John's, was densely settled by Croatians. Most of the Slovenians were concentrated in the southern part near Holy Family. Other nationality groups were scattered throughout the whole area. The Germans were found in greater abundance in the area near St. Anthony's, and there were still a number of Irish families living in the general vicinity of St. Mary's. Finally, there were small numbers of people of other national identities (Serbians, Lithuanians, Poles, Slovaks, and Russians) whose churches were located elsewhere in the city.

In the Patch there had been a number of immigrant-owned shops and stores. New immigrants, who were unable to speak English or easily calculate values in American currency had often been victimized by American shopkeepers in the early days. The ability to trade with their own countrymen was a source of comfort and security for those immigrants who followed. As the new communities established themselves on Strawberry Hill, ethnic-owned businesses played a prominent role in





*Children at St. John's Orphanage, circa 1925.*

providing a sense of neighborhood self-containment.

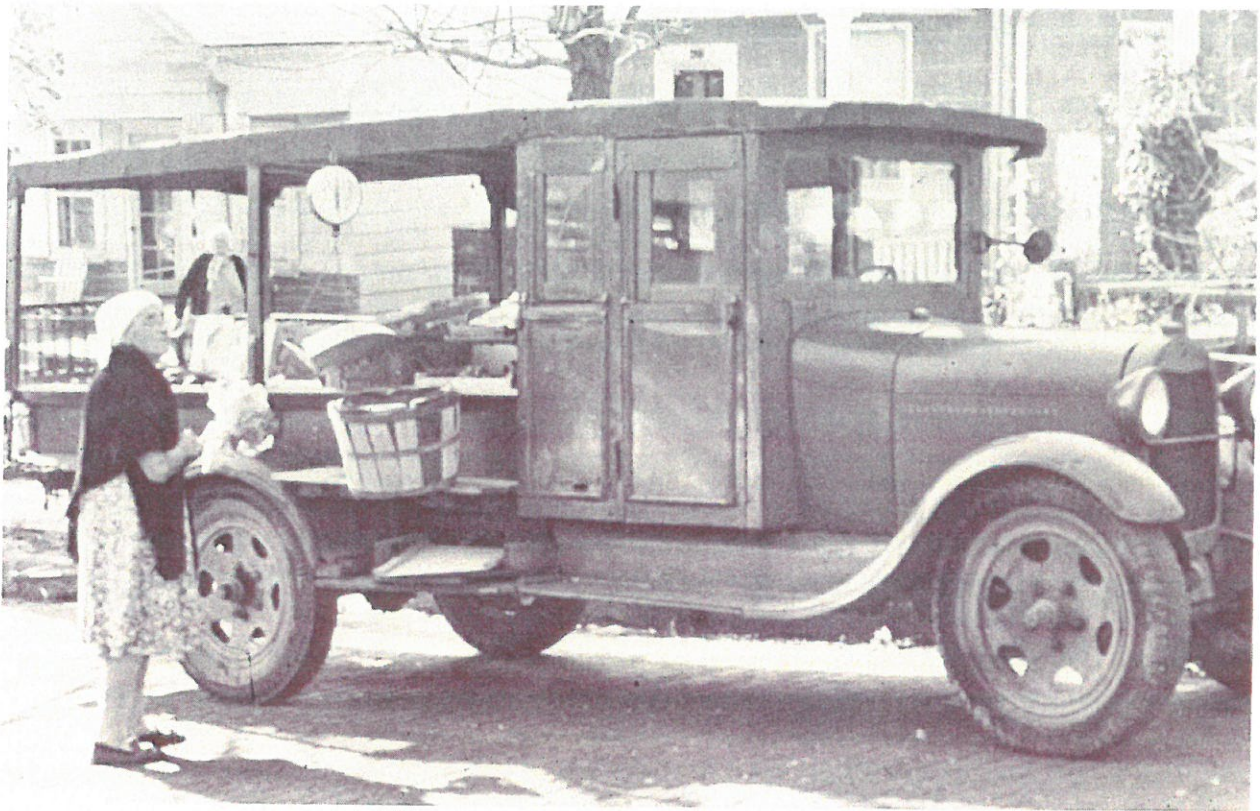
The churches and the activities they sponsored were the nucleus of community life. The churches provided for a variety of spiritual and temporal needs among the parishioners, and organized activities were initiated to meet these needs as the situation arose. Schools were both a necessity and a requirement under the statutes of the diocese of Leavenworth. All four churches in the area had schools. In this manner they were able to equip the coming generations with basic educational skills and, at the same time, instill an understanding of the cultural traditions of immigrant homelands.

In 1918, an influenza epidemic raged throughout the United States. Hardest hit were neighborhoods like Strawberry Hill, where large families were living in small quarters, and houses were close together. This was a strain of flu that easily developed into a deadly pneumonia, and those most vulnerable to the disease were young adults. St. John's parish recorded seventy-one deaths that year (compared with fifty-three in 1917, and only thirty-five in 1919). In the wake of the epidemic, many children were left without one or both of their parents. Monsignor Krmpotic, pastor of St. John's, called a meeting of the parishioners at which time it was agreed that a home should be established to provide for the sustenance and upbringing of these new orphans of the parish. A large house north of the rectory (the Cruise-Scroggs home) was purchased, and Monsignor Krmpotic was able to obtain the services of the Franciscan Sisters to supervise the orphanage.

In 1925, Monsignor Krmpotic initiated the idea for St. John's Catholic Club. This organization provided young people with a variety of activities—billiards, bowling, and a gymnasium. Baseball, football, and basketball teams were organized by the club. These teams played against many other teams throughout the region, and provided an early beginning for a number of individuals who went on to play collegiate and professional ball. The Club also sponsored cultural activities intended to keep the music, dance and traditions of Croatia prominent among the values of the second generation.

The onset of World War I had halted the flow of new immigrants from Europe into Kansas City, Kansas. By this time most of the single males who at first occupied crowded boarding houses in the west bottoms, had succeeded in establishing or reuniting their families. The number of children on





*Huxtering on the Hill in the Depression.*

Strawberry Hill increased dramatically, and those who had been born in the earliest periods were growing into adolescence. With these developments, the new communities on Strawberry Hill completed adjustment to life in their adopted homeland. The hard times were not over, however. The Great Depression came early and stayed long on Strawberry Hill. Although there had been some gains, wages in meatpacking remained low. There was a long and difficult strike in 1921, followed by a work force reduction that continued into the 30's. Despite these things, the burdens of the depression were not as hard-felt on Strawberry Hill as among working people elsewhere.

The lodges continued to play an important part in church and community life. The insurance programs remained as an important economic function of these organizations; but the meetings, picnics, and dances also provided the residents of the Hill with occasions to be with each other, and enjoy not only the company of kinsmen and fellow countrymen, but also the food and festivities that gave relief from the work-day concerns of families still struggling to provide for themselves on the low wages they earned in the packinghouses. During this period, people helped each other and devised many ingenious ways to make their cash go further. Grain and coal could be obtained at no expense by collecting them in the railroad yards. Driftwood was found in abundance along the banks of the river, and ice could also be gotten there in winter. Children contributed a great deal in these efforts, and many women became adept at carrying very heavy loads of coal or wood balanced on their heads.

Nearly all of the households had chickens, and some had hogs as well. Some of the homes had smokehouses in the rear for curing meats and sausages. Wine-making was a nearly universal practice. Men would gather together on Sunday afternoons and butcher hogs for the smokehouses and drink wine and have friendly disagreements about who in the neighborhood was most accomplished at the art of making wine. Residents purchased fresh meat, milk, and produce that was raised on farmsteads located in the western part of the county. Many of these farms were owned by Slavic families who had thus realized their dream of acquiring good farmland in America. Each week, the farmers brought their products to a city market that was located on Sixth Street between Barnett and Sandusky. By purchasing bulk quantities of such items as flour, potatoes, and cabbage and preparing them in





*A Strawberry Hill smokehouse, 421 Thompson, 1910.*





*Houses on 4th Street, before the highway.*

traditional ways, family nutrition far exceeded that which one might expect among wage-earners receiving 20¢ per hour.

The onset of World War II brought dramatic changes to Strawberry Hill. This small community sent nearly all of its young men to fight in the war, and more than a score of them never returned. A sizable number of young women from the neighborhood also joined the service. The activities of the parishes during this period centered mainly on the war effort and providing aid and comfort to the service people overseas. St. John's printed a newsletter to keep them in touch with each other and with events back home. Women gathered at the church, and sewed or made things to go into packages that were sent to service people by the parish.

On August 14, 1945 Msgr. Stimac, pastor of St. John's, telephoned several parishioners requesting that they call their relatives and neighbors to a special thanksgiving mass. That afternoon, the church was filled to the walls as parishioners wept and prayed in this shared realization that the war was finally over, and that their children and their neighbors' children would soon come home. With their return, also came prosperity.

The meatpacking industry was in a decline from which it would never recover, and sons and daughters of the immigrant families on Strawberry Hill increasingly chose other kinds of work. The education that they had gained, and the greater opportunities now available, offered a material well-being that had not been known in the previous generation. This had been the dream of poor immigrants who had come to this country from the very earliest times, and among those families living on Strawberry Hill, the dream was coming true. With its realization, however, came changes.

The returning servicemen, who were barely more than boys when they had left for the war, returned as men. They had delayed starting families and completing educations, but were now ready to make up for lost time. The rapidly forming second generation households could not all find places to live on the already crowded Hill, and increased earnings made it possible to think about a new house with modern conveniences. A large part of the second generation moved to the western part of the county during this period, in many cases occupying lots that were once part of Slavic-owned farms.





*Strawberry Hill before the highway.*

The community was now divided between two widely separated parts of the city, and this division did not occur without some difficulties. Contact was not as easy as it had been when everyone lived in the same small area, and the suburban lifestyle was not quite consistent with traditional values and orientations. Loyalty to family, church, and community generally remained strong among the suburban group, however; and although their ways of doing things may have been different, many of their ideas were not.

The major crisis confronting the community during this period was not suburban flight. It was the construction of the new inter-city viaduct which began in 1957. This project resulted in the demolition of all the homes and stores on Third Street and Fowler Street. Large sections of 4th Street, 5th Street, and the 300 blocks of Ann, and Barnett, were also leveled.

Over a two year period, the properties were acquired and demolished. The excavation that followed cut away the entire eastern face of the hill. St. John's Church, which once occupied the center of the hill, is now poised on a cliff overlooking a broad belt of freeways. St. John's Park, which had hosted scores of neighborhood athletic and social activities, was included in the right of way. Many of the houses that were taken had belonged to the same people for over 50 years—had been purchased for little more than a thousand dollars, but at a time when wages were 10¢ an hour. Most felt the appraisers were fair, but the value attached to being part of the neighborhood was not calculated.

The changes that occurred on Strawberry Hill in the years following the turnpike project were not as drastic as one might suppose. Although the physical integrity of the area was dealt a serious blow, the social fabric remained basically intact. Neighbors and some valued commercial properties were lost as a result of the construction. The neighborhood is smaller than it used to be, but over a quarter of those who were dislocated managed to move to another house on the hill.<sup>1</sup> Many of those who did move away remained members of St. John's and continued to send their children to school there.

Social conventions and activities within the neighborhood have also remained essentially the same, although the pace of life has changed. People have more time for socializing now, but less occasion to do so. Passersby are nearly always greeted, regardless of whether they are known. Yards



and porches are close together, and casual visiting between neighbors is frequent. Neighbors also see each other as they do their shopping. In the last remaining neighborhood grocery store, customers visit and inquire about each other's families as they wait for their meat to be sliced and their grocery orders assembled. The core of neighborhood social life continues to revolve around the churches and the activities and organizations they sponsor. The level of church attendance among neighborhood residents is very high. There are a number of people who attend mass daily. All four churches have altar societies, which involve members in shared activities in addition to church attendance. Holy Family, St. Anthony's, and St. John's sponsor a varying number of "circles". Together, St. John's and Holy Family sponsor nearly a dozen lodges, the fraternal organizations that had their origins among the early immigrants. The insurance they provide has diminished in importance, but the lodges remain active in organizing picnics, and other social and cultural events. In addition, there are the Holy Family and St. John's Catholic Clubs which sponsor a number of organized activities. St. John's Catholic Club has a six lane bowling alley and a variety of recreational equipment. One of the club's most visible activities in recent years has been the Tamburitians, a group of about 60 young people who perform the music of Yugoslavia on traditional stringed instruments. The Tamburitians have performed extensively, locally and elsewhere in the United States, and the group has twice traveled to Yugoslavia to give performances.

Many of the Tamburitians members have parents who live in the suburbs. In most cases, it is their grandparents who live on Strawberry Hill. Currently, one of the most active neighborhood organizations is the St. John's Senior Citizens Club. Organized in 1974, the club meets once a month to plan activities. These include excursions, bingo games, banquets, and a number of service activities. To the nearly half of the St. John's parishioners who are over retirement age, the Senior Citizens Club is assuming increased importance.



## Ethnographic Survey

The specific purpose of this study has been to define and describe the Strawberry Hill community—as it is today, and as it has come to be that way during its near century-long existence as a distinct neighborhood. Strawberry Hill has played a prominent role in the history of Kansas City, Kansas. It has been home to several of the immigrant groups who came to this city during the past century, and whose descendants make up a large proportion of the contemporary population. It is still home to a sizable number of people who came here from what is now the country of Yugoslavia, and within Strawberry Hill the rich cultural traditions of these south Slavic regions have been vigorously maintained.

Strawberry Hill is unique in many respects, and its uniqueness is the subject of much of the discussion that follows. At the same time, the people of Strawberry Hill share many of the problems and conditions common to most inner city residential areas. The houses were built a long time ago. Maintenance is difficult on older structures, and for many of the persons in the area who are living on retirement incomes, major repairs are too costly. For others, financing and insurance have, without explanation, become more difficult to obtain. The streets are narrow, and were not originally designed for on-street parking of automobiles. As the city has grown, changes have taken place in the land use of the areas surrounding the neighborhood, and in the late 1950's construction on I-70 and the new inter-city viaduct resulted in the demolition of 125 homes on one of the most stable sections of Strawberry Hill.

It has not been very long ago that the common viewpoint concerning inner city neighborhoods like Strawberry Hill was that they stood in the way of progress. Single family homes constructed on narrow lots were considered to be an inefficient use of valuable central city property. This was the sort of logic that led to the demolition of the Italian-American West End in Boston. Today there are many professional planners in Boston and elsewhere who agree that this destruction was a tragic mistake. Such occurrences are less likely now than in past decades. Economic necessity and the many failures of Urban Renewal have fostered a more rational approach to the preservation and rehabilitation of



inner city residential areas. The relentlessly higher costs of new housing have made the repair and maintenance of older homes an increasingly attractive economic alternative.

It is also true that much has been learned about the damaging effects of uprooting people from traditional neighborhood communities. The social costs of dislocating families and individuals in this manner has not only been borne by those directly involved, but indirectly by all of the citizens of the communities where this has taken place. In big cities like New York and Detroit, vast areas of the inner city have been reduced to rubble-strewn lots, hosting only occasional half-demolished structures. These areas comprise a kind of urban no-man's land, and many of the surrounding residential areas are isolated and vulnerable. This is a dark picture, one that bears only slight resemblance to the landscape of Kansas City, Kansas. But, in our efforts to ensure the well-being of the neighborhoods of Kansas City, Kansas, it is prudent to learn from the past failures of other cities. The designation of Strawberry Hill as an historic preservation district represents an appreciation of the fact that viable neighborhood communities are an essential resource, and that actions which affect residential areas must take into account the needs and desires of the people who live in them.

Strawberry Hill is, by all standard definitions, a viable neighborhood community. There is very little crime in the area, and the residents generally know a large number of their neighbors. Over one-third of the current residents have lived at the same address for more than twenty years. A substantial number of the newer residents grew up there, or still have grandparents who live there. The yards and sidewalks in front of a large proportion of the houses have been exceptionally well cared for. These characteristics stand in sharp contrast to general statistics and descriptions concerning the nature of urban social life, especially in the inner city where most residential areas have been technically defined as "blighted." Such technical definitions, which equate conditions like mixed land use and small yards with the social conditions thought to be characteristic of "slums," have been one of the major obstacles to the preservation of urban neighborhood communities.

Until recently, few of these technicians sought to inquire into how the people who lived in these areas perceived them, and if in fact they were even aware that their neighborhood was a slum. When such investigations were done, it was discovered that in many cases the residents had strong emotional attachments to their neighborhoods, their neighbors, their local church, and the commercial establishments in the area where the proprietor was often also a neighbor. In other cases, they found exactly what was expected. Neighbors were living in fear of each other. Residents moved often, and the housing and general surroundings were deteriorating rapidly. These were areas that were undergoing abandonment, frequently the self-fulfilling prophecy of banks and insurance companies that have too often been willing to declare that poor, but healthy, neighborhoods are a bad investment.

It is now apparent that our cities are in trouble. Since the end of World War II, suburban expansion has resulted in a situation where a substantial proportion of the population between twenty-five and fifty years of age no longer live in the city. Along with this population shift, there has been a relocation of jobs, commercial facilities, and vital services away from the central city. Increasingly, the residents of the city are made up of the very young, the very old, and the very poor. These are the people who stand in the greatest need of public services, and whose incomes are insufficient to provide the tax revenue to offer such services. This trend will continue so long as city neighborhoods are permitted to decay.

One major step towards urban revitalization is the recognition that within many of these neighborhoods, there still exist cohesive communities of individuals who are anxious to remain where they are and who are willing to invest considerable time and effort towards maintaining the livability of their homes and surroundings. In this manner, public and private resources can be more rationally combined towards reversing the locational choices of those who presently see no alternative to suburban residence.

The final, but not least important, reason for doing this study has to do with the value a population attaches to its traditions and heritage. It has often been said that Kansas City, Kansas suffers from an "inferiority complex"—that the rambling suburbs of Johnson County are somehow representative of a better, more affluent way of life. There are many reasons to disagree with this viewpoint, and among the neighborhoods of Kansas City, Kansas, Strawberry Hill provides but one of many contradictory examples. The strengths of a society, a city, or a neighborhood cannot be measured in material terms alone. The values of trust and understanding among neighbors and across groups are lost in such



economic calculations, and so too is the importance of the history and experiences of a people in shaping the present and deciding the future.

In that regard, this city has much to be proud of. During the past century the people of Kansas City, Kansas played a vital, although largely unrecognized, role in the industrial development of the entire metropolitan area. The growth and development of the rail and meat packing industries in this area could not have been accomplished without the labor of the many immigrant and migrant groups who settled in Kansas City, Kansas during this period. These were people who worked hard, experienced and overcame many difficulties, and raised families who have made lasting and diverse contributions to the city as a whole. There were many groups who came here under these circumstances—northern Europeans, former slaves, Slavs, Greeks, Mexicans—scores of different nationalities in all. Kansas City, Kansas has developed a rich cultural diversity that is unique in the metropolitan area. Ancient traditions from many parts of the world are reenacted in the daily lives of our citizens, and the communities in which these traditions are preserved offer a sense of security and personal identity which is difficult to find in a complex urban world.

The Slavic-American community of Strawberry Hill illustrates one facet of the ethnic heritage of Kansas City, Kansas. It is not an historical curiosity, however, but a living system. It represents the long efforts of people who were forced to adjust to new and difficult surroundings, accepting much of what the new culture had to offer, but retaining valued customs and beliefs brought with them from their homelands. To the people who took part in this process and to their descendants, Strawberry Hill is far more than just a place to live. For the residents of the city as a whole, it stands as an example of those positive aspects of neighborhood and community, the preservation of which is vital to the creation of a healthy urban environment.

## METHODS

The methods used in a study like this one (or any study for that matter) are the single most important factor in determining the value and accuracy of the information that derives from the research. In designing this study, the objective has been to arrive at generalizations about the social and cultural life of the Strawberry Hill community which are representative of diverse viewpoints and, where possible, subject to empirical validation. A neighborhood is a complex phenomenon. No single approach would yield sufficient understanding of the "how" or the "why" of it to adequately meet the objective outlined above. For this reason, a variety of techniques and sources of information were used to produce this report. The following is a description of these various approaches, and the reasons for using them.

The principal data for this study derive from an interview survey that was done in the fall of 1977. The interview form was designed to obtain general descriptive information from a substantial cross-section of the residents of Strawberry Hill. The questions focused on the following issues: 1) ethnic identity and immigrant origins among the residents; 2) the extent to which languages other than English continue to be spoken within the area; 3) the level of agreement among residents concerning the boundaries of Strawberry Hill and significant landmarks that exist within the area; 4) patterns of residential stability and general attitudes of the residents towards their neighborhood; 5) participation in local church and social activities; 6) use of commercial activities within and close to the area; and 7) the degree to which the people who live on Strawberry Hill know their neighbors.

Slightly more than 10% of the households within the Strawberry Hill Community Development area participated in the survey. These households were selected by creating a randomized listing of all addresses within the area. Once this list was created, the first 130 occupied residential addresses were chosen as the survey sample. The interviewing was done over a two week period by four women college students from the local area. One of the interviewers was a fluent speaker of Serbo-Croatian and, by her participation, it was possible to conduct interviews with several people in the sample whose principal language was not English. Interviewing was done during the day, on weekdays and Saturdays. There were 93 successfully completed interviews. Sixteen persons declined to be interviewed, and those remaining on the original sample listing were not found to be home after two or more attempts.



## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of the survey was to provide a general description of the people of Strawberry Hill—their perceptions about the area, and some of the religious, cultural, social, and civic activities that take place within the area. The significance of preserving residential areas where a community-like atmosphere continues to exist, especially in the inner city, was discussed earlier. In this section, we will examine what this means for the individual residents and for general orientations and attitudes among the residents concerning their neighborhood.

This discussion needs to be placed in a clear framework. The previous section which dealt with the history of the area was intended to provide part of this framework. There are many facets to Strawberry Hill, and there are many differences among the residents. Strawberry Hill is an ethnic neighborhood community, but it would be most inaccurate to describe it as "Little Yugoslavia on the Prairies". The people who live there represent several different ethnic origins and many combinations of origins. They are thoroughly American and, in that sense, inherently diverse. As individuals, they reflect differing attitudes about the area and varying degrees of participation in the social and cultural activities of the neighborhood. Some of the differences that affect the extent to which individuals are involved with their neighborhood are the same that would affect any of these activities anywhere—such things as life cycle, length of residence, and whether one is an owner or a renter. On Strawberry Hill, there are also differences among the residents not commonly found in other neighborhoods—a sense of ethnic identity (or the lack of it); among most, a commitment to a particular church that is expressive of cultural as well as religious orientation; and in many cases (but by no means all) life-long shared experiences among families and individuals, which have served to reinforce cultural norms and have provided the ongoing social contact which gives these values continued significance.

In evaluating the information gained from the survey, the focus will be on sorting out differences, describing possible trends, and attempting to discover which of the different factors appear to be related to the stability of the neighborhood.

Ninety-three households participated in the survey. The households were selected randomly in order to provide a good cross-section and eliminate as much bias as possible. There are several problems that inevitably arise with interview surveys which make it difficult to achieve a good random sample. People who work are not usually home during the day, when interviewing is done. Many people are skeptical about talking to a stranger, whose real objective may be to sell them something they don't want, or worse. The people who are contacted may hold views that are very different from others who are not contacted, or they may conceal or distort their answers for a variety of reasons. A major concern in designing the survey was to avoid as many of these problems as possible. Residents were notified in advance about the survey, and in that notice we attempted to be as explicit as possible about the project and the survey in order to reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding. The interviewers carried identification, which was prominently displayed, and were committed to being courteous and respectful of the wishes of the people they contacted. The survey was not designed to obtain any sort of personal information beyond what was necessary for categorizing answers to the questions. All information has been kept strictly confidential, and the results reported here in no way reflect personal identities of the persons who participated. The interview was "pre-tested" with a number of residents prior to the actual survey, and any questions found to be confusing or apparently causing discomfort were eliminated. In order to contact as many working people as possible, interviewing was also done on Saturdays.

Of the ninety-three individuals who made up the survey sample, 73 were women and 20 were men. The average age for all the respondents was 62 years. The average length of residence was 30 years. Over half of the respondents had lived at the same address for more than 20 years, whereas 11% had lived in their present home for one year or less. Eighty-one percent regularly attend one of the churches in the area.

## IMMIGRANT ORIGINS AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

The history section of this report described the conditions and origins of immigration for the major ethnic groups who, together, constitute a majority of the contemporary inhabitants of Strawberry Hill.



The Croatians were the largest of the Slavic groups who immigrated to Kansas City, Kansas in the early part of the century, and they are still the largest single group currently residing on Strawberry Hill. Slightly more than 35% of the households in the area are Croatian,<sup>2</sup> and most of the Croatians continue to live in the northern section of the Hill. They are densely concentrated in the immediate vicinity of St. John's. Fourteen of the nineteen households in the 400 block of Barnett are Croatian. On Thompson Street, which is located just south of St. John's, 37 of the 52 households are Croatian. Nearly 20% of the



*An early tamburitza orchestra, circa 1905.*

Croatian households in the entire Strawberry Hill area reside on these two blocks. Croatian households are found throughout, however. Over one-quarter are located south of Splitlog, and over 20% live west of 6th Street. The remaining Croatian households, who are in the majority, do live north of Splitlog and east of 6th Street, in the area traditionally associated with St. John's Parish and the Croatian community.

The Slovenians represent a much smaller group—under 10% of the households in the Strawberry Hill area. They are even more densely concentrated in the area around Holy Family Church, than is the case with the Croatians surrounding St. John's. Well over three-quarters of the Slovenian households are located south of Splitlog, and over half live within a one-block radius of the Church.

Taken together the German households of Strawberry Hill are approximately as numerous as the Slovenians, i.e. nearly 10% of the total. Unlike the Croatians and Slovenians, however, the Germans living on Strawberry Hill did not arise from a single wave of immigration occurring over a brief period. Several of the German households are occupied by descendents of early German immigrants, and others by individuals or the descendents of individuals who immigrated to Kansas City, Kansas at the same time as the Slavs. Still others are representative of post World War II immigration. German households are more dispersed within the area than those of the Croatians or Slovenians, but there is a



primarily a matter of convenience and offers some advantages when matters need to be discussed privately in the presence of non-speakers. In most cases, they were household languages during childhood, and with the continuing need to communicate with parents and grandparents, these languages have been retained. Although St. John's School at one time offered classes in Croatian, this is no longer the case. Holy Family School does not offer instruction in Slovenian, and St. Anthony's are all given in English. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest among a substantial number of third generation Slavs in their traditional languages, and several students from the area have formally pursued an interest in Slavic languages and culture at colleges and universities. In addition, the University of Kansas periodically offers extension courses in Serbo-Croatian, which are held at City Hall, just a few blocks from Strawberry Hill.

"Non-Ethnics" are a minority on Strawberry Hill, but just barely. For the survey sample 12% (11) of the participants reported either no ethnic identity or mixed northern European heritage. In this respect, the sample is not proportionally representative. Over 40% of the households within the total area of Strawberry Hill fall into this "non-ethnic" category. In many cases, they are the third and fourth generation descendents of early immigrant groups in Kansas City, Kansas who no longer retain any active ethnic identity. Others represent people who have migrated to this city during recent decades from surrounding rural areas. For them economy and convenience are the principal motives for choosing Strawberry Hill as a place to live. They are more heavily represented among the renters of the area, and are more likely to remain for only a short period of time.<sup>3</sup> They are also likely to be much younger. Many of them are single, or are married with no children or very young children. None of the non-ethnics in the sample described themselves as bilingual. Only two attended a church in the area.

## BOUNDARIES

The neighborhood known as Strawberry Hill occupies a slope of the river bluff in the extreme east-central portion of the city. The name derives from wild strawberries that once grew on the sides of the hill—or so it is said. No one still living has ever seen wild strawberries in the area, and the name is probably as old as the city itself. It has enjoyed something of a resurgence in recent years, and signs erected throughout the area proudly proclaim its official designation. The Community Development group in the area calls itself simply "Strawberry Hill". Ninety-eight percent of the respondents in the sample were familiar with the name. (The survey was done prior to the installation of the signs.)

Strawberry Hill is located just south and east of the downtown area. The slope of the Hill is gradual, extending approximately 16 blocks south to Central Avenue. Seventh Street, a major traffic artery, runs along the western edge of the area. To the east is I-70, and just beyond that is the river. The river bottoms, where the packing plants and related industries were once located, is just to the south and east of Strawberry Hill. Before the construction of the new inter-city viaduct, Fowler (Ferry) Street provided a direct link between the bottoms and Strawberry Hill.

The boundaries of the area described above roughly correspond to those which surround the C.D. area, known as Strawberry Hill. For purposes of choosing a sample, and in other aspects of the project where it was necessary to define in advance the area under consideration, these were the boundaries we used in the study design (i.e. Minnesota Avenue on the north, Riverview Avenue on the south, 7th Street on the west, and 4th Street on the east). This decision was somewhat arbitrary, in that one of the purposes of this study was to examine the residents' perceptions of the boundaries. However, the area taken in represented the largest probable extent of the Strawberry Hill district, and all four streets are major thoroughways or adjoin natural boundaries which normally serve to inhibit neighborly social interaction with those residing on the other side. The main objectives in analyzing the responses to questions concerning boundaries were to determine to what degree the residents of the area are in agreement that these streets (or some others) comprise the boundaries of what they commonly understand to be Strawberry Hill; and whether there are any substantial differences in this regard which relate to ethnic identity, age, and/or location of the respondent's house within the area.

Overall, the people who participated in the survey generally agreed with the boundaries. (See Appendix A) The **modal** responses (i.e. the streets most commonly selected as the north, south, west,



and east boundaries) were as follows: Armstrong to the north (57%); Central to the south (38%); 4th Street on the east (57%); and 7th on the west (61%). In interpreting these responses, it needs to be borne in mind that the C.D. boundaries had been in effect for well over a year prior to the survey, and there is every reason to assume that this influenced some of the answers to this question. Nevertheless, more than half of the participants gave Armstrong as the northern boundary rather than Minnesota (32%), and Central Avenue, which is two blocks south of Riverview, was the predominant response for the southern boundary. The southern boundary was the least clear-cut in the minds of the people we talked to. Altogether, eight different streets were given by varying numbers of people as the southernmost boundary, extending as far north as Sandusky, twenty percent of those responding placed the boundary north of Splitlog. There were only four different responses for the northern boundary, and no one placed it further south than Barnett.

Disagreements concerning the eastern boundary were interesting, in that over one third of the respondents (37%) gave Third Street as the eastern boundary. (Third Street has not existed as a street for over 20 years, since it was acquired as part of the right-of-way for the inter-city viaduct construction.) Although a clear majority were in agreement that 7th Street forms the western boundary of the neighborhood, just under 25% of the respondents selected 6th Street. Finally, it should be noted that approximately 30% of the sample did not give all four boundaries, and in a number of cases, individuals were unable to give a boundary in even one direction.

The answers to the boundary questions were analyzed to determine if there were any striking differences in the perception of boundaries that corresponded to ethnic identity, age, or location within the area. There were several reasons to suspect that there might be differences in this regard.

Ethnic identity and location were thought to be possible factors because of residence patterns in the immediate vicinity of the various ethnic parishes in the area, and particularly because Strawberry Hill has been traditionally most closely associated with the Croatian community. For the northern boundary, there were no apparent differences among the Croatians, and the other ethnics, and the non-ethnics residing in the area. For the southern boundary, there were differences which are difficult to interpret. Sixty percent of the Croatians in the sample gave Central as the southern boundary. Slightly less than one quarter placed the boundary north of Splitlog. Among the other ethnics, 29% gave Central, and nearly 40% put the boundary north of Splitlog. Among the non-ethnics, fifty percent gave Central, and none placed the boundary north of Splitlog. From these findings, it would appear that among the Croatians there is a greater tendency to regard the entire slope of the Hill (i.e. extending down to the hollow at Central Avenue) to be Strawberry Hill, whereas the other ethnics in the area appear to be less certain as to how much should be included, and show a greater tendency to regard only the northern part as truly representing "Strawberry Hill". The non-ethnics do not seem to have been aware of these ambiguities, and preponderantly selected the major street in the southern part of the area to be the boundary.

Another question concerning boundaries focused on possible differences in perception among those living in the northern part of the Hill, compared with those living in the southern part. The only differences of any significance in this regard pertained to the southern boundary—and were between respondents who lived south of Splitlog and those who reside north of Splitlog and east of 6th Street. For those in the north, 41% gave Central as the boundary, and 24% put the boundary north of Splitlog. In the southern portion, however, these figures are reversed; with 26% giving Central, and 44% placing the boundary north of Splitlog. This pattern is highly consistent with that found for differences between the Croatians and other ethnics, and is undoubtedly related to the interaction between residence, ethnicity, and church membership in the area. (83% of the respondents in the northern segment were Croatian, compared with 35% Croatian in the southern part.) Once again, the finding would seem to suggest that among the residents of the northern part there is a greater tendency to perceive Strawberry Hill as extending all the way to the bottoms; whereas this perception is not as strongly shared among those in the southern portion.

The final question concerned age. Age was considered to be a possible factor mainly due to the Third Street finding in the general results. The fact that such a large number of respondents selected a street that no longer exists seemed to suggest that over time, perceptions about the extent of the neighborhood may have not really altered to reflect this change. The age categories were as follows: (younger than 36); (36 to 45); (46 to 65); and (older than 65.) Of eight people who fell in the youngest



category, only one gave Third Street as the eastern boundary. Of seventeen people in the next category (36 to 45), only two gave Third Street. In the next age category (46 to 65), however, over half of the twenty respondents listed Third Street, and nearly half of the 29 respondents in the oldest category gave Third Street as the eastern boundary. These findings do seem to reflect the fact that, for those people who best remember the neighborhood before the highway construction, physical realities have not altered their conception of what would otherwise have still been part of the residential section.

Age of respondent revealed no appreciable differences in boundary perceptions in the other directions, with the exception of the western boundary. All of the respondents in the youngest group gave Seventh Street as this boundary. With the increased age of the respondents, there was a consistent tendency to draw the boundary somewhere east of Seventh Street—either at Sixth or Fifth. Thirty-six percent of those in the age category (36 to 45) listed either Fifth or Sixth Street; 41% of the next group (46 to 65) gave one of these responses; and 44% of those in the oldest category did likewise (32% of the oldest group listed **Fifth Street** as the western boundary). The results concerning the western boundary when compared with those for the eastern, would seem to suggest that with time, and especially with the construction of the turnpike and the viaduct, the preceived center of the neighborhood has shifted to the west, possibly to compensate for the loss of territory; and that among those who were already adults when these events took place, there has been some reluctance to acknowledge the changes.

### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Within Strawberry Hill, there are just over 900 separate residential households. In addition to the churches and public buildings, there are 65 commercial and other non-residential properties within the area. Included among these non-residential establishments, are a number of businesses which provide for a variety of the needs of neighborhood residents (although not nearly as many, nor as well as in past decades). There are seven stores that sell groceries, meats, and general merchandise; seven "private clubs"; six service stations or auto body shops; three restaurants; three beauty shops; three cleaning establishments; three liquor stores; two funeral parlors; a furniture store; a jewelry store; an optical shop; a flower shop; and a photographic studio. Of those we interviewed, seventy-one percent reported that they do at least some of their shopping within the immediate area. Most of the



*The textures of a neighborhood.*



commercial facilities are located within the northern section, along 6th and 7th Street. The only differences among the respondents concerning shopping were between those who live in the northern, as compared with those who live in the southern, parts of the Hill. Over 80% of those who live north of Splitlog shop in the neighborhood, compared with slightly over half of those who live south of Splitlog. Nearly all of the respondents who had lived in the neighborhood for a long period of time observed that there have been drastic changes in their ability to buy things they need in their local area, and that the closing of the many small grocery stores that at one time existed in the area and the loss of the big stores on Minnesota Avenue are the principal reasons for this.

Most of the original houses in the area are single-family and were constructed on very narrow lots. In recent years, there have been some new buildings added—apartments and new homes built on double lots. Some of the larger old houses have been subdivided into apartments, and a number of the commercial establishments have flats on the floors above. For their age, the houses on Strawberry Hill are in pretty good shape. There are relatively few examples of the physical characteristics associated with blight—e.g. broken windows, weedy lots, unpainted exteriors, littered yards and parkways, etc. A goodly number of the houses are in exemplary condition, the result of years of diligent maintenance. The yards, parkways, and sidewalks are perhaps the most striking feature of the neighborhood. The yards in the front of a large number of the houses have been very well cared for. Many of the small front yards are filled with flowers and religious ornaments, and the lawns have been carefully trimmed. In some cases, the front yards slant at about a 45 degree angle. It is not uncommon to see residents with hand or power lawnmowers secured to their waists with ropes, struggling against the grade.

Nearly all of the sidewalks on Strawberry Hill are made of brick. Under City Ordinances, the maintenance of sidewalks is strictly the responsibility of the adjoining property owners. Brick sidewalks require constant and tedious attention, or they are soon overgrown with vegetation. Over time, bricks become dislodged and broken. Brick sidewalks in front of more than two-thirds of houses in the area have been meticulously weeded and maintained, and are not only visually pleasing, but provide a clear, even walking surface for pedestrians.<sup>4</sup> On nice days there are many people coming and going along the sidewalks of Strawberry Hill; singly and in groups, carrying parcels, and stopping occasionally to talk to people in yards or on porches. On days like this, an observer can begin to understand who takes care of the sidewalks and why.

These physical conditions reflect general attitudes among residents toward their neighborhood. During the interview, we asked people what they liked and did not like about their neighborhood. The responses varied a good deal in terms of specific aspects of the neighborhood that were positively regarded. For some, it was the closeness of schools, churches, and shopping. For others, there were more intangible reasons that had to do with the importance of knowing neighbors and the sense of "belonging". For still others, the relatively inexpensive housing, lack of crime, and convenience to work and shopping were most important. Only two people in the sample said that there was nothing that they particularly liked about the neighborhood.

When we asked what they did not like about the neighborhood, the answers included problems that ranged from difficulties finding parking and the loss of commercial facilities, to the conditions of some of the houses and the attitudes and activities of their occupants. However, 52% of the sample expressed no dissatisfaction with the neighborhood, (some were vehement on this question), and an additional 38% only had one specific complaint. The respondents expressed general satisfaction with the public services and police protection that their area receives.

A related question concerned "landmarks" (sites and institutions within the area) which the residents perceive to be important for "cultural or historical reasons". There were admittedly some difficulties in explaining what was being asked in this question, and interviewers were instructed to minimize confusion by stressing that we were far less concerned with the age of a structure than with its overall importance for the people who live within the area. Of those who participated in the interview, 70 were able to identify at least one of these "landmarks", with an approximate average of three. (See Appendix B) Twenty-one percent identified four or more buildings within the area as being important. Altogether, 17 different locations were given. These included all of the churches, and most of the church-related buildings. Seven active commercial establishments were also given, and the site of the old city market and a number of stores that have now closed were also given. Fifth Street Hall (the Croatian-Sloven National Home) and the Old City Hall were also mentioned frequently. Of a total of 207





*Brick sidewalks on Thompson Street.*



responses, 119 were divided among the four Catholic churches in the area, and an additional 24 were of church related structures (orphanage, convent, school, rectory, etc.). Together, these church and church-related landmarks accounted for 70% of all of the responses to this question, and illustrate the fact that within this neighborhood churches are important institutions.

The houses within the area were also regarded as important. Some people included their own homes or neighbors' homes which were known to have been built long ago. Several people suggested that the homes taken by the Turnpike belonged in this category, and should have been preserved; and a number of the people stated that all of the homes in the area are important.

## THE DIMENSIONS OF NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL INTERACTION

The majority of the current residents of Strawberry Hill have participated in a common experience that began over three-quarters of a century ago, and which continues still. Further back than that, a very large proportion of the Croatian population trace their origins to common ancestors in the small Yugoslav village of Ribnik. At the turn of the century this village was greatly depleted of its inhabitants, many of whom reassembled in the packing-house district of Kansas City, Kansas. Partly as a result of this fact, there are many intertwining branches on the family trees of people who now live in the Strawberry Hill area. In addition to a dense network of kinship relations, the active institution of godparenthood supplies individuals with an extra set of relatives (*kumavi*). The Slavic parishes on Strawberry Hill sponsor a variety of organizations and activities which provide the settings for considerable social interaction among the participants. People see each other at meetings, banquets, dances, and picnics; as well as in church, at local stores, and at family gatherings—in a host of situations where many of the same people are frequently encountered.

The early immigrants and their descendants should, by this time, have gotten to know each other very well. In the most commonly offered definitions of "community", it is this aspect that is emphasized—i.e. the regular occurrence of face-to-face interaction in a variety of cross-cutting situations. In the interview survey, we attempted to derive a measure of the extent to which the pattern of social interaction among Strawberry Hill residents corresponds to that of textbook definitions of a community. Apart from scholarly concerns, however, there are functional and practical implications attached to high levels of sociability within neighborhoods. The likelihood of crime is diminished in areas where neighbors know each other well, and social pressures to conform to accepted standards of exterior maintenance are stronger.

The issues that were addressed in this part of the interview survey are as follows: 1) Does the observed pattern of social interaction among residents of Strawberry Hill represent a comparatively high level of neighborhood cohesiveness? 2) What factor (or combination of factors) is most closely associated with high levels of social interaction among neighbors in this setting? 3) Is there an observable correspondence between individual sociability and careful exterior maintenance?

The term "social interaction" in itself does not mean very much. In order to better define the problem, it was broken down into two components. One component of the definition involves acquaintanceship—merely knowing another person. The other component addresses the bases of acquaintances—i.e. whether they are friends, relatives, and/or members of the same church or clubs. Towards the close of the interview, respondents were asked to identify all of the people they knew from current city directory listings for all of those addresses that fall within the Strawberry Hill area. They were also asked to indicate which of these acquaintances were either good friends or relatives, or both. Finally, they were asked to estimate what proportion of their neighborhood acquaintances attend the same church and/or belong to the same clubs as the respondent. In this way, it was possible to obtain a measure of the total number of acquaintances an individual had and the variety of contexts within which those acquaintances have been developed and maintained.

The data were analyzed in the following ways: 1) The average number of acquaintances for the survey sample was compared with similar measures of social cohesion from other types of neighborhoods; 2) The respondents in the sample were sub-grouped according to several criteria (ethnic identity, length of residence, church attendance, club membership, and age) to determine the possible influence of these factors in the formation of neighborhood acquaintances; 3) Measures of number of



acquaintances were compared with responses concerning friendship, kinship, and common participation in local activities in order to evaluate which, if any, of these characteristics are here associated with high levels of social interaction; and 4) To assess the possible relationship between sociability and maintenance of neighborhood surroundings, data on number of acquaintances were compared with data from a separate survey of the condition of brick sidewalks throughout the area.

### General Results

Data on number of acquaintances were obtained from 74 of the 93 participants in the interview survey.<sup>5</sup> The average (**mean**) number of acquaintances reported by these respondents was 164. This is an extremely high figure when compared with the results of studies done in other types of neighborhoods. The most extreme contrast is found in a study done several years ago in a new middle-income townhouse complex. (Athanasίου & Yoshioka, 1973). Among 276 families who participated in this research, the average number of acquaintances was 3.7 and the largest number of acquaintances reported by anyone in the sample was 13. In 1950, a study was done in a midwestern subdivision, which was described by the researchers as a very homogenous and socially cohesive area. (Caplow & Foreman, 1950). In this study, the average number of acquaintances reported was 17. This same figure (17) was found to be the average number of neighborhood acquaintances reported by a sample of 152 residents of four C.D. areas within Kansas City, Kansas (Greenbaum, nd). This study was done two years ago, and the neighborhoods were selected to provide a representative cross-section of the ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics of the city.

The methods of investigation in these other studies differed somewhat from those used in the Strawberry Hill study, although this is not the case with Caplow & Foreman. In the other two studies (Greenbaum and Athanasίου & Yoshioka), respondents were asked to identify their acquaintances from maps, rather than from lists. Despite these possible discrepancies, the very wide departure in the observed level of acquaintance ship among Strawberry Hill residents, strongly indicated that its reputation as a neighborly place is well deserved.

### Factors related to sociability

The extent to which people know their neighbors on Strawberry Hill varies along a number of dimensions. The factors that revealed the most pronounced differences in this regard were: ethnic identity, length of residence, church attendance, club membership, and age. The results of these analyses follow:

**Table 1**  
Mean number of acquaintances by ethnic group

Croatians	Other Ethnic	Non-Ethnic	F	P
239.9	108.8	43.2	15.1	≤ .001
(n=36)	(n=28)	(n=10)		

The above table represents the average number of acquaintances for each of the ethnic categories. The Croatians in the sample reported more than twice as many acquaintances as the other ethnics, and over four times as many as the non-ethnics. These results probably stem from the fact that the Croatians form the largest single ethnic community on Strawberry Hill, but they also indicate that ethnic identity is a highly significant factor in the formation of neighborhood acquaintances in this setting, and that this influence can also be discerned among the other ethnic groups who live on the hill.



**Table 2**  
Mean number of acquaintances by length of residence

0-5 yrs.	6-15 yrs.	16-30 yrs.	+31 yrs.
61.8	164.1	203.4	209.4
(n=10)	(n=14)	(n=14)	(n=36)

Length of residence is significantly correlated with larger mean number of acquaintances, ( $r(72) = .39, p \leq .001$ ), i.e. those who have lived in the area for longer periods of time, tend to know more of their neighbors. This finding contradicts similar results from the other studies referred to earlier. In these other areas, length of residence did not significantly affect social interaction, with the exception that those who were very recent residents had fewer acquaintances. This pattern is also evident for Strawberry Hill, in that the only meaningful differences to be noted in the above table are between those who have lived in the area for five years or less and those who have lived there longer. The elevated levels of acquaintances in the other categories are, in all likelihood, a reflection of the fact that residential stability on Strawberry Hill is most pronounced among the ethnics.

**Table 3**  
Mean number of acquaintances by church attended

St. John's	Holy Family	St. Anthony's	St. Mary's	other or none	F	P
241.1	143.3	83.9	64.5	72.4	7.7	$\leq .001$
(n=36)	(n=9)	(n=8)	(n=6)	(n=15)		

The figures in Table 3 reveal significant differences in the number of acquaintances among parishioners of the different churches in the area. Ethnic identity and church attendance on Strawberry Hill are highly interrelated, as indicated by the near identity of scores on this measure for Croats and members of St. John's (39 of the 46 Croats in the sample attend St. John's). The very large number of acquaintances among the parishioners of St. John's appears to derive from the fact that the Croatian community is both large and centered around the activities of the church. The relatively large number of acquaintances among the parishioners of Holy Family are not as easy to explain on the face of it, but perhaps are a reflection of the fact that the Slovenians on Strawberry Hill continue to comprise a cohesive community, and that there has been substantial interaction and intermarriage between Croats and Slovenians.

**Table 4**  
Mean number of acquaintances by club membership

Members	Non-Members	F	P
204.4	100.5	10.7	$\leq .005$
(n=45)	(n=29)		



Those persons in the sample who belonged to one or more clubs reported over twice as many acquaintances as those who belonged to no clubs. This strongly suggests that participation in such organized activities is associated with knowing larger numbers of people in the neighborhood. Of the 61 persons who belonged to clubs, 44 belonged only to church-sponsored organizations. Of the total sample, 26% belonged to three or more clubs, and 6 people belonged to 5 or more different clubs.

**Table 5**  
Mean number of acquaintances by age category

≤ 35	36-45	46-65	≥ 66	F	P
24.8	166.5	188.4	183.3	3.2	≤ .05
(n=8)	(n=17)	(n=20)	(n=29)		

The age of the respondent also revealed significant differences in the average number of acquaintances. This is only true, however, with respect to the youngest category (35 or younger). In the higher age categories, the number of acquaintances are more than six times as great as for the young adults in the sample. From the figures for the older groups, it would appear that number of acquaintances increases steadily up to the age of retirement and then levels off slightly. Although this interpretation is consistent with common assumptions about life-cycle and social participation, the data from Strawberry Hill are suggestive rather than conclusive. The averages in these latter three categories are not statistically different from each other, and in this setting age, length of residence, and ethnic identity are inter-correlated. Nearly half of the respondents in the youngest category were non-ethnics.

#### Bases of Social Interaction

The foregoing section dealt only with the number of acquaintances and the differences on this measure that exist within the neighborhood. The differences that were found with respect to club membership and church attendance strongly indicated that the number of acquaintances one forms in the neighborhood is directly affected by participation in neighborhood institutions. Friendship and kinship were two additional dimensions of neighboring that were examined. For the total sample, the average number of good friends in the neighborhood was 8, indicating that friendship and acquaintanceship are clearly not perceived to be the same thing. Fourteen percent of the sample reported no good friends in the neighborhood. There were differences in the number of good friends reported that correspond to age and ethnic divisions within the sample. The Croats and the other ethnics averaged 10 and 8 good friends, respectively. The average for the non-ethnics was 3, and for those persons in the youngest age category (35 or younger), the average was 2.

The distribution of relatives living in the immediate area reveals a strikingly similar pattern. The number of relatives reported by individuals in the sample ranged from 0 to 18. Twenty-six percent of the sample reported no relatives, whereas 41% had three or more. The Croats averaged 4 relatives, and the other ethnics averaged two. Non-ethnics in the sample had virtually no relatives living in the area (mean .2), and those individuals who were 35 years old or younger had even fewer (mean .1).

Among those who participated in the sample, the differences found with respect to number of relatives and friends were the same differences as were found for total number of acquaintances, i.e. those groups with large numbers of acquaintances also reported larger numbers of friends and relatives living in the area. From this, a positive correlation might be expected between the number of good friends and the relatives and the total number of acquaintances reported. This proved to be the case, but the correlation was only significant for the number of relatives ( $r^2 = .5$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ). Number of good friends was only weakly correlated ( $p \leq .24$ ) with number of acquaintances. This latter discrepancy may well be the result of inevitable differences in opinion as to what constitutes a "good friend."<sup>6</sup> A relative is far easier to define, and on this measure the results are also clearer.



## Social interaction and exterior maintenance

Mention was made earlier about the condition of brick sidewalks on Strawberry Hill. The data on which these generalizations were based derived from a survey that was done in October, 1977. The survey consisted of a field check of the current state of maintenance for each run of brick sidewalk in front of residential addresses within the area. Three categories were established, and each address received a score from one to three. The assigned categories were labeled "good", "moderate", and "poor". In order for a sidewalk to qualify as good, there could be no surface vegetation, and the edges also had to be trimmed. The moderate category was characterized by shaggy edges and small amounts of vegetation between cracks, but there had to be clear evidence of regular maintenance. The poor category signified no maintenance whatever, with cleared areas obviously the result of foot traffic. The survey revealed that 66% of the brick sidewalks were in the top maintenance category, whereas only 7% were rated as being poorly maintained. The remaining 27% were moderately well-maintained.

Although city ordinances clearly state that property owners are responsible for sidewalk maintenance and repair, there is far from universal acceptance of this responsibility among the citizens of the city at large. Conformity to this ordinance among the residents of Strawberry Hill does not result from official coercive measures, but rather appears to be a neighborhood norm. Given the observed level of social interaction among the residents of the neighborhood, it is also reasonable to assume that local standards of exterior upkeep (which affect the appearance of the neighborhood as a whole) might be transmitted and reinforced as a result of all this communication.

**Table 6**  
Mean number of acquaintances by sidewalk condition

Good	Moderate	Poor	F	P
184.2	161.8	77.4	1.2	$\leq .25$
(n=32)	(n=16)	(n=5)		

In order to determine if there is any relationship between the number of acquaintances a resident has and the degree to which exterior maintenance is done, the respondents in the interview survey were grouped according to the condition of the sidewalk in front of their residences. The average number of acquaintances for individuals in each of these categories is listed in Table 6 (above). The results do suggest a relationship between these two measures, with those who fall in the "good" category having on the average more acquaintances than those in the other categories, and so on. However, the findings do not meet accepted standards of statistical reliability. (One time out of four, a random assortment of numbers could be expected to produce similar results).

One possible explanation for these cloudy results is that the total number of people in the sample whose sidewalks were rated poor was very small (5) when compared with those in the other categories (32, 16). With so few represented, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons. Although the numbers of acquaintances for those in the "poor" category were low, overall, a fair number of non-social people maintain their sidewalks quite well, and some very social people are only moderately inclined to pick the weeds from between the cracks in their sidewalks.

It would appear that knowing a large number of people only partially influences this kind of maintenance behavior. A statistically stronger relationship was found between having good sidewalks and foreign-born parents. Eighty-five percent of all the well-maintained sidewalks in the sample were in front of the homes of first or second generation ethnics ( $\chi^2 = 8.04$ ,  $p \leq .005$ ). That these are also the people with the largest number of acquaintances, suggests once again an interrelationship between factors.

This interrelationship, and the ones that appear to exist for the other measures examined in this report (e.g. ethnic identity and church attendance, church attendance and residence, etc.) reflect the natural interconnectedness of these different facets of community life on Strawberry Hill. Those



persons in the sample who reported large number of acquaintances, were also likely to be members of local churches and organizations. Ethnic identity was clearly a factor in conditioning participation in these institutional settings where acquaintances are made, renewed, and maintained, during the course of life. There is also an indication that the presence of relatives is related at least indirectly to the likelihood of participation, and further, that participation in these activities is positively related to the formation of individual friendships. The size of ethnic groups residing in the neighborhood, the size of their respective parishes, and the number of organized activities sponsored by the churches, also appears to be directly related to the size and nature of social networks among area residents. What seems to emerge from all of this is that Strawberry Hill provides its residents with a setting where religious, social, cultural, and family life are highly intertwined, and it continues to reflect an atmosphere not unlike that associated with small-town or "community" life.

Not all the residents are fully involved with this setting, but it would appear that the non-ethnics who do not share in the broadest aspects of the neighborhood, are nonetheless satisfied with their surroundings and engage in a slightly higher level of social interaction with their neighbors than might be the case if they were living elsewhere. Some of the most pronounced differences found among the respondents related to the different age groups and were suggestive that young people in the area are not likely to keep the community structure alive as they move into full adulthood. These finds need to be interpreted with great care, however. Given the fact that the overall number of people in this category was small and that nearly half were also non-ethnic, such conclusions would be entirely premature. Social participation, especially in the kinds of activities that take place within Strawberry Hill, generally increases with age. This is also true with respect to forming acquaintances and friendships in neighborhoods like Strawberry Hill, where people generally remain in one place for a long period of time.

## CONCLUSIONS

This report has attempted to tie together diverse kinds of information concerning neighborhood life (past and present) on Strawberry Hill. In the process, it was hoped that a more or less complete picture would emerge, and that from this presentation there might also emerge a better understanding of the significance of neighborhoods for the city as a whole. The question of what will happen to Strawberry Hill in the future naturally arises, and for now the answer is unclear.

Many of the people we spoke with while compiling this report expressed the conviction that the neighborhood and its parishes would eventually disappear—that the strong ethnic identity which has been the mainspring of neighborhood institutions would fade with the passing of the immigrants. The results of the sidewalk survey would appear to give substance to these longrange fears. However, the results of the sidewalk survey also indicate that a significant majority of the residents do take the trouble to take care of the spaces in the area, and not all of them are ethnics. Since the end of World War II and the easing of immigration restrictions, new immigrants from Yugoslavia have been moving into the neighborhood. With their presence smoke-houses and winemaking have returned, resurrecting some of the ethnic character of Strawberry Hill.

There are other hopeful signs. Although not as common as it once was, houses on Strawberry Hill continue to pass from one generation to the next, and a growing number of ex-suburbanites have purchased homes on the Hill. Many of the older Victorian houses in the area have been rehabilitated or are in the process, and combining lots has permitted the construction of substantial new housing. Creative renovation of some of the smaller structures has provided modern homes for small families. The extent to which this trend will continue and the changes it may bring are unknown at this time, but at this point Strawberry Hill still retains a great deal of its vitality.



### NOTES

1. In order to achieve some measure of the impact of the turnpike project, an effort was made to trace the relocations of the households who had previously resided in the right-of-way. This was done by listing out all the households represented at those addresses in the 1955 Polks Directory. There were 219 individual households. (Slavic households accounted for 57% (124) of the total.) New locations were sought by matching the names on the list with the alphabetical surname listing in succeeding year's editions of the Kansas City, Kansas Polks Directory. The main objective was to ascertain how many households had settled in another location on Strawberry Hill. In the four years following 1955 (1956-1959), 73% of all the households on the list were located at another address in Kansas City, Kansas (See Appendix C). Thirty-seven percent of the Slavic households had resettled on the hill, compared with 6% of the non-Slavic households.
2. The ethnic identity of all the households on Strawberry Hill was determined by asking several active members of the ethnic communities on the hill to identify the ethnicity of households listed in the Polks Directory (1976) at those addresses that fall within the Strawberry Hill area. Their judgements were compared with the self-reports of those households in the sample in order to assure reliability.
3. This information derives from an analyses of current Polks Directory listings for the Strawberry Hill area. These listings give type of tenure (owner or renter) and identify all of the new residents for that year. This information revealed that 75% of the non-ethnics are renters, and 77% of the new residents are non-ethnics.
4. See page 41 for methodology.
5. In the early stages of the survey, respondents were asked to identify their acquaintances from maps. This instrument proved to be unworkable in that the large number of acquaintances were too difficult to recall and identify in this manner. Because of the methodological change, the maps were not used resulting in acquaintanceship data for only 74 of the 93 persons in the sample.
6. A good friend was defined as someone who is visited at home once a month or more.



# Environmental/Historic Survey

The objective of the Strawberry Hill—Environmental/Historic Survey is to institute a process to preserve and enhance the physical environment of Strawberry Hill. The initial phase of the program includes the identification of structures and other elements of environmental and historic value, the analysis of internal and external (to the area) environmental conditions, an evaluation of this data for the purpose of helping to define the physical boundaries of a proposed historic district, and the development of suggestions to continue the process of preservation and community improvement.

The City's objective is to conserve the existing distinctive physical characteristics and attributes of the hill, that, together with the social aspects dealt with elsewhere in this study, form the unique and viable neighborhood that is Strawberry Hill. The approach of neighborhood conservation, as opposed to urban renewal, is the basis of the City's Community Development Program. Such an approach seems particularly appropriate for the hill, with its strong sense of identity and its disastrous experience with Federal programs in the past. With this in mind, this study will define existing conditions and make suggestions for possible actions, but it will not attempt to impose a "plan" on the neighborhood and its people.

## **DEFINING THE STUDY AREA**

In starting the Environmental/Historic Survey, it was felt that the selection of a rather specific geographic area might be most beneficial for the eventual purpose of defining the physical boundaries of a proposed historic district. These concerns, in conjunction with apparent traffic patterns, land use, and the topography of the hill, became the determinants for setting the configuration of land area defined as the Study Area. This Study Area is the region bounded by Barnett/Armstrong on the north, Reynolds on the south, Interstate-70 on the east and the 7th Street Trafficway on the west.

The north, east, and west boundaries are well defined by physical barriers. At first glance, Central would have seemed the logical southern boundary, but the Central Avenue commercial corridor is a



strong entity in itself. Reynolds lies in the valley at the southern foot of the hill and forms a visible break between the Study Area and the commercial corridor. Generally, in a study of this kind, both sides of the streets forming the boundaries of the Study Area are included within the area since both sides establish the street's character. This study diverges slightly from this practice because of the special conditions and complexities present and therefore does not include the Center City urban renewal area to the north of Armstrong, or the area west of 7th Street Trafficway. Because the character of Strawberry Hill is predominantly residential and neighborhood-commercial, it is felt that the character of these other areas is sufficiently different so that the center line of the street defines the Study Area.

## **SURVEY**

The physical study has been divided into three stages: Survey, Analysis, and Recommendations for defining the physical boundaries of a proposed historic district. The first two stages, when reviewed with the study's objectives, formed the basis for the recommendations.

The survey procedure involved several differing survey tasks. Initially, the consultants, during an orientation process, recorded representative and exceptional structures as candidates for possible survey form investigation. Over 200 structures were identified. This number was reduced to the 182 structures shown on Scope/map 1. The task of completing Survey Form 1 for these selected structures was then undertaken. This form includes the address, building type, photo identification, approximate construction date, building condition, architectural description, and visual analysis of the structure(s). One hundred forty-one forms were completed using this procedure. This number is fewer than the 182 because in many cases a single form was used to record a grouping of similar adjacent structures.

Other surveys examined vehicular and pedestrian activity, land use, and a determination of the contributing visual elements within the Study Area. All of these survey components were performed to assist in defining a starting point for the study, to give a condition appraisal, and to investigate the existing resources that would affect the recommendations of a proposed historic district boundary.

### **Traffic**

The survey shows that there are three different types of traffic conditions within Strawberry Hill: major, minor, local. Major arterial traffic for north-south movement makes use of the 7th Street Trafficway and, to a lesser extent, 5th Street (access to I-70.) State Avenue (north of Strawberry Hill) and Central (south of Strawberry Hill) are presently the major east-west arterials and do not go through the neighborhood. Minor arterial streets are 6th Street, and Barnett to Minnesota Avenue for eastwest traffic movement around the Center City Mall development. All other roads are basically for local use, with a patrolled street-crossing during school hours at Barnett and 5th Street. Thus only 5th and 6th Streets form any sort of potential barrier to neighborhood cohesiveness, but the traffic on these streets is not heavy enough at the present to be disruptive.

Development of the proposed convention center and hotel to the north of the study area could change this situation, however. It is possible that traffic could then increase on 5th Street to such an extent as to create serious difficulties for pedestrian movement and the adjacent residential properties. Off-street parking is largely nonexistent on 5th Street, creating still further problems if an increase in traffic should occur.

### **Land Use and Zoning**

The land use survey identifies eight basic categories of land use for the Study Area. These are; 1. Single-family residential 2. Designed multi-family residential 3. Commercial/Residential 4. Commercial 5. Civic/Educational/Religious 6. Industrial 7. Recreational 8. Vacant lots/parking.

The entire Study Area is predominantly residential, comprised of single-family housing and some multiple-family dwellings. Most of the multiple-family dwellings are not designed as multi-housing but represent the conversion of single-family units to multiple units. Very few of these conversions are in structures that are adequate for the purpose of housing more than two families at most. Unfortunately, single-family zoning does not exist on the hill. The residential properties are zoned "E" Apartment, a situation dating from a period when urban renewal was active and single-family areas in close proximity to the urban center were considered somehow wasteful. This situation was apparently intended to encourage the construction of new apartments rather than conversions. Only a few new



units have been built, however, with results that range from benign to clearly disruptive.

Commercial development occurs along 5th and 6th Streets, and strip-type developments lie along 7th Street Trafficway from Ohio south. An isolated, non-conforming, and somewhat intrusive commercial area also exists at the south end of 4th Street. For the most part the existing commercial development is neighborhood oriented. The existing zoning, however, would allow for much heavier uses, including light industry.

Three areas within the Study Area have light industrial zoning: the former Meyer dairy plant at 5th and Barnett, a block-and-a-half stretch of commercial development along either side of 6th Street south of Tauomee, and the former Bryson's automotive repair and salvage operation at 6th and Reynolds. The 6th Street zoning is clearly inappropriate, with the potential for a strong negative impact on the area. As it is, the zoning has encouraged deteriorating conditions and intrusive uses. The City should therefore consider changing the zoning on these properties to a more appropriate commercial category.

Both the Meyer dairy and the former DeCoursey dairy plant at 7th and Northrup were originally developed for that particular purpose. The Meyer building is a substantial brick structure, with the truck area enclosed within the U of the building, and its presence seems to have had little or no negative impact on its residential surroundings. These qualities would seem to lend themselves to an adaptive use project, perhaps as mixed apartments and commercial. The DeCoursey plant by contrast was never properly zoned—the property is split between apartment and commercial zoning—and its presence has always been a source of irritation to the neighborhood. The buildings vary in condition and appearance, and the truck and storage yard is unscreened. Attempts to rezone the property for industrial purposes have always been vigorously opposed by the adjacent property owners. The alternatives would seem to be adaptive use to conform to the existing zoning, or clearance and redevelopment. In the past, however, both alternatives have been regarded as prohibitively expensive.

The commercial zoning in the area, though somewhat heavier than normal for neighborhood commercial, has generally not been a problem. It should be noted, however, that it takes in areas that remain residential in nature. This includes the frontage on 7th Street between Sandusky and Splitlog, and the east side of 5th Street. In these instances rezoning may be indicated.

The demolition of structures to provide surface parking lots for commercial development has been minimal and not disruptive to the cohesive quality of repetitious structures along the neighborhood streets. However, the few off-street parking lots surveyed are generally unscreened, unterraced, and in some cases unpaved, and they do detract significantly from the residential quality of the neighborhood. Plans for any additional off-street surface parking should be carefully reviewed regarding their potential effect on the neighborhood, and the existing ordinances covering paving and screening might be more vigorously enforced.

#### Exterior Visual Qualities

The survey also classified structures by their exterior visual qualities (re: Visual Analysis of Structures/map 3). Most structures are either one-story brick and/or wood frame Working-Man's Cottages on 25 foot wide lots with full width porches and shallow front yards, or one-and-a-half to two-story wood frame Victorian houses in simplified variants of the Queen Anne style, datable from the late 1880's to the early 1900's. These structures function as the supportive background elements, the common thread throughout the neighborhood that gives the area its sense of unity. Many, perhaps a majority, of these structures have been refaced in asbestos shingles or asphalt siding, but the forms and often the decorative details remain intact. Only a few, such as the house at 523 Orville, remain unchanged after eighty or ninety years. But the overall impression remains one of consistency in form, scale, and period.

Intermittently placed among the other buildings are a number of distinguished structures that because of their size, location, design, or detailing exhibit special significance to the neighborhood. The styles vary and include Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Bungalow and Commercial. They were constructed for the most part from the post-Civil War period through the 1930's, a wider time-frame than that of the background structures. Some of these serve as reference landmarks to the area and include the four churches and the Cruise-Scroggs Residence (St. John's



Childrens Home.) Others are simply good examples of their style and period, either alone or in groups such as the trio of houses at 643, 645, and 647 Splitlog. But all are important to the overall fabric of the area.

There also exist a number of structures that are incompatible and discordant in various ways with the character of the district. They are generally incompatible because of unsuitable height and massing, variation from the established setbacks, and the unsympathetic use of materials. Some of these problems could be corrected through simple remodelings. Fortunately, the number of such discordant elements is still small and their location is scattered. The most serious visual problems occur on the commercial portions of 6th Street, and reflect the discrepancies in zoning noted earlier. Ironically, this same area includes structures such as the property at 413-419 North 6th that have the potential for being among the most distinguished in the Study Area.

#### Selected Examples

The pages that follow contain buildings selected from the Environmental/Historic Survey. The examples shown are not intended to be the best of Strawberry Hill, but were chosen to give some idea of the interest and variety present in the area. The dates given are often approximate, as the City of Kansas City, Kansas has routinely disposed of all building records over ten years old.





*RESIDENCE, 400 NORTH 6TH STREET, circa 1870.*

*The oldest buildings on Strawberry Hill are among the oldest in the city. The dating is very uncertain, with construction in the late 1850s a distinct possibility. They are characterized by stark brick walls, tall, round-arched windows, low pitched roofs, and an often total absence of ornamentation. In this case, the windows have been partially bricked up, and a porch added in the early 1900s.*





*MATHIAS SPLITLOG RESIDENCE, 251 ORCHARD STREET, circa 1865/1885.*

*Mathias Splitlog was one of the original Wyandot Indian settlers who came here from Ohio in 1843. Following the distribution of tribal lands in 1855, he amassed considerable holdings, at one time owning most of the Strawberry Hill area. His home was built sometime prior to his move to Oklahoma in 1867. The front wing is a later addition in the Queen Anne style of the 1880s. The house may have been moved from a site to the east of its present location.*





*RESIDENCE, 608 SPLITLOG AVENUE, circa 1870.*

*Yet another example of Civil War era architecture, this house has the bracketed cornice typical of the period. There is some evidence that the house may have been moved to its present site in the early years of this century, with the elaborate porches then added. The interior has recently been extensively reworked.*





*RESIDENCE, 431 ARMSTRONG AVENUE, circa 1880.*

*Beautifully sited and surrounded by trees, this house seems almost rural in character, and shows what Strawberry Hill may have been like prior to the building boom of the late 1880's. There are traces of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival in the design, but the style is essentially Midwestern vernacular.*



*RESIDENCES, 610 AND 612 SANDUSKY AVENUE, circa 1885.*

*This fine pair of bracketed Italianate houses adapt themselves comfortably to their narrow lots. The house on the left has been carefully maintained with obvious appreciation of its qualities, and illustrates the potential of many of the houses in the area. The porches may be later additions.*





*RESIDENCE, 620 ORVILLE AVENUE, circa 1885.*

*Another example of the bracketed Italianate style. The porch, added circa 1910, is attractive in itself and makes a positive contribution to the overall design. While reducing the window size is not desirable, if it must be done it is preferable to avoid alteration of the openings as in this case.*





*RESIDENCE, 507 THOMPSON STREET, circa 1885.*

*This 2-story brick house is an example of the "Kansas City Peaked Style," which was built in many variations throughout the metropolitan area. The eyebrow-like window arches are made of brick in imitation of the more expensive stone.*





*RESIDENCE, 537 THOMPSON STREET, circa 1885.*

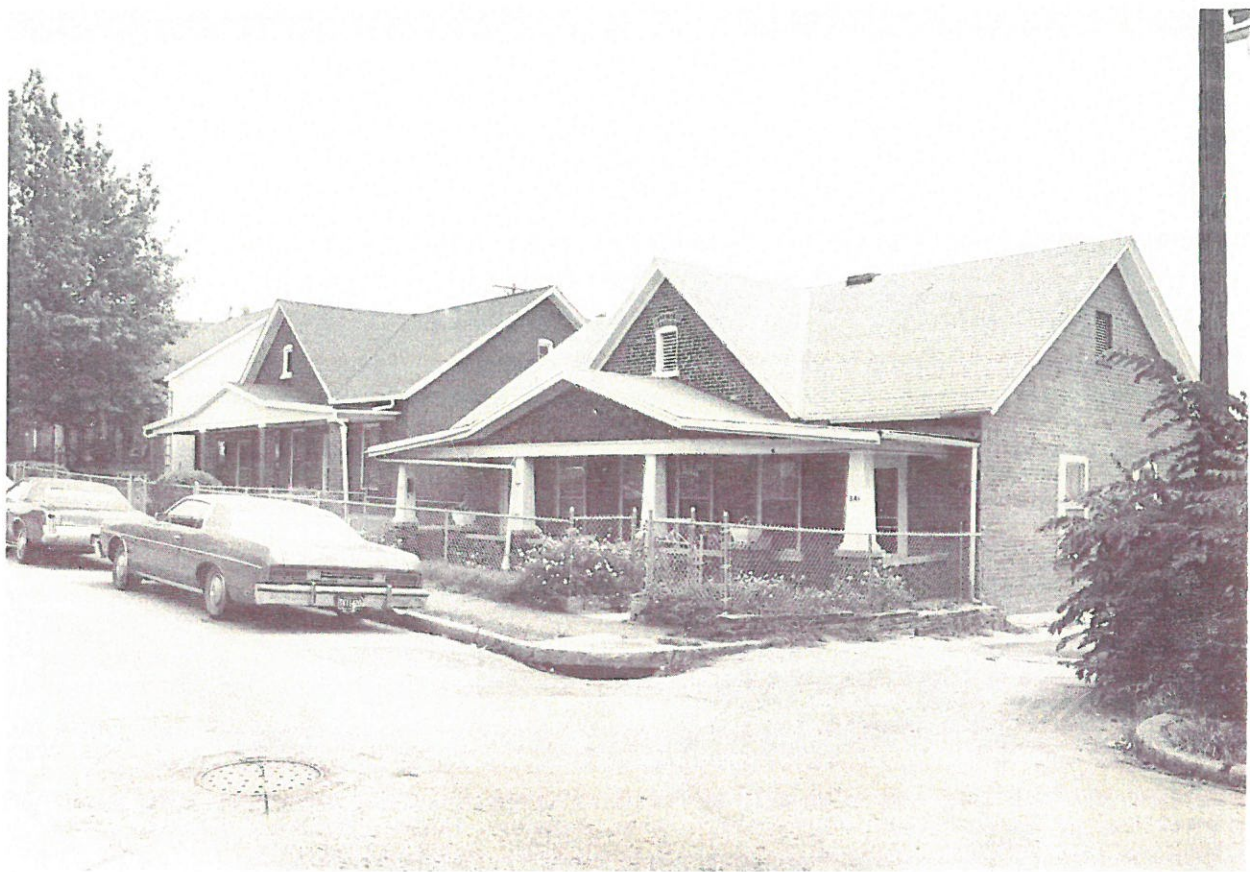
*By the mid-1880s, small one story working-class houses had begun to be built on Dugarro Avenue, later renamed Thompson Street. These houses would set the pattern for much of the building on Strawberry Hill over the next twenty years. This house, with its brickwork and iron fence, differs from its larger neighbors only in size.*



*RESIDENCE, 633 TAUROMEE AVENUE, circa 1885.*

*At the time this house was built, Tauromee was Young Street and came to a dead end just west of the house. The building itself is an elaboration of the "Kansas City Peaked Style". It is particularly notable for its fanciful porch. The decoration is vaguely Eastlake in style, but more closely resembles the spindled furniture of the period.*





*GEORGE FOWLER'S ADDITION, 5TH TO 6TH AND TAUROMEE TO BARNETT, 1887.*

*Unlike the proprietors of Armour's or Wilson's, George Fowler was a local businessman—his house stood on the present site of Northeast Jr. High School—and he built one of the few planned examples of working-class housing in the city. Duplexes, many now converted to single family use, fronted on Tauromee Avenue, while a mixture of duplexes and 2-story apartments fronted on Barnett. The roof forms of the westernmost duplexes on Barnett are of particular note.*



RESIDENCE, 628 OHIO AVENUE, 1888.

*The qualities of this house are at first glance somewhat elusive. But the board siding and the rear wing are obviously later additions to what may have been a local variant of the Shingle Style. The careful detailing of the corner tower, from the undulating shingle pattern to the corkscrew finial, give evidence of the original nature of the design. The stone wall with its carved date is also original, with each course smaller than the one below.*





*RESIDENCE, 523 ORVILLE AVENUE, circa 1890.*

*A somewhat late example of the bracketed styles that dominated mid-century residential architecture, this house remains in what would appear to be its original condition. The stylistic origin of many of the houses of this period is often rather vague, as the builder felt free to use decorative forms from a variety of popular styles, limited only by his imagination and the budget.*



*RESIDENCE, 511 ARMSTRONG AVENUE, circa 1890.*

*Many of the houses along Armstrong had fine sites lifting on terraces above the street. Nominally Queen Anne in style, this house is unmistakably Midwestern in character with its white-painted clapboards and wide veranda. It remains in excellent condition, and by its presence reinforces the argument that commercial encroachment from the north should be strongly resisted.*





*RESIDENCES, 643, 645, AND 647 SPLITLOG AVENUE, circa 1890.*

*These three Queen Anne houses were built at one time, with identical floor plans. Originally the two flanking houses were identical in detail, so that the composition remains essentially intact despite the remodeling of the eastern-most structure. Both individually and as a unit, these houses remain one of the finest examples of the period in Kansas City, Kansas.*



*COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, 601-611 NORTH 6TH STREET, circa 1900.*

*Following the Panic of 1893, building in Kansas City did not really revive until after 1900. There was then a gradually accelerating boom as the older parts of the city took on their present form. The northern part of 6th Street developed commercially, with this building being one of the older examples. Except for the classical cornice, the design was surprisingly modern in concept and materials. The ground floor is entirely in glass, while the upper portions were covered with metal sheets stamped to resemble stone.*





COMMERCIAL/APARTMENT BUILDING, 413-419 NORTH 6TH STREET, circa 1900.

*The largest commercial structure on Strawberry Hill, this building was distinguished by its two bays with their rather unusual detailing. The store fronts were presumably all glass in their original form. Together with the adjacent rowhouses, this building could be the starting point for any revitalization efforts on 6th Street.*



*ROWHOUSES, 540, 542, AND 544 ELIZABETH AVENUE, circa 1900.*

*These are one of the very few examples of the rowhouse type of development in Kansas City, Kansas. Similarities in detailing would seem to indicate that they were designed and built at the same time as the adjacent commercial building. The design might be called Commercial Style, with touches of Queen Anne or Georgian Revival.*





*COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 808 NORTH 4TH STREET, circa 1900.*

*As the ethnic community grew on Strawberry Hill, numerous small businesses appeared to serve the neighborhood. This building is a typical wood frame storefront of the period, with the additional interest of the nicely detailed kneebraces which support the projecting porch.*









ST. MARY'S CHURCH, 5TH AND ANN, 1890-1903.  
ST. MARY'S RECTORY, 509 ARMSTRONG, 1917.

*The property which Father Kuhls bought from Mathias Splitlog in 1865 has gone through many transformations. The first church was built in 1866 on the site of the present school. A convent and school on the site of the present church followed in 1869, and a rectory in 1880. The present church basement was built and dedicated in 1890, with the cornerstone for the remainder of the building being laid in 1900. A school on the site of the old church was built in 1892, remodeled in 1912 and again in 1925.*

*The present rectory is the fourth one to be built. It is similar in appearance to many of the fine houses built in Westheight or Grandview at that time, and its broad massing complements the rugged Romanesque masonry of the church.*



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, 4TH AND BARNETT, 1900-1905.

*This simple red brick Gothic church was reportedly designed by Father Krmpotic himself, who also took a hand in laying the brick. The vaulted interior has a spacious character, and the damage to the murals by Oton Ivekovic in the fire of January 2, 1932, is to be deeply regretted.*

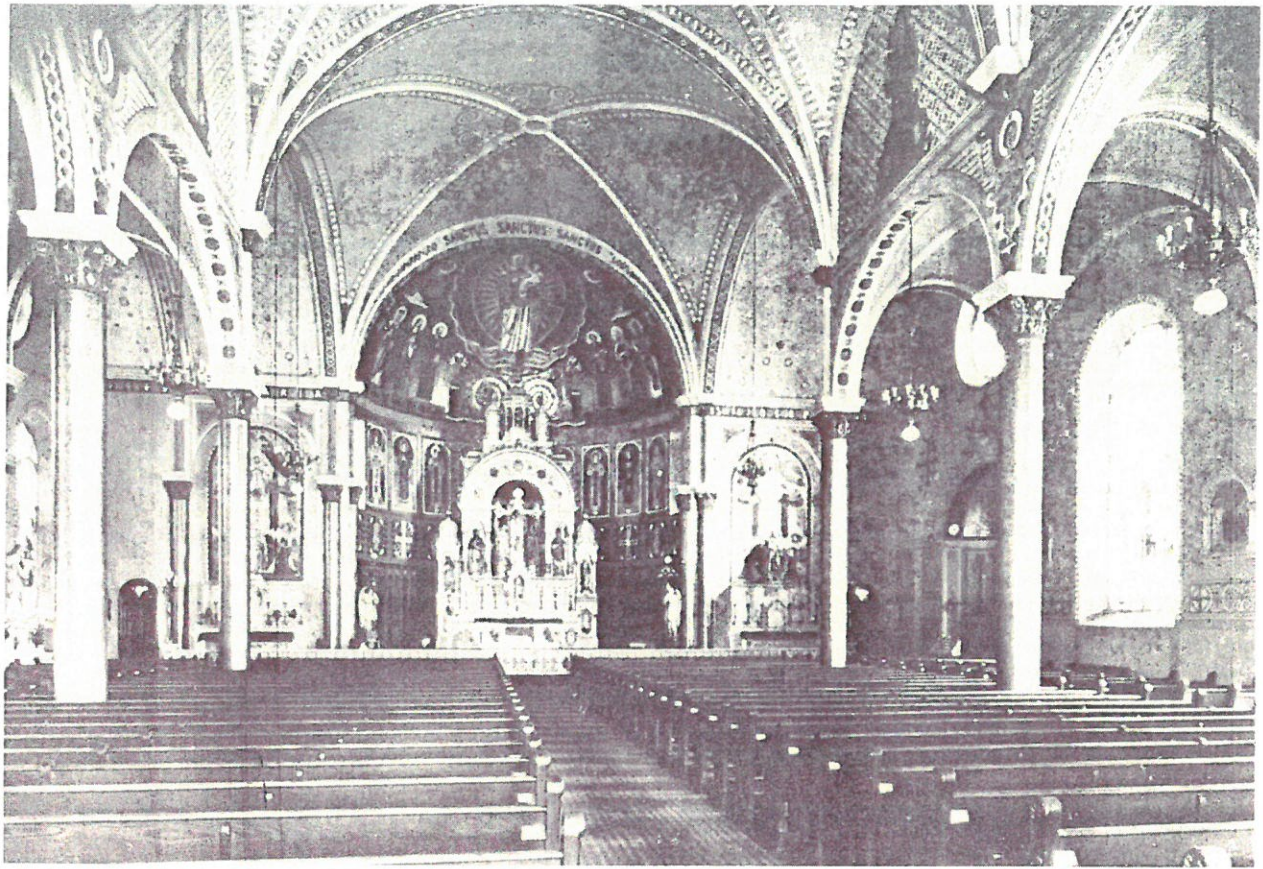












*ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH, 7TH AND BARNETT, 1889-1906.  
Franciscan Brothers Adrian and Anselm of St. Louis, architects.  
Charles E. Keyser, architect (towers only, 1930).*

*This imposing Romanesque church was the result of a building program spanning forty-one years. The magnificent interior, almost Byzantine in character, was executed in 1924 but has undergone considerable modification.*





*RESIDENCE, 628 SANDUSKY, circa 1905.*

*This house was possibly the most imposing residence to be built in the area of Strawberry Hill. The house itself, with its wide eaves and fine brickwork, is rather typical for its time and place, but the porch is an outstanding feature. The carriage house to the rear is basically unaltered and would seem to predate the house, suggesting that this is actually the second structure to be built on this lot.*

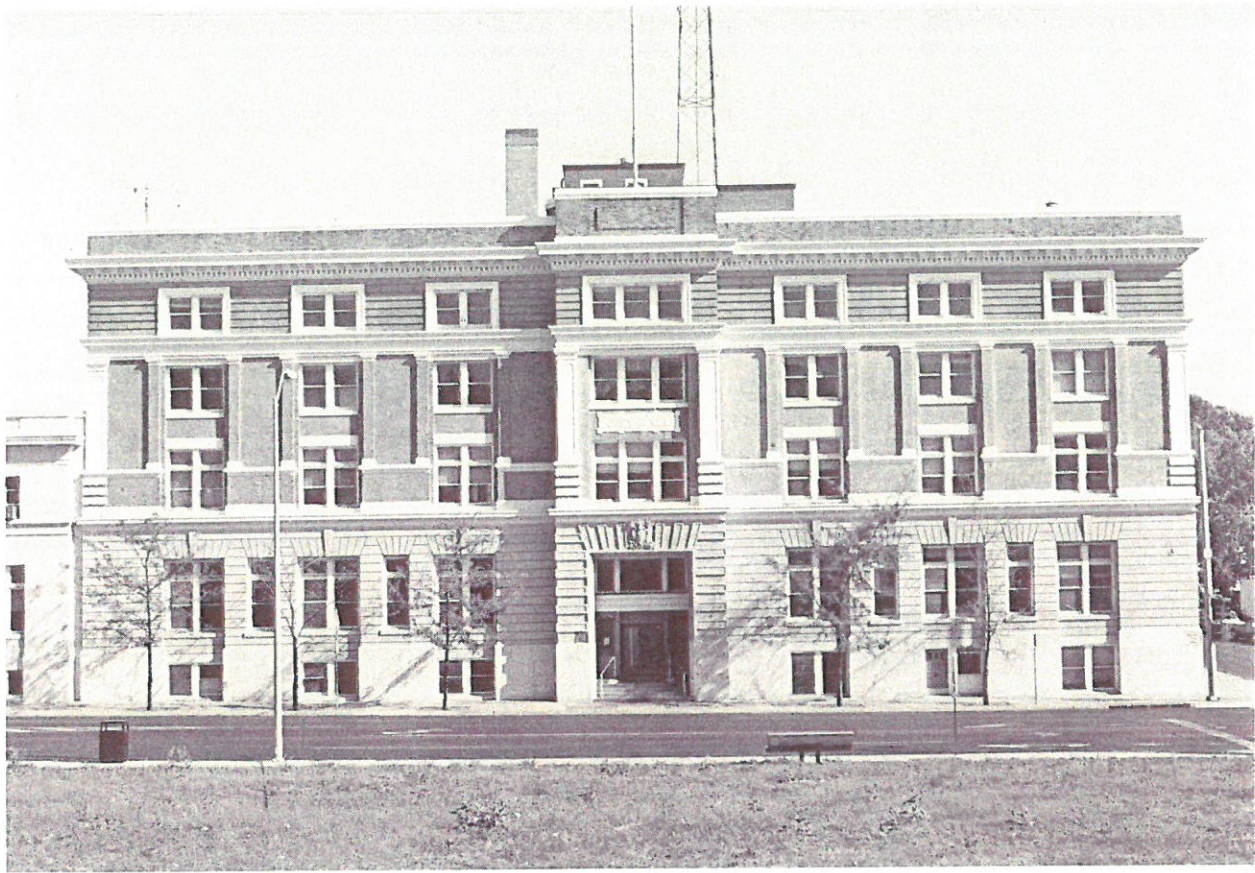




*HARRY DARBY COMPANY OFFICES, 333 NORTH 6TH STREET, 1902-1910.*

*In the midst of a residential area, the quiet design and beautiful maintenance have made a good neighbor out of a structure that might otherwise seem out of place. With the exception of the classical pediment over the door, the style is Progressive and non-historical in nature.*





**KANSAS CITY KANSAS CITY HALL, 6TH AND ARMSTRONG, 1911.**  
*Rose and Peterson, Architects*

*The "new" City Hall was built immediately south of its predecessor at 6th and Armstrong, at a time when 6th Street rather than 7th was the principal north-south thoroughfare for the area. Efforts are currently underway to find a new use for the building, which has stood empty since 1973. The successful preservation and reuse of this local landmark could be of considerable importance to the adjoining neighborhood.*





**CROATIAN-SLOVEN-NATIONAL HOME, 406-410 NORTH 5TH STREET, 1914.**

*Nationalistic feelings were often quite strong among the various ethnic groups that came to America, and particularly among those whose homelands were dominated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The flags that flew at the cornerstone laying for St. John's in 1904 were Croatian, not Austrian. This building, with three shops and a meeting hall, provided space for wedding receptions, parties, and meetings of the Croatian Fraternal Union. Essentially styleless, the horizontal proportions and careful masonry of the shop fronts are quite pleasing.*





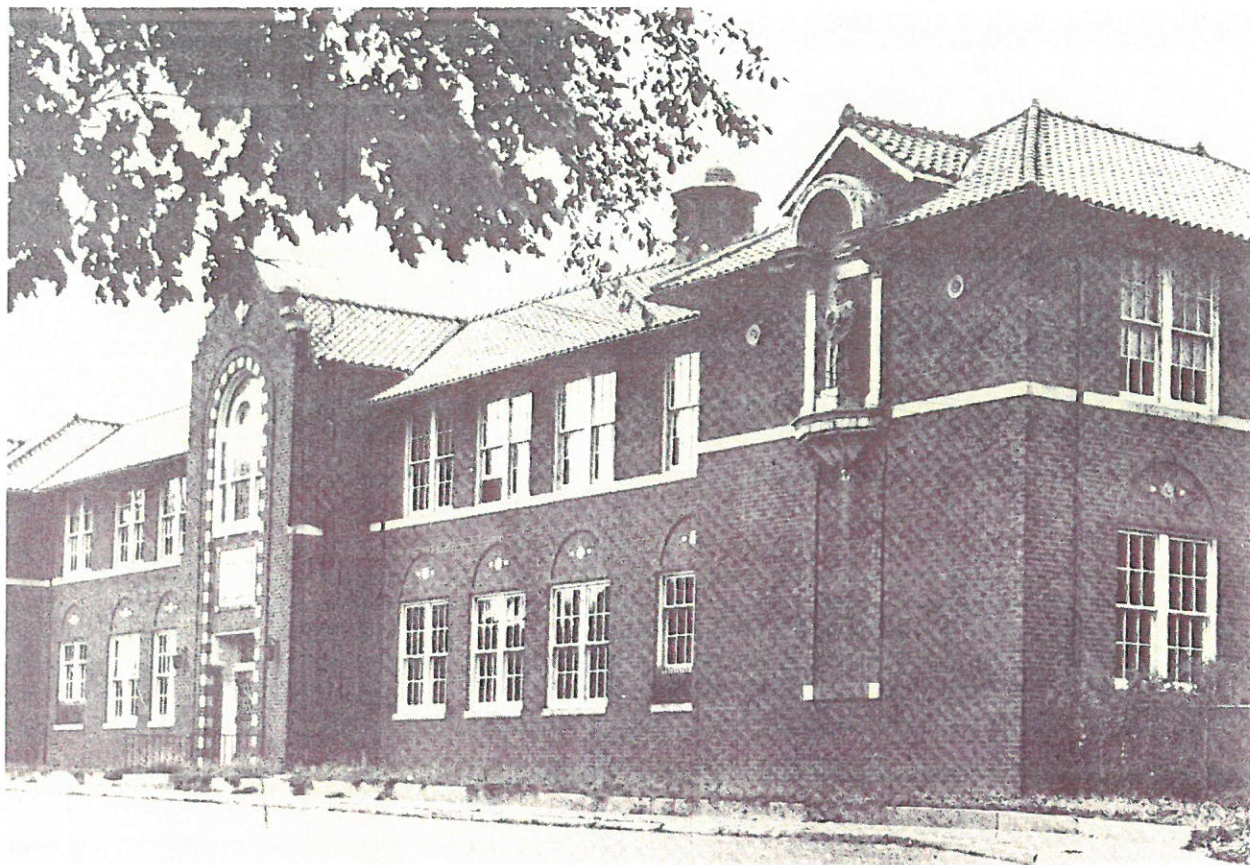
CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY, 6TH AND OHIO, 1925-1927.  
H. W. Brinkman, Architect.

*From the modest beginnings of a converted house in 1908, the Slovenian community was able to produce this beautiful example of the Romanesque Revival. The setting is one of the finest for any church in the city, and the design takes full advantage of the site. The stone of the retaining wall along 6th Street was reportedly salvaged from the demolition of the old Wyandotte County Court House.*









ST. ANTHONY'S SCHOOL, 7TH AND TAUROMEE, 1925.  
Charles E. Keyser, architect.

*Following the construction and dedication of the basement of the new church in 1890, the first church was converted to a school. In 1907 this building was moved to the south end of the property and added to, only to be demolished and replaced by the present structure. The new school was Romanesque in style, yet very much a product of the 20s, presenting an interesting contrast to the older church.*

## ANALYSIS

To the residents or visitors, the current physical character of the Strawberry Hill District may not be readily differentiated from that of other adjacent neighborhoods, particularly those west of the 7th Street Trafficway. There are differences, of course, but they are differences in grain or texture—the setbacks, spacing, and scale of individual structures—rather than age or design, and thus are not readily apparent to the casual observer. This lack of a distinct physical neighborhood identity might seem to diminish some of the environmental historic importance of the area. As noted previously, the Study Area contains few structures which are historically or architecturally significant in the larger sense. Most serve only as supportive background buildings, though these are often representative of a given style or era. Unfortunately, the physical environment does not fully reflect the rich ethnic heritage of the residents, and it is this combination of factors that makes Strawberry Hill unique. Neighborhood unity could reinforce the sense of ethnic cohesion and pride by creating a specific, distinguishable place, that could in turn encourage home improvement in a process of mutual reinforcement.

### Visual Analysis of the Streetscape

**Streetscape:** a term describing the relationship between buildings and the spaces and forms between the buildings. This includes the buildings' massing, facade, composition, and materials—and land forms, and surface textures, trees, and other plant material, as they affect each other.

#### 1. Sense of Entry

One major improvement of the area would be the provision of sense-of-movement sequences through the neighborhood that would include anticipation of arrival, passage into the area, and appreciation of the significant landmarks of the area, and appreciation of the significant landmarks of the area. The need for entry experiences and transition areas into the Study Area is attested to by existing confusion over the boundaries of the area known as Strawberry Hill. These transition spaces would establish an introduction to the area. Such spaces might occur as distinctively designed portals at the neighborhood's edges.

#### 2. Views and Vistas

The vistas afforded to the observer from within the Study Area are of great excitement and variety. The vistas include the Kansas City, Mo. skyline/Kansas River (east), Kansas City, Kansas downtown (north), and Kansas City, Kansas Civic Center (west).

Of the various views terminated by major buildings within the district, all are pleasing and important to the character of the area. These include the view south on 5th Street, and the view south on 6th Street terminated by the Church of the Holy Family. Terminated views also exist between the intersection of Orchard/Hallock and the Church of the Holy Family.

#### 3. Street Enclosures and Incomplete Edges

In the Study Area, it was found that there are many incomplete edges. These conditions take two forms: discontinuity of enclosure (demolished or never improved building sites) and facades that are not compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood. These are particularly noticeable given the close-grained nature of much of the area.

The original layout of the neighborhood was based on a gridiron scheme which was broken by topography on the east and the path of a former street car line along Orchard/6th Street. The typical houses are closely spaced with minimal front yards. This has created a regular pattern along both sides of the street which has been retained, even when structures were replaced over the years. The fine character of the neighborhood arises from these streets enclosed by a tight rhythmic pattern of repetitive forms and roof lines of modest houses.

Some buildings have been removed because of parking needs or because of deterioration. This was recorded on a work sheet prepared by the consultants during the initial survey phase and shows the loss of twenty-five structures in the last ten years. These open spaces are visually disturbing. It is not the parking use that is the greatest problem; it is the lack of landscape development on the street side and within the unbroken open spaces of the lot that causes the visual disturbance. A similar problem is associated with the parking strip (areas between the sidewalk and street). Almost all of the streets are literally denuded of trees and



this bareness diminishes the sense of street enclosure that could be achieved with their presence.

#### 4. Patterns and Textures

A wide variety of textures and patterns has evolved over the last 100 years in both the structures and in landscape elements. Wood siding, stonework, and brick are the predominant materials of the houses. Stone retaining walls are a recurring landscape feature, as are small fences and hedges, all contributing to the sense of enclosure noted above.

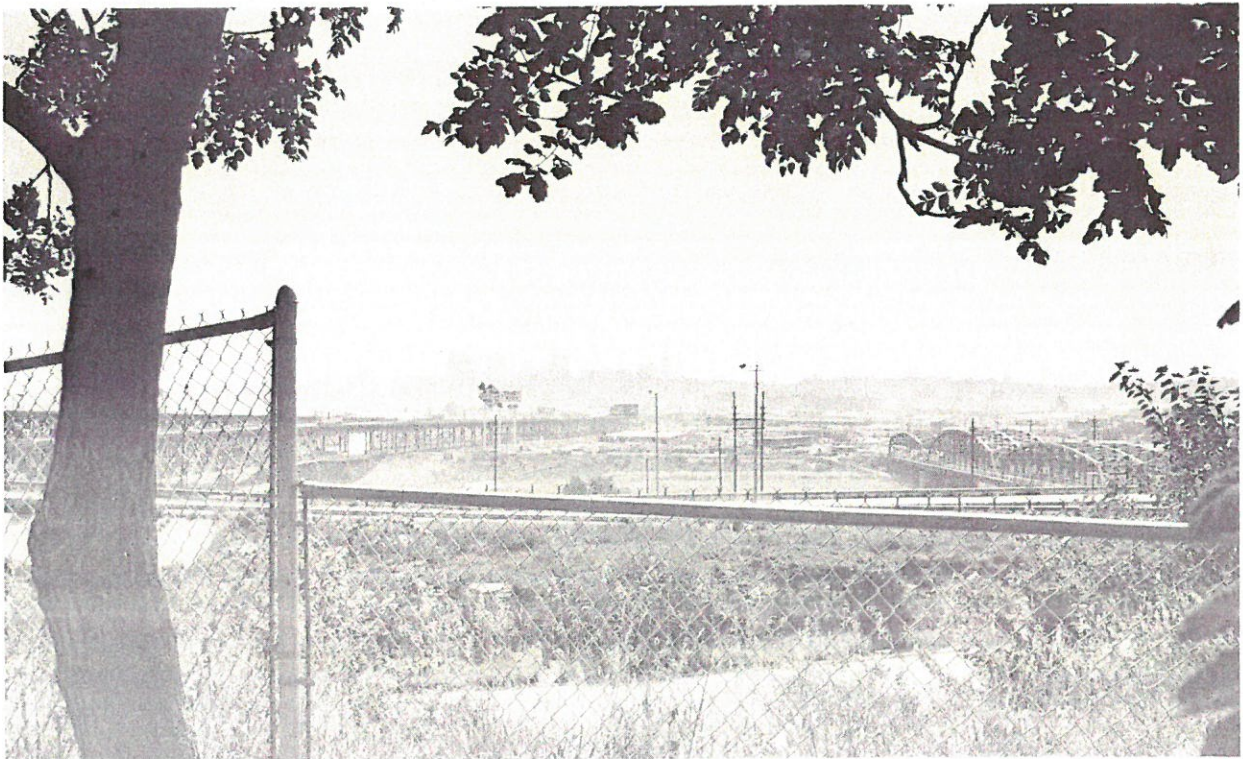
The extensive use of brick sidewalks is one of the strongest unifying landscape features of Strawberry Hill. These textural remains of the past are particularly important in the establishment of the physical character of the neighborhood.

#### 5. Maintenance

Good maintenance contributes greatly to the quality of the neighborhood. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Strawberry Hill is the amount of care that has been devoted to many of the homes and yards. At the same time, it should be recognized that the existing Study Area is quite uneven in this respect—many structures are badly in need of reroofing, painting, gutter repairs, etc. These problem structures are often the rental properties, but age and modest original construction will continue to make maintenance a concern throughout the area.

#### 6. Variety of Signs

Signs clutter the streets of the district. They are placed and supported in various ways and at varying heights, and use many different type-faces. Furthermore, many are in need of major repairs and are difficult to read. It is obvious that a coordinated direction and information system needs to be employed that clearly distinguishes this particular area and attractively serves as reference points throughout the neighborhood. This problem is not unique to Strawberry Hill, of course. It is relatively common in older urban areas across the country. But in this instance it has been compounded by the various jurisdictions, State, Federal, and local, that have some level of responsibility for 5th, 6th, and 7th Streets.



*The skyline as seen from Strawberry Hill.*

**RECOMMENDED BOUNDARY FOR PROPOSED STRAWBERRY HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The consultant's primary recommendation in this report is the determination of the boundary lines for the proposed Strawberry Hill Historic District. This boundary is graphically illustrated on map 5. It is contemplated that this district will be nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. With this neighborhood so listed, Strawberry Hill will be recognized as a resource which will be protected by specific federal safeguards in its future management.

Various factors were considered in the determination of the district boundary lines. The Study Area's physical site conditions and the relationship between existing physical components were the primary determinants.

The shape of the hill is the most powerful physical factor in the recommendation of a district boundary. This topography articulates the neighborhood's environment through a variety of spatial experiences including ascent and descent. From either walking or driving through the Study Area, a sense of bounds, relating to the hill's slopes and plateaus can be recognized. The hill's east side, which I-70 follows, is a dramatic cliff from one of its high points at 442 Barnett to the banks of the Kansas River. This area offers one of the most exciting metropolitan vistas of Kansas City, Mo., skyline and Kansas/Missouri Rivers. Where the hill begins its rise was also noted and the northern recommended boundary line of Armstrong and the southern line along Reynolds from 6th Street Trafficway to Orchard conform to these elevation changes. The other high point of the hill is located at 627 Sandusky. Intermittent plateaus and valleys occur between these high points, the largest plateau occurring around the Church of the Holy Family along 6th Street from Barnett to Northrup. This plateau along 6th Street is indicated on map 4 and is distinctive not only as the topographical core of the district but also as a potential commercial center.

The consistency of the appearance of structures was also considered and tested against the existing topographic configurations of the Study Area. A feeling of cohesiveness of neighborhood scale and streetscape was recorded. On the west edge of the Study Area, it was found that most blocks west of 7th Street Trafficway are superficially similar in scale and streetscape to the blocks east of it. The very real differences that do exist have been remarked on elsewhere. Seventh Street itself, with its width and its high traffic volume, serves as a distinct neighborhood barrier. The houses facing seventh tend to be both larger and somewhat newer than those to the east, but their exclusion would have been difficult to justify.

Unrelated institutions and land uses such as commercial strip developments have been excluded from the recommended district. It was also determined that some entities should be excluded from the proposed district because their uses vary significantly from the Study Area's predominant residential and neighborhood-commercial character. Those areas excluded should include the urban renewal area north of Armstrong, and the commercial strip along the southern portion of 7th Street Trafficway between Splitlog and Riverview, neither of which has any strong social or physical relationship to the areas they abut.

The exclusion of two other areas may be more open to question. The areas south of Riverview and east of 6th Street includes vacant property and uses related to the Central Avenue corridor, as well as houses continuing the pattern found to the north. Two factors determined the boundary as shown: the abrupt change in grade southeast of the intersection of 6th and Riverview, and the use of Riverview as the southern boundary of the Strawberry Hill Community Development Group.

The other questionable exclusion was the old City Hall and Fire Department Headquarters on 6th Street between Ann and Armstrong. While these structures are of historic and architectural significance to the city as a whole, they have no clear-cut relationship to the neighborhood and their ultimate disposition by the City is uncertain. Both of these cases would seem to warrant further study prior to the submission of a National Register nomination.

The recommended boundary line, determined by environmental factors, was found by the consultants to correspond closely to that area outlined most frequently by neighborhood respondents to the interview survey. In recommending this district boundary line, it is hoped that this definition of neighborhood will focus the residents' perception of their area's physical/historic qualities. If a neighborhood begins to perceive its importance in this manner, then implementation of improvements may grow from within.



## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations that would significantly improve and distinguish the physical character of the hill must encompass an organizational course of action. However, before anything occurs, immediate stabilization of the neighborhood is necessary. Specific measures should be taken to preserve and protect the area's architectural and historic resources. The values they evoke are scarce, and the ethics for the responsible conservation of these resources are already strongly present within the community. In these circumstances, the City's role in such matters as zoning and code enforcement can be crucial, but the key remains the actions and attitudes of the neighborhood.

### Entry and Identity

A strong factor in the preservation of Strawberry Hill remains the question of identity. The signs recently erected by the Community Development group have served to make people much more aware of the area. If greater control and coordination were established over the street signage on the hill, the marking signs should be taken into account as part of the overall system.

Attention should particularly be paid to the points of entry into the area on 5th and 6th Streets. A small billboard at the north end of 5th Street has been made available to the group, and has been painted in a manner similar to the small street signs. Although some might question the appropriateness, the sign is not unattractive and would seem to be an effective interim measure.

There would seem to be opportunities for entry markers at the south end of 5th Street and at the intersection of 6th and Barnett. The south entry on 6th Street presents the greatest problem, as it is in this area that the boundaries of the proposed district are hardest to define. One possibility would be at the intersection of 6th Street and 6th Street Auxilliary. Even better would be the small triangle at the intersection of 6th Street Auxilliary and 7th Street. This triangle is outside the boundaries previously defined and is private property, occupied by a long-abandoned gas station. Despite this, its physical location would seem to be ideal, and its development as a green area would be a positive step for both Strawberry Hill and for the Central Avenue corridor.

### Streetscape

A rich system of paving texture, materials, and street furniture would help to formulate a distinctive mood for the district. These objects and textures would assist in creating public places that are used by the residents in an extension of the social interaction that already exists. Various paving textures exist throughout the district and generally the sidewalks play a key role in the perception of Strawberry Hill.

In one view of neighborhood conservation, the spirit of the block is closely related to the condition of the area from the curb line back to the structure (in that order of importance). A poor curbing and sidewalk condition is often the first important symptom of a downward trend. Conversely, a restored system of curbs and sidewalks has a positive effect on private maintenance and rehabilitation. The sidewalk survey conducted as part of the Ethnographic Survey would seem to bear this out. If a process can be found to bring the deteriorated sidewalks and curbs up to the high standard that already exists throughout much of the area, a positive step in neighborhood identity and preservation will have been taken. The revitalization of the brick walkways will create a rich pedestrian experience and will serve as a strong physical definition of the proposed district boundary lines.

### Residential Rehabilitation

In regard to district structures that are not major landmarks, the level of preservation treatment should be basically corrective maintenance, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse efforts. Criteria for a coordinated home improvement effort need to be developed. These criteria might include recommendations for facade materials and colors, lighting, landscaping, etc. A mechanism should be established whereby individual property owners could obtain professional assistance for specific recommendations regarding their property. Such measures should not be coercive, but help should be available to those who request it.

In some cases, even the background structures would easily lend themselves to exterior





*Rehabilitation, 425 and 427 Ann Avenue.*

*Restoration, 519 Ann Avenue.*





restoration, at no greater cost than rehabilitation. This should be strongly encouraged. But in other cases the building may be relatively nondescript. Here a rehabilitation approach that takes into account the scale, character, and textures of the existing neighborhood can be highly successful. A prime example of this approach would be the houses at 425 and 427 Ann Avenue. This work was done by a local architect, Robert Sixta, and shows the potential inherent in even the most modest structures.

In addition to code enforcement, there are several actions the City could take to reinforce the residential character. One would be to change the residential zoning, if the neighborhood agrees, from "E" Apartment of "B" One Family. This would provide the residents a greater sense of security and put an end to the conversions that have been a principal source of residential deterioration. At the same time, the City should carefully scrutinize all future zoning cases and cases before the Board of Zoning Appeals.

This process does not mean displacement. Rather, it represents an opportunity for those young people who would prefer to remain on the hill but are now being pressured to move to apartments or the suburbs. This could be critically important in an area where such a high percentage of the residents are elderly.

### Commercial Development

The commercial area on 6th Street needs a concerted effort to break its present cycle of decline. One recommendation would be for the City to initiate procedures to remove the present light industrial zoning. Strict code enforcement could also be employed. In the area of self-help, a 6th Street Merchants Association could be formed to work with the Economic Development and Community Development departments of the City in an effort similar to that now occurring on Central Avenue. Membership in the Central Avenue Business Association is not recommended, as there would seem to be little in common between the two areas, and too much chance of a diluted effort.

The redevelopment of a 6th Street business district and the establishment of a Merchants Association could serve as the nucleus of the Strawberry Hill revitalization. This would provide not only a shopping/convenience center for the hill's residents, but could also, as a common-use area for all the residents, serve as the symbolic heart of the district.

The Strawberry Hill Community Development Group working together with a 6th Street Merchants Association could direct various area improvement projects and maintenance standards. They might also assist in controlling incompatible new construction, assuming supplemental tree maintenance, caring for common areas, and collecting trash. These efforts would increase property values while contributing to the beauty and distinctive quality of the area—and these programs would be an example of neighborhood planning participation in the truest sense.

### CONCLUSIONS

The very nature of the composition of the neighborhood as an infinite number of parts will require an evolving framework by which to aid the people of Strawberry Hill. This suggests the necessity of further and more refined study in specific design aspects and the development of an architectural master preservation plan, all in close cooperation with the neighborhood organizations.

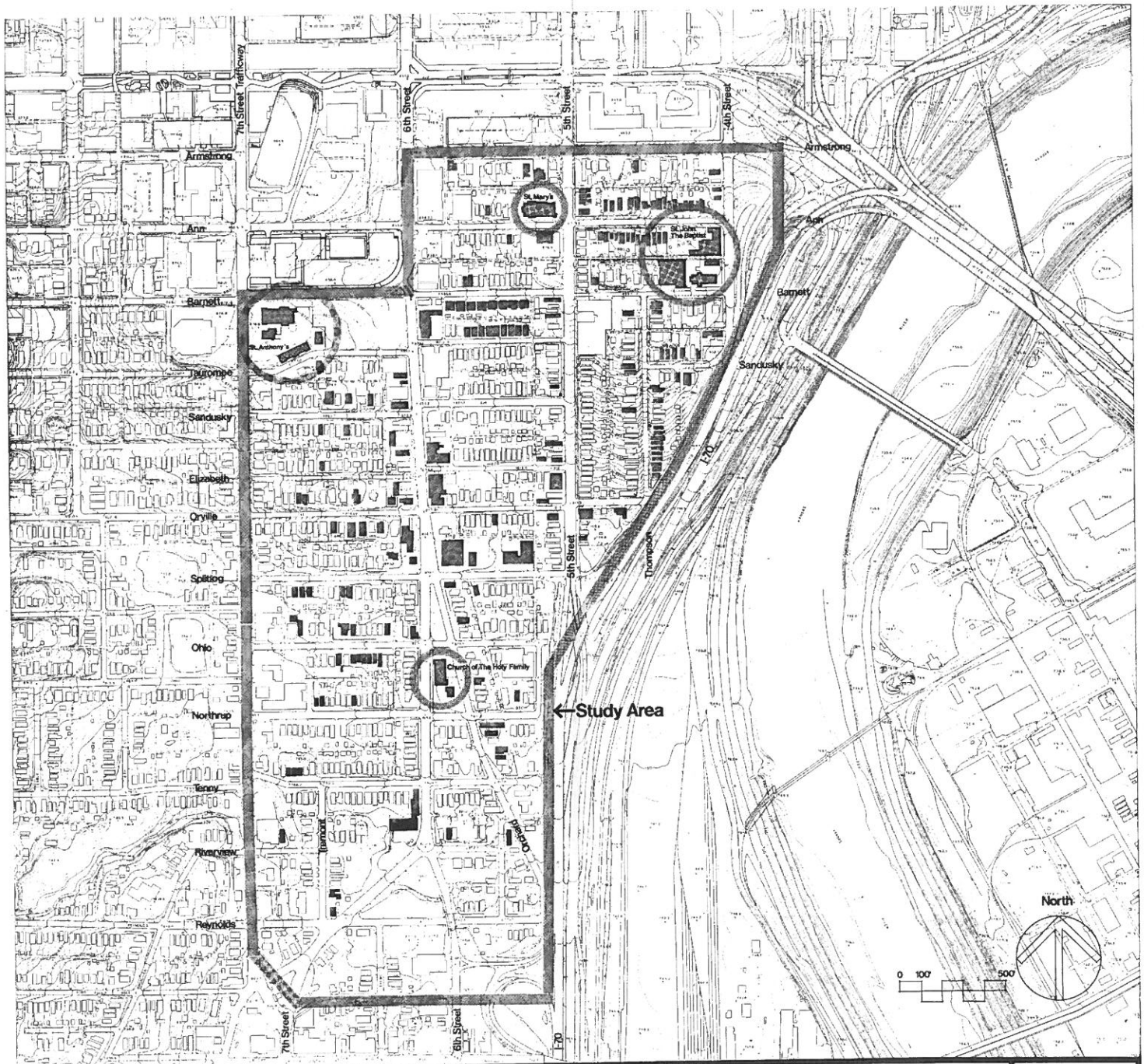
The processes of planning, of public and private agreement over projects and procedures, of funding, and of actual project work could develop over a period of years. However, a reiteration of public policies in support of historic preservation and neighborhood integrity certain capital improvements, adaption of preservation and rehabilitation methods, some remedial maintenance work, and some restoration and rehabilitation could take place in the immediate future.

The future of Strawberry Hill is admittedly uncertain. The next five to ten years will be critical in the determination of whether or not the area will survive as a viable and coherent neighborhood. The area could lose all that makes it distinctive to the pressures of commercial and industrial development and the indifference of absentee landlords. What happens is up to the people of Strawberry Hill. In view of the determination and perseverance they have shown in the past, that would seem to be a very real cause for hope.



**Maps**





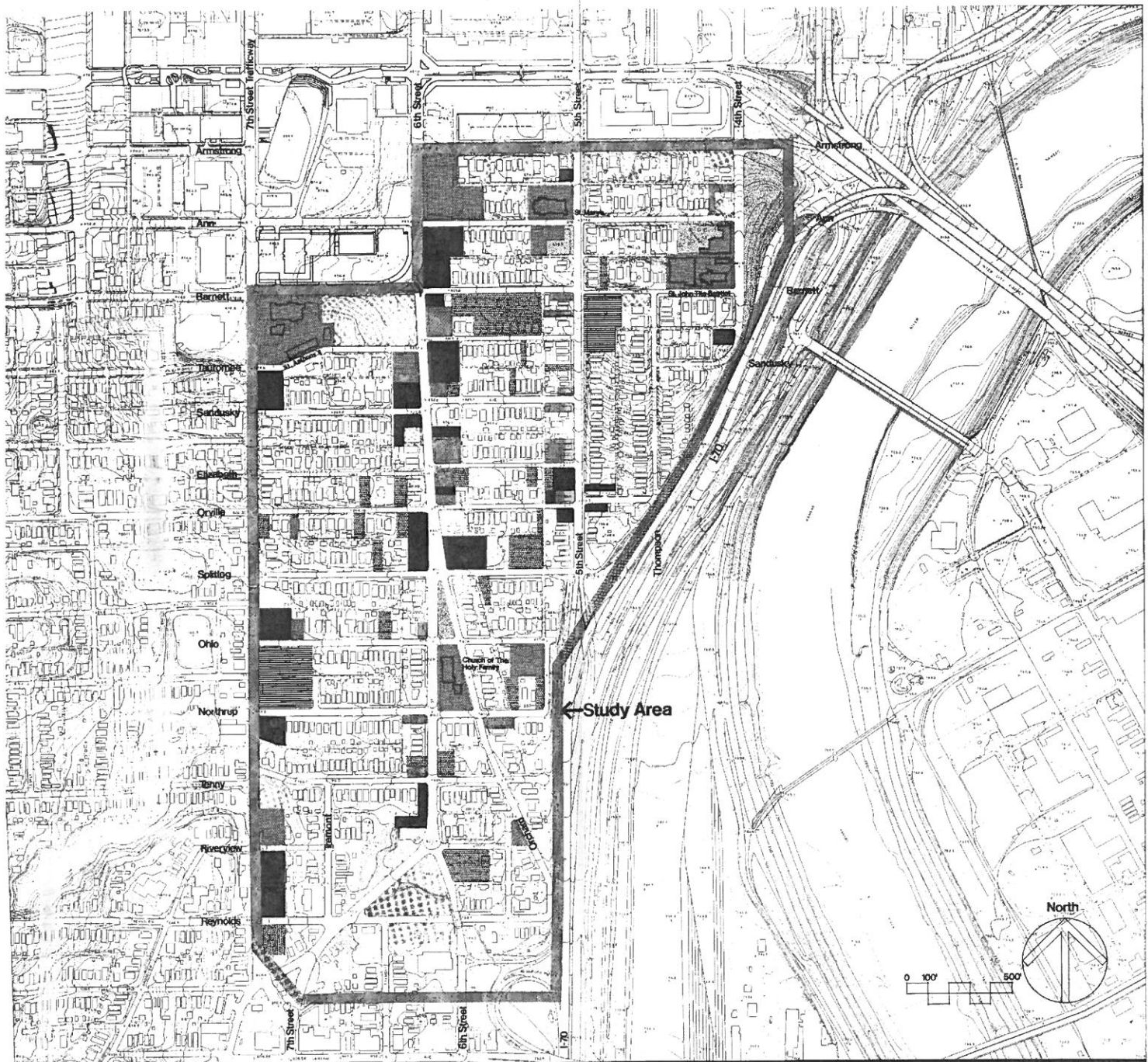
Strawberry Hill  
Environmental/Historic  
Survey Kansas City, Kansas

MA.Solomon/R.J.Claybaugh Architects Inc.

## Scope

Structures selected for survey  
investigation & photograph

Map 1  
5-15-78



Strawberry Hill  
Environmental/Historic  
Survey Kansas City, Kansas

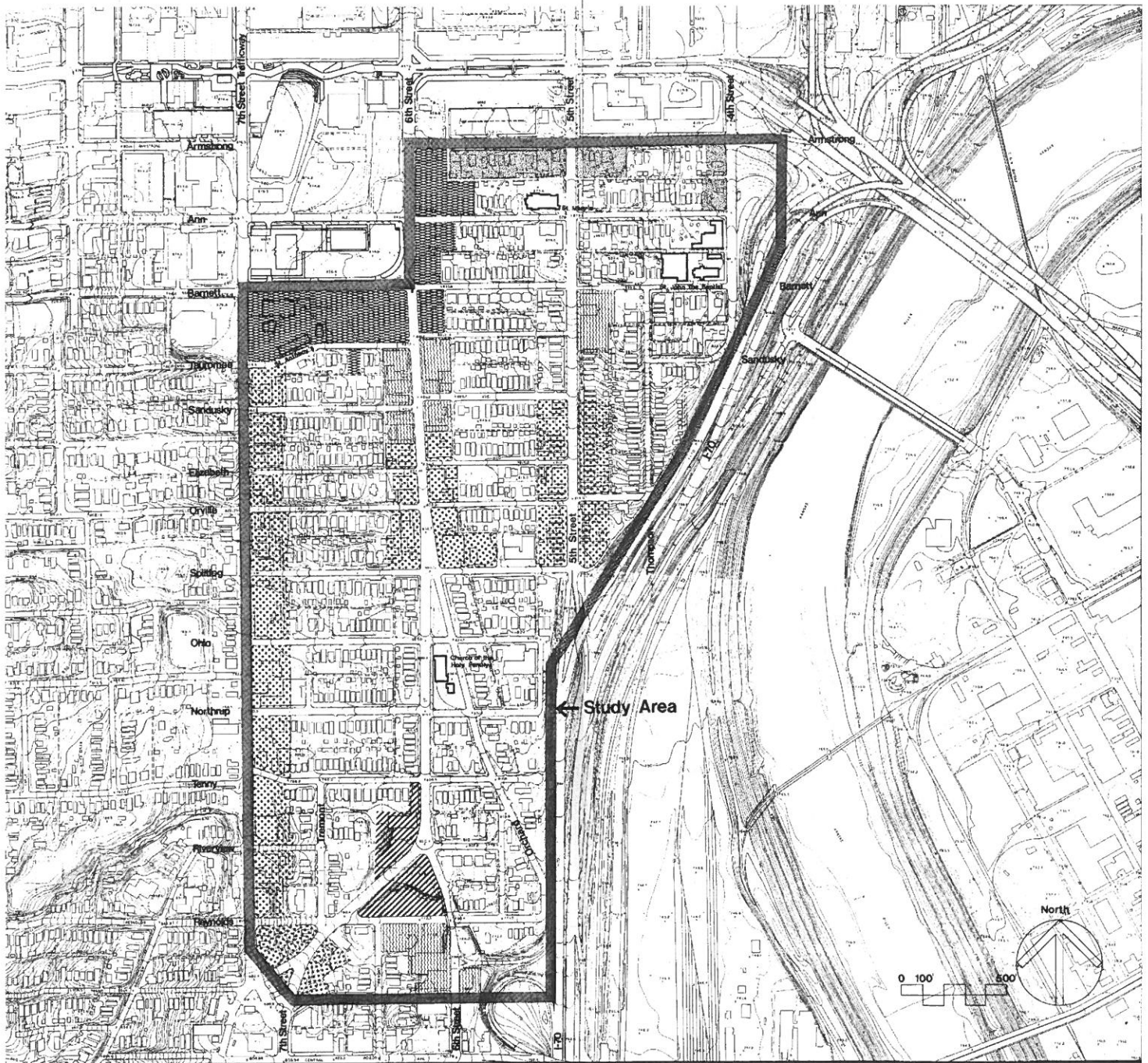
M.A.Solomon/R.J.Claybaugh Architects Inc.

## Land Use

Single-family residential	Commercial/Residential	Civic/Education/Religion	Industrial
Designed multi-family residential	Commercial	Vacant lots/Parking	Recreation

Map **2<sup>a</sup>**  
5-15-78





Strawberry Hill  
Environmental/Historical  
Survey Kansas City, Kansas

M.A. Solomon/R.J. Claybaugh Architects Inc.

## Existing Zoning

□ E-Apartment

▨ H-Business

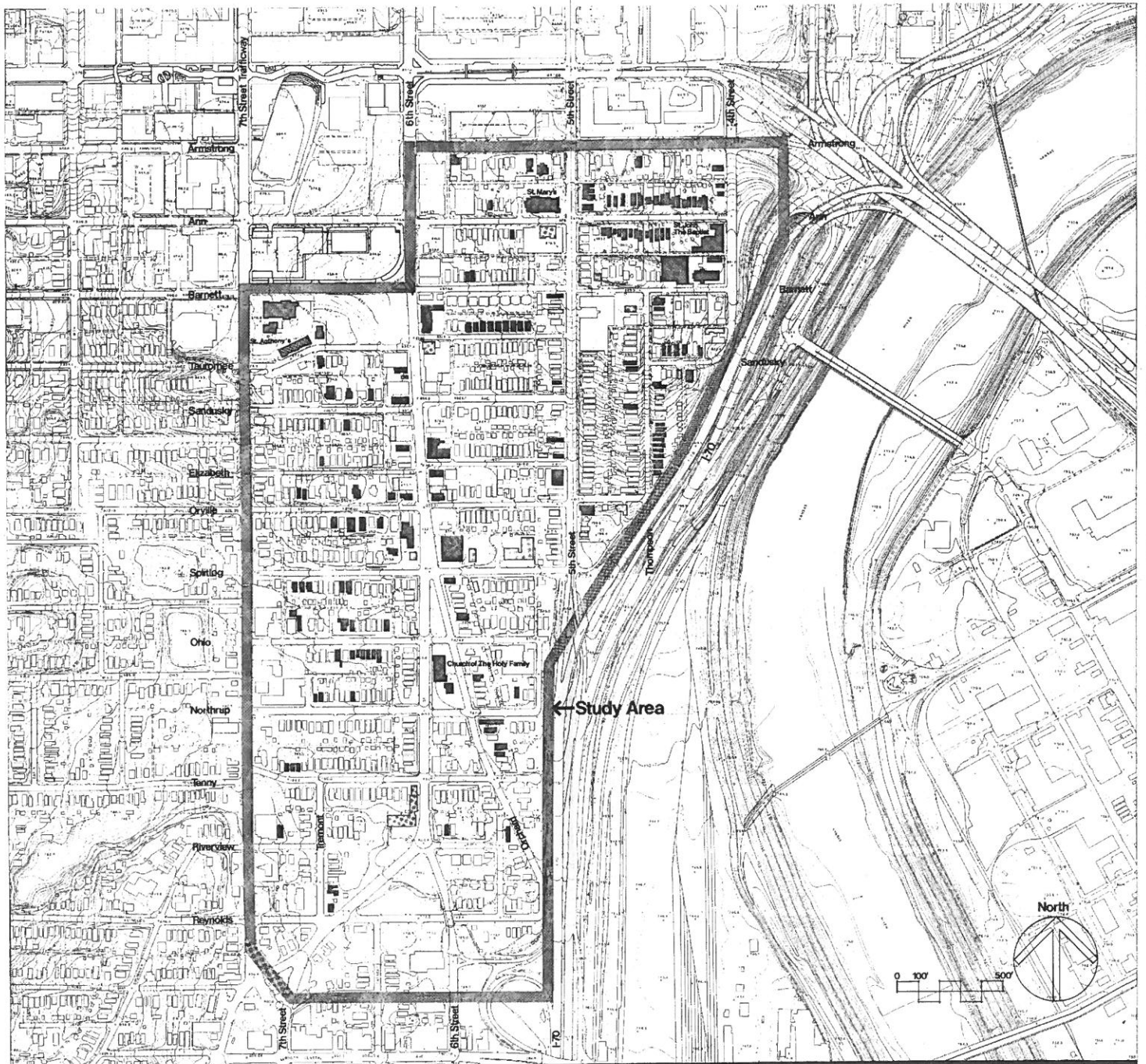
▩ H-a Governmental & Office

▨ F-Commercial

▩ G-Commercial

▩ I-Light Industrial

Map **2** b  
5-15-78



Strawberry Hill  
Environmental/Historic  
Survey Kansas City, Kansas

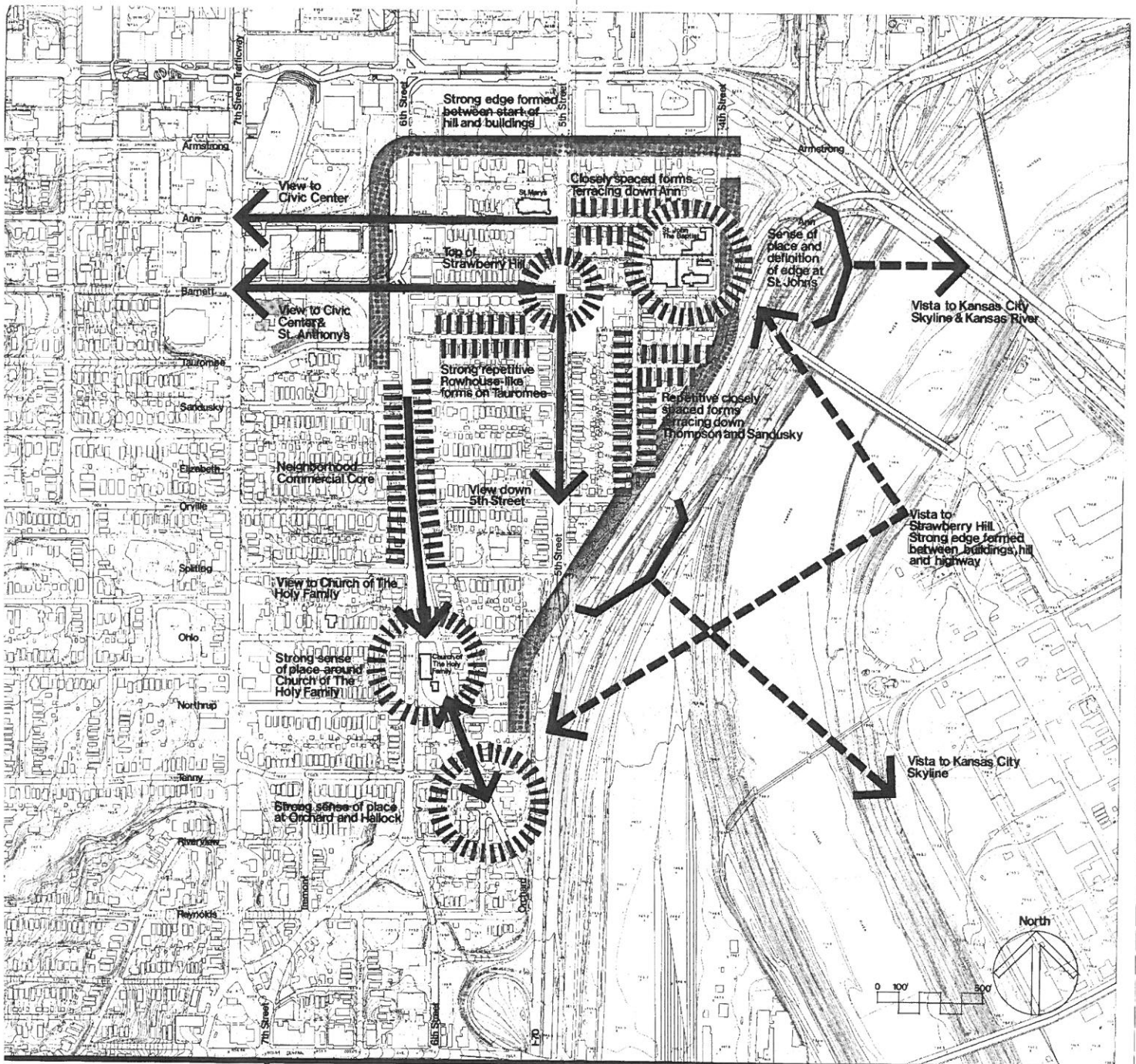
MA.Solomon/R.J.Claybaugh Architects Inc.

## Visual Analysis of Structures

■ Significant structures ■ Non-contributing structures □ Background structures

Map **3**  
5-15-78





Strawberry Hill  
Environmental/Historic  
Survey Kansas City, Kansas  
MA.Solomon/R.J.Claybaugh Architects Inc.

## Visual Analysis of Streetscape

Structures of interest

Map

5-15-78

4



Strawberry Hill  
Environmental/Historic  
Survey Kansas City, Kansas  
MA Solomon/R.J. Claybaugh Architects Inc.

## Boundary for Proposed Historic District

■ Significant structures    ▤ Non-contributing structures    □ Background structures

Map **5**  
5-15-78



# Appendix C

# Turnpike Relocates

## WYANDOTTE COUNTY



PREPARED BY: THE KANSAS CITY, KANSAS  
COUNTY ENGINEER  
OCTOBER, 1973

14 in northeast  
52 in Strawberry Hill  
113 not in Strawberry Hill

## Appendices



# Appendix A

## Boundary Responses

North	Minnesota	Armstrong	Ann	Barnett	No Response
# choices	22	38	5	2	26
% of totals	23.7	40.9	5.4	2.2	28.0

South	Central	Riverview	Tenny	Northrup	Ohio	Splitlog	Orville	Sandusky	No Response
# choices	25	5	11	3	5	8	6	3	27
% of total	26.9	5.4	11.8	3.2	5.4	8.6	6.5	3.2	29.0

East	Third	Fourth	Thompson St.	Fifth	No Response
# choices	24	37	1	3	28
% of total	25.8	39.8	1.1	3.2	30.1

West	Seventh	Sixth	Fifth	No Response
# choices	37	13	11	32
% of total	39.8	14.0	11.9	34.4

## Appendix B

### Landmarks

Description of Site	# respondents who selected	n=69 % of those who responded	n=93 % of sample
St. John's Church	49	71.0	52.7
St. Mary's Church	35	50.7	37.6
St. Anthony's Church	19	27.8	20.4
Holy Family Church	16	23.2	17.2
St. John's Home	13	18.8	14.0
old City Hall	12	17.4	12.9
Croatian-Sloven Home	10	14.5	10.8
Bruson's Market	8	11.6	8.6
St. John's School	5	7.2	5.4
vacant store on 5th St.	4	5.8	4.3
St. John's Convent	2		
Snow's Market	2		
old City Market	2		
Meyer Dairy Bldg.	2		
Darby Co.	1		
Gorup Bros. Furniture	1		
Grisnik's Meats	1		
Jennie's Restaurant	1		
McCoy Bros. Bldg.	1		
Skradski Funeral Home	1		
St. Anthony School	1		
St. John's Catholic Club	1		
St. John's Park	1		
St. Mary's rectory	1		
St. Mary's School	1		

(15 respondents listed one or more residential properties,  
but none was given by more than one person.)



Appendix D  
**Ethnographic Survey Questionnaire**

To begin with, I have some general questions about you and your neighborhood, and how you feel about the area where you live.

1. How long have you lived at your present address?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(years)

2. Have you lived in any other parts of Kansas City, Kansas?

Y      N

2a. (IF YES) Where was the **first** place you lived in Kansas City, Kansas?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. In what year were you born?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(year)

4. (FEMALE R's ONLY) Do you work outside of the home, either part time or full time?

Y      N

part time \_\_\_\_\_

full time \_\_\_\_\_ (CHECK APPROPRIATE)

4a. (IF YES) What kind of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you belong to any clubs or associations like lodges, church groups, social clubs, anything like that?

Y      N

5a. (IF YES) Which groups do you  
belong to?

5b. Are you an officer in  
any of these?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(name of club)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(office)

(WRITE DOWN VERBATIM RESPONSES TO THE NEXT 3 QUESTIONS. EACH TIME, PROBE ONCE BY SAYING "IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE".)

6. Do you remember some of the reasons you originally chose to move to this neighborhood?

7. What are some of the things that you like about living in this neighborhood?

8. What things do you **not** like about this neighborhood?

9. Do you have any plans for moving out of this neighborhood within the next year?

Y N

9a. (IF YES) Where do you plan to go? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you able to do any of your shopping in this neighborhood (that is, within walking distance?)

Y N

11. I am going to read a list of all of the churches in this general area. Would you mind telling me if you attend one of these? (READ LIST)

Y N

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of church)

One of the purposes of this study is to define the streets that enclose the area known as "Strawberry Hill".

12. Are you familiar with that name (Strawberry Hill)?

(IF NO, SKIP TO Q15. IF YES, SHOW MAP AND CONTINUE)

Y N

13. This is a map of the general area where you live. (POINT OUT R's ADDRESS AND DRAW A RED CIRCLE AROUND IT). If you don't mind, I would like you to look closely at the map and tell me which streets surround the area **you** consider to be "Strawberry Hill".

(ASSIST R WITH MAP. POINT OUT STREET NAMES, CITY HALL, THE FREEWAY, ETC. TAKE ONE DIRECTION AT A TIME. IF R CANNOT GIVE ALL 4, WRITE IN PARTIAL ANSWER. PROBE, BUT DO NOT PERSIST.)

NORTH \_\_\_\_\_

SOUTH \_\_\_\_\_

EAST \_\_\_\_\_

WEST \_\_\_\_\_

DK \_\_\_\_\_

CANNOT READ MAP \_\_\_\_\_



14. Another part of this study is going to be a report by architects about some of the older buildings in this area (same as map). Are there any buildings—that is stores, homes, churches, or public buildings—in the area that **you** feel are important for historical or cultural reasons?

Y      N

- 14a. (IF YES) What are they? (ALLOW R TO LOOK AT MAP, AND GIVE AS MANY OR AS FEW AS DESIRED).

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As you may already know, a large number of the people who originally settled in this part of the city came from other countries. In this study, we are trying to trace the "roots" of the neighborhood, that is where the residents came from and how strongly the people in the area identify with the various nationality groupings who came together here and contributed so much to the building of Kansas City, Kansas.

15. I am going to first read a list of different nationality groups that are common to Kansas City, Kansas. Would you mind telling me if you, yourself, identify your origins with one of these groups. (READ LIST)

15a. (IF YES) Which group? \_\_\_\_\_

- 15b. (IF NO) Is there a group that wasn't mentioned that you do identify with?      Y      N.  
(IF STILL NO, SKIP TO Q18. IF YES TO 15b, CONTINUE).

(Name of group) \_\_\_\_\_

16. Were you born in the United States?

Y      N

16a. (IF NO) Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_  
(TRY TO GET THE NAME OF A CITY, TOWN, OR VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRY OF BIRTH).

- 16b. (IF YES) Were both of your parents born in the United States?

father      Y      N      (IF NO) Where was he born? \_\_\_\_\_

mother      Y      N      (IF NO) Where was she born? \_\_\_\_\_

(TRY TO GET THE NAME OF A CITY, TOWN, OR VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRY (IES) OF BIRTH).

17. Were (are) both of your parents \_\_\_\_\_ (name of R's ethnic group) \_\_\_\_\_?

Y N

Father (IF NO) What group? \_\_\_\_\_

Mother (IF NO) What group? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Are you married?

(NOTE IF WIDOWED, SEPARATED, OR DIVORCED. IF NEVER MARRIED, SKIP TO Q21).

19. Does (did) your husband (wife) identify his/her origins with one of the nationality groupings I read to you from the card earlier? (RE-READ CARD IF NECESSARY)

Y N

19a. (IF YES) Which one? \_\_\_\_\_

19b. (IF NO) Is there a group that wasn't mentioned that he (she) does (did) identify with?

Y N (Name of group) \_\_\_\_\_

20. Was your husband (wife) born in the United States?

Y N

(IF NO) Where was he (she) born? \_\_\_\_\_

(TRY TO GET THE NAME OF THE CITY, TOWN, OR VILLAGE IN THE COUNTRY OF BIRTH).

21. While you were growing up, what language or **languages** were spoken in your home?

21a. (IF OTHER THAN ENGLISH WAS SPOKEN) Do you **now** know how to speak \_\_\_\_\_ (name of language) \_\_\_\_\_?

Y N

(IF R WAS **COMPLETELY** UNABLE TO READ MAP IN PREVIOUS QUESTIONS USING THE MAPS, TERMINATE THE INTERVIEW AT THIS POINT. READ CLOSING STATEMENT ON LAST PAGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE.)

Some experts say that people in cities do not usually know the other people in their neighborhoods. Others say that this is not the case, and that people who live close together are as likely to know one another as people who work together, for example. The purpose of the last set of questions I have for you is to find out which of these ideas is most correct for your neighborhood.

(IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, AT THIS POINT CIRCLE R's ADDRESS IN RED ON THE MAP).

Here is the map that you were looking at before. It shows all of the addresses on all of the streets within the area. You will see a red circle around your address (INDICATE CIRCLED ADDRESS). I would like you to first look at the map for a few moments to picture in your mind where all of the streets, stores, churches, and other things you are familiar with are located.

While you are still looking at the map, I would like you to think about all of the people that you, or the other adults in your family, know who live within this area. They do not only have to be your friends, but also the other neighbors that you are acquainted with. (PAUSE FOR A FEW MOMENTS).

Now, I would like you to draw circles around the addresses of all of these people. Do you have any questions?



(ASSIST CAREFULLY WITH THIS PART. INTERPRET THE MAP IF R HAS DIFFICULTY. PROBE BY ASKING ABOUT INDIVIDUAL STREETS. IF R IS UNSURE ABOUT AN ADDRESS, GET A NAME AND A STREET, IF POSSIBLE. ONCE ALL OF THE CIRCLES HAVE BEEN DRAWN, TAKE THE MAP FROM R AND NUMBER EACH CIRCLED ADDRESS. AFTER YOU HAVE DONE THIS, RETURN THE MAP TO R.)

22. Are any of the people, whose addresses you have circled, your relatives?

Y N

22a. (IF YES) Which ones? (numbers)

# \_\_\_\_\_ relationship \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ relationship \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ relationship \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ relationship \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ relationship \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ relationship \_\_\_\_\_

23. Did you know any of the other families, whose addresses you have circled, before you or **they** moved into the neighborhood?

Y N

23a. (IF YES) Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Do you go to the same **church** as any of the families whose addresses you have circled?

Y N

24a. (IF YES) Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

25. (IF R BELONGS TO ANY CLUBS) Do any of the people whose addresses you have circled belong to the same **clubs** that you do?

Y N

25a. (IF YES) Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

26. Do you, or any of the adults in your family, **work** at the same place as any of the people whose addresses you have circled?

Y N

26a. (IF YES) Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

27. Which, if any, of the people whose addresses you have circled do you consider to be your close friends?

27a. (IF ANY) \_\_\_\_\_

28. In what parts of the metropolitan area (i.e. KCK, KCMO, Johnson County) do your other friends live?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (FOR ANY AREAS MENTIONED **WITHIN** KCK,  
TRY TO GET A LOCATION THAT CORRESPONDS  
WITH THE DIVISIONS OF THE KCK MAP)

29. In what parts of the metropolitan area, if any, do your (other) relatives live?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(FOR ANY AREAS MENTIONED **WITHIN** KCK,  
TRY TO GET A LOCATION THAT CORRESPONDS  
WITH THE DIVISIONS OF THE KCK MAP)

That was the last question I have for you. I want to thank you for your help and your time, and to assure you once again that your answers to this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential. We expect that a report on this study will be ready some time next summer. Would you like us to send you a copy of that report?

Y      N



No.

Address				
Building Type				
Photo Identification	Roll No.	Frame	View	
	Roll No.	Frame	View	
Constructed				
Building's Condition: Good Fair Poor				
Architectural				
Stories	Style			
Alterations:	None	Moderate	Considerable	
Comments				
Visual Analysis				
Individually:	Contributor	Background	Non-Contributor	
Group:	Contributor	Background	Non-Contributor	
Surveyor				Date

## PRELIMINARY SURVEY FORM—Form I

STRAWBERRY HILL ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORIC SURVEY for the  
DEPARTMENT of COMMUNITY PLANNING, KANSAS CITY, KANSAS by  
M. A. SOLOMON/R. J. CLAYBAUGH, ARCHITECTS, INC.

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