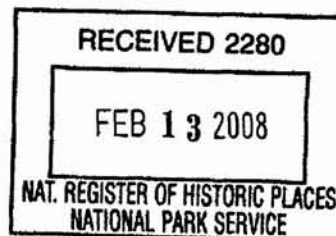


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Clayton Park Addition

other names/site number: Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)

2. Location

street & number: 7901-8027 Bennett Avenue and 1221-1282 Laclede Station Road not for publication n/a

city or town: Richmond Heights vicinity n/a

state: Missouri code: MO county: Saint Louis code: 189 zip code: 63117

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles
Signature of certifying official Mark A. Miles/ Deputy SHPO

FEBRUARY 07, 2008
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register _____

 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register _____

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register _____

 removed from the National Register _____

 other (explain): _____

Patricia Andrews
Signature of Keeper

3/20/2008
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)
resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- object

Number of Resources within

(do not include previously listed

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>29</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>29</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
listed

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously

in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: domestic Sub: single dwellings

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: domestic Sub: single dwellings

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: ranch

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: stone
concrete

walls: brick
stone

roof: asphalt

other: _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage / Black

Period of Significance

1945-1968

Significant Dates

1945

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

(Complete if Criterion D is marked above)

n/a

Architect/Builder

McMahon, Robert (architect)

Alper, N.W. and Son (builder)

Wischmeyer, Kenneth E. (architect)

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 11.36 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	<u>732180</u>	<u>4279100</u>	2	15	<u>731900 4278800</u>
3	15	<u>731800</u>	<u>4278720</u>	4	15	<u>731950 4278910</u>

 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

 X See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ruth Keenoy, Historic Preservation Consultant & Joellen Gamp McDonald, Director, Richmond Heights Historical Society

organization: Richmond Heights Historical Society date: December 14, 2007

street & number: 1203 Claytonia Terrace telephone: 314-645-3922

city or town: Richmond Heights state: MO zip code: 63117

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name multiple

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
Saint Louis County, Missouri

Narrative Description

Clayton Park Addition, commonly known as the Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred), is located in Richmond Heights, St. Louis County, Missouri. Richmond Heights is situated approximately six miles west of the St. Louis (Independent) City limits. The district is bounded at the north by Wise Avenue, at the northwest by properties along South Street, at the west by Hampton Park Drive, at the south by Interstate 64/Highway 40, and at the east by properties bordering Arch Terrace. The topography of the district is undulating with few instances of steep inclines in relation to changes that occurred to the neighborhood when Interstate 64 was introduced to the setting in the 1950s-60s. The area surrounding the district illustrates a typical ranch/suburban mid-twentieth century neighborhood with curvilinear drives and streets with low curbing. The dwellings are Ranch style or variations thereof, with heights of one and one-and-a-half stories. Dwellings have brick and stone exterior walls, gabled and hipped rooflines, and (most) have attached garage wings. The homes within the district were constructed from 1945 through 1968. The district includes 30 dwellings, one of which (1248 Laclede Station Road) is non-contributing due to its construction date of 1989. Individual landscapes surrounding the houses are distinctively open, without sidewalks or rigid fencing, which strongly contrasts typical city residential lots within older sections of Richmond Heights. The dates of construction provided for the properties are based on building permits, interviews, and city directory research.

7901 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

7901 Bennett Avenue was designed by architect Kenneth E. Wischmeyer and constructed by Scholenburg Construction Company in 1953. The property is a one-story Ranch style dwelling. The dwelling's original owners were Dr. William and Blanch Sinkler. 7901 Bennett Avenue has a low-pitched gabled roof clad with asphalt shingles, exterior brick walls, and a continuous stone foundation. The primary entry is recessed and positioned off-center at the façade, which faces southeast. Limestone flanks the primary entry bay. The primary single door entry is offset by a full-length façade window, also set within the recessed bay. Paired and single windows of one-over-one aluminum sash design also flank the façade entry bay. Remaining windows at all elevations are similar in design and configuration. The rear section of the dwelling extends to form two stories, as the house is constructed within a small hill. This feature is visible at the rear (northwest) and side (northeast) elevations. The northeast elevation displays a series of windows in sets of four at upper and lower levels. A secondary entry faces northeast at the east end of the dwelling. At the roofline level is an interior chimney near the east end of the house. The roofline has paired gables flanking the chimney at the east/west. The southwest elevation holds a lower level garage bay. A rear entrance faces northwest at the rear elevation.

7911 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

7911 Bennett Avenue was designed by architect Robert G. McMahon and constructed by

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
Saint Louis County, Missouri

Nathan Alper and Son in 1956. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style house. Current owner, Georgia Rusan, and her (now deceased) husband, Dr. Thomas Rusan moved into the home following its completion. The dwelling features a low-pitched gabled roof clad with asphalt shingles. The exterior walls are brick. The house has a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (southeast) façade bears a projecting central cross-gabled bay that surrounds the recessed entry. The entry is situated at the west end of this gabled bay and holds paired doors with diamond-shaped lights. Offsetting the entry are continuous windows of small one-over-one aluminum sash design. The gable field of the entry bay has vertical board siding. West of the entry bay are four larger windows of single and two-panel design. East of the bay are individual smaller windows of one-over-one aluminum sash design. Remaining windows at all elevations are of similar configuration/design. At the roofline ridge is an interior central brick chimney. The rear section of the dwelling extends to form a hipped roofline. The rear ell has exterior synthetic siding and a continuous band of windows (one-over-one design) at all elevations. These windows create a rear screened porch. A large garage bay is noted at the southwest (side) elevation.

7915 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

7915 Bennett Avenue is a one-story Ranch style dwelling designed by Robert G. McMahon. The house was constructed ca. 1957 by Nathan Alper and Son. The home's original owners were Dr. Benjamin F. and Ann R. Davis. The dwelling's exterior façade appears to curve slightly, creating an almost semi-circular plan. The dwelling has a low-pitched gabled roof clad with asphalt shingles, exterior brick, and a continuous limestone foundation. The primary (southeast) façade holds four bays divided by projecting limestone pilasters that unite to form a porch across much of the facade. The central bay holds the primary entry, which is flanked by two-over-two horizontal sash and picture style windows. Windows at the end façade bays are smaller and are one-over-one and two-over-two horizontal sash design. The roof above the side elevations (northeast/northwest) projects to form a hip. Above the hipped sections of the roofline are louvered end-gable vents. The dwelling has a garage bay at the northeast (side) elevation.

7917 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

7917 Bennett Avenue is a one and a half-story, split-level Ranch style dwelling. The dwelling was constructed circa 1962 by Charles E. Kirksey and designed by architect Frank McGuire. Original owners were William E. and Blanche Lee. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick and board-and-batten siding, and a continuous concrete block foundation. The primary (southeast) façade has an obscured entry adjacent to the one-and-a-half story central section of the dwelling. The central projecting bay has exterior board-and-batten siding (upper level) and brick (lower level). Windows are patterned in sets of three single-light panels. The primary entry flanks the central wing at the east and features paired three-panel original doors. Also flanking the entry to the east is a large brick interior/exterior chimney. The chimney stack divides the entry at a one-story hipped wing (east end) that has a continuous two-light large window bay extending along the façade

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
Saint Louis County, Missouri

and northeast (side) elevation. A similar wing at the west end of the house (west of the central one-and-a-half story wing) has a continuous band of smaller windows at the upper level. These also extend along the façade. The southwest elevation holds an overhead track garage door.

7920 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

7920 Bennett Avenue was designed by architect Edward B. Kelley and constructed by Oliver Littage in 1958. Original owners were Harold G. and Lillyan Russell. The house was originally numbered as 1290 Karbe Avenue. Following the completion of Interstate 64 in the early 1960s, the house was re-identified as 7920 Bennett Avenue. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style house with a low-pitched gabled/hipped roof clad with asphalt shingles. The dwelling, which faces west, has exterior brick and a continuous concrete block foundation. The primary entry is flush at the façade, located off-center, and holds a single door that is offset by a large single panel window. This window mirrors the size and shape of the door. A brick pilaster flanks the entry to the south; and a large eight-panel window offsets the entry/window to the north. Remaining windows are picture style and two-over-two horizontal sash design. At the north elevation is a garage bay with a multi-panel door. Gable vents are situated at the north/south elevations and rise above the hip of the roofline.

7924 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

The dwelling located at 7924 Bennett Avenue was constructed by Oliver Littage circa 1960. The house was originally numbered as 1294 Karbe Avenue. Following the completion of Interstate 64 in the early 1960s, the house was re-identified as 7924 Bennett Avenue. Original owners were Dr. Edward B. and Jacqueline Williams. The dwelling is a one-and-a-half story Ranch style house with a low-pitched gabled roof clad with asphalt shingles. The dwelling has exterior brick and board-and-batten siding. The foundation is constructed of plain pre-cast panels. The primary (west) façade has a projecting one-story wing with an overhead garage door near the north end of the house. A flanking porch holds an integral shed bay that holds the primary entry. The primary entry retains paired doors of multi-panel design. The south end of the porch features an open "weave" brick pattern supported at the end by a cut limestone pillar. Slender columns supporting the porch roof rest on a low cut-limestone balustrade. The bay above the primary entry has exterior board-and-batten siding and small windows of two-by-two sliding light design. Windows at the upper half-story level of the façade have canvas awnings.

7925 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

7925 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1965. The dwelling's original owner was Sylvester Burk. The property is a one-story Ranch style dwelling with a low-pitched asphalt shingled gabled roof, exterior brick and synthetic siding, replacement windows, and a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (northwest) façade has a projecting gabled porch with exposed rafter supports that rest on large brick pillars. The brick pillars supporting the porch divide the entry bay in half. The north end of this bay holds the primary entry, which retains a single-light door and

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
Saint Louis County, Missouri

sidelights. The south half of the bay has two single panel design windows. Synthetic siding surrounds the entry and adjacent windows. The entry bay is flanked by three two-light (large) windows to the north and a single two-panel large window to the south. At either end of the façade are synthetic panels. Set within each of these panels are sets of single-pane design windows. The windows at the north end hold two sets of three windows; whereas the windows at the south end consist of a continuous band of six windows. The foundation is above-ground at the north end of the dwelling and retains two-light original windows near the base of the house.

8000 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

The dwelling at 8000 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1956 by L.P. Roth, who also designed the home. The dwelling's original owner was Dr. Scott R. Barrett. The property is a one-story Ranch style home with a hipped asphalt-shingled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous plain pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (northwest) façade has a central entry with a three-panel original door that is offset by a decorative concrete panel. The entry is offset to the west by a slightly projecting window bay of two-light sliding design. Two additional windows of similar design are located at the west end of the façade. East of the entry is a large picture style window. The northeast elevation holds an above-ground garage door at the basement level. Above this door are two windows. The window at the northeast end of the elevation is a small two-over-two horizontal light opening. The window at the northwest end of the elevation is a large 12-light panel design. The southwest elevation features two small windows of two-over-two design. A rear hipped wing features patio windows and a door that leads to a built-in swimming pool/patio.

8003 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

8003 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1959 by Nathan W. Alper and Son. The property's original owners were William D. and Gussie Fultz. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style house with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (southeast) façade holds an off-center entry with paired original doors. The façade has three sections/bays. The primary entry is situated within the central bay. A narrow porch extends above the entry bay and is supported by two wrought iron columns. At the roofline ridge is an interior brick chimney. The entry is flanked at the south by paired double-hung horizontal sash windows and at the north by three large two-panel lights. Further south at the façade is a set of two large two-light panels. The northeast elevation has a garage bay with an overhead track door. The southwest elevation has two sets of small paired double-hung windows. The foundation is raised at the southwest and southeast elevations.

8008 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

8008 Bennett Avenue was constructed in 1963 by Nathan W. Alper and Son for Dr. and Mrs. Luther A. Forest, Jr. The dwelling is a Ranch influenced style dwelling with a steeply pitched hipped roof clad with asphalt shingles. The exterior is clad with brick, and the foundation is poured

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
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concrete. The dwelling bears Colonial Revival details that include a steeply pitched roof, a louvered cupola at the east end of the house, and multi-light windows. The dwelling has three "sections." The central section of the house holds a recessed entry bay with paired doors. These doors are paneled with lights featuring diamond shaped tracery. Flanking the entry (which faces north) are large multi-light bay windows. The central section of the house is flanked by hipped projecting wings, each of which has arched double-hung windows of multi-light design. The east elevation holds a secondary entry and a double-hung window.

8011 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

The dwelling at 8011 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1959 by Keystone Industries, Inc. The property's original owners were William M. and Evelyn Tandy. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style house with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (southeast) façade holds an off-center recessed entry with a paneled door offset by a multi-light sidelight. The entry is within a shallow porch supported by a single wrought iron column. Flanking the entry to the southeast is a projecting bay with lower level cut-limestone. Above the limestone water table are a single-panel picture style window and a six-light large jalousie window. Visible at the roofline level is an interior end brick chimney. The southwest elevation holds a small single window of one-over-one design. The foundation is raised at the side (southwest) and rear (northwest) elevations. A lower level garage bay is situated at the northwest elevation.

8012 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

8012 Bennett Avenue is a one-story Ranch style dwelling constructed in 1959 by Nathan W. Alper and Son. The house was designed by architect Robert C. McMahon for Patrobas C. and Kathryn Crawford Robinson. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (northwest) façade holds an off-center entry that retains original paneled paired doors. A shallow porch extends above the entry bay and is offset by a low limestone balustrade. Two wrought iron columns support the porch, one of which rests on the limestone balustrade. Above the balustrade is a large picture style window. Flanking the entry at the opposite (southwest) side are paired windows of four-over-four design. Two additional sets of paired windows are also located at the façade at either end. A large projecting limestone chimney divides the larger (southwest) section of the house from the northeast section. The northeast elevation holds a picture style window and an overhead track garage bay. The southwest elevation has two small picture-style windows and one double-hung window.

8015 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

The dwelling at 8015 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1960 by F. Korsek. The home was designed by Ferdinand H. Peipers. The property's original owners were Mr. and Mrs. Tyler B. Reddick. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style house with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (southeast) façade has an off-

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
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center recessed entry bay flanked by projecting brick pilasters. The entry has paired doors. Flanking the entry are a band of four-light windows (west) and a single window of two-light sliding design (east). Remaining windows are of similar configuration (two-light sliding design). Visible at the roofline is an interior brick flue.

8020 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

8020 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1966 by John Waterhout. The property's original owners were Edmond and Thelma Willis. The dwelling is a one-and-a-half story split-level Ranch style home with an asphalt-shingled flat gabled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (northwest) façade has a full-width shed porch at the one-story level wing. Within the porch is an off-center original entry that holds a paneled door offset by a single-light glass panel. Adjacent to the entry are paired windows of 12-over-12 light design. The one-and-a-half story cross-gabled wing is attached to the one-story wing at the northeast end. The façade of this wing has upper and lower level windows of eight-over-eight double-hung design. The gable field of the one-and-a-half story wing has a louvered vent. At the roofline ridge of the one-story wing is an interior brick chimney. The southwest elevation holds two garage bays at the basement level. There is no fenestration above the garage doors. The northeast elevation has two lower level windows of double-hung design.

8021 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

8021 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1965 by Nathan W. Alper and Son. The house was designed by architect Frank McGuire for Garland F. and Mary Whorton. The dwelling is a one-Ranch influenced dwelling with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (southeast) façade has a central projecting bay. This bay holds a central recessed entry with paired paneled doors. The entry bay is flanked by four large single-light window panels with diamond shaped tracery (west) and paired windows of one-over-one double-hung design (east). Extending wings at the east/west ends of the central projecting bay hold single windows of one-over-one design at the façade. The northwest elevation has a sub-level garage bay. A projecting brick wall with a pillar supporting an exterior light is attached at the northwest corner of the house. A similar projecting wall extends at the southeast corner of the house but does not hold a lighting fixture. The northeast elevation has two double-hung windows. Primary elevations of each bay have brick quoins.

8027 Bennett Avenue (Contributing):

The dwelling at 8027 Bennett Avenue was constructed circa 1960 by Nathan W. Alper and Son. The property's original owner was Ruges R. Freeman, Jr. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style home with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (southeast) façade has a central recessed entry bay. The entry is off-center within the bay and holds paired paneled doors. The doors are offset by paired windows of multi-

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
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light, double-hung design. Flanking the paired windows is a small sliding window. Projecting bays flank the entry bay. These projecting bays hold a band of single-light windows (west) and a solid brick wall (east). The band of single-light windows has a projecting brick pilaster at the west end. At southwest and southeast corners of the façade are bands of double-hung horizontal sash windows. These windows extend to the side elevations. In front of each corner window band is a projecting low brick knee-wall. The northeast elevation has a raised foundation. Also at the northeast end of the house is an interior/exterior end brick chimney stack. The rear northeast corner holds a band of screened windows extending from the northeast elevation to the rear (northwest) elevation.

1221 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

A building permit for 1221 Laclede Station Road, a one-story Ranch style dwelling, was issued in 1960. The property's original owners were Richard A. and Jane Hudlin. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (east) façade holds an off-center projecting hipped wing and corner recessed entry. The projecting hipped bay creates a porch above the entry that is supported by a single square column. The façade of the projecting wing has a set of three one-over-one windows. Flanking the entry toward the west is a panel of three large two-pane lights. At either end of the façade are paired lights of one-over-one design. The roofline ridge of the primary wing holds an interior central brick chimney. The south elevation has two small picture windows and two single windows of glass block design. Above hipped portions of the roof (near the side elevations) are raised gable louvered vents. At the northwest corner of the house is a garage wing/bay. The rear (west) elevation has an upper level band of continuous windows. Across the length of the windows is a decorative wrought iron balustrade. The upper level extends above the lower (recessed) level at the rear elevation.

The house lot retains a former grass tennis court partially surrounded by a retaining concrete wall. This feature is situated within the southwest quadrant of the Bennett Avenue/Laclede Station Road intersection.

1227 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1227 Laclede Station Road was constructed circa 1952. The Ranch style home was designed by Robert G. McMahon and constructed by Nathan Alper and Son. The property's original owner was Dr. John F. Benson. The one-story dwelling has an asphalt-shingled gabled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (east) façade holds a central recessed entry with a paneled door that is offset by a picture style window. A projecting cross-gabled bay at the south end of the façade holds paired windows of one-over-one aluminum sash design. The south elevation has two sets of paired windows and one single window, all of which are one-over-one design. At the north elevation is an interior end brick chimney.

1228 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

Architect Edward B. Kelly designed 1228 Laclede Station Road. The dwelling was

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Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred)
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constructed circa 1950. The property is a one-and-a-half story Bungalow-influenced dwelling. The home's original owner was Albert K. Smith. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled gabled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete block foundation. The primary (west) façade has a full-width integral porch supported by four square wood columns. Within the porch bay, the entry is centrally situated and flanked by a four-panel window bay and paired double-hung windows. Above the porch bay is a half-story projecting shed dormer with a projecting bay window that was added ca. 2000. The north elevation has an exterior end chimney and an attached one-story garage wing. The garage entry faces west toward Laclede Station Road. The south elevation has two single windows of one-over-one design and one glass block light. Gable fields hold one-over-one windows and louvered vents.

1230 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

A building permit for 1230 Laclede Station Road, a one-story Ranch style dwelling, was issued in 1950. The property's original owner was Richard Kelly. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled gabled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. Gable fields have synthetic siding. The primary entry is located centrally at the west façade and holds a paneled door that is flanked by replacement light picture-style windows. Offsetting the entry and windows at the south end of the façade is an overhead track garage door. There is no fenestration at the south façade. The north façade holds a secondary entry. An interior/exterior end brick chimney is visible at the north elevation.

1234 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1234 Laclede Station Road, a one-and-a-half story Ranch style dwelling, was constructed in 1949 by Frank Ott. The property's original owner was Louis F. Temm. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled gabled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (west) façade holds a central single door that is flanked by large two-light window panels. The south end of the façade has a six-light window. Above the primary façade windows are metal awnings. Gable fields at the north/south elevations have louvered vents and gable returns. The south elevation holds a small six-light window. The north elevation holds an exterior end brick chimney. At the roofline ridge is a central louvered cupola.

1238 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

William E. Lee, Jr. designed the home at 1238 Laclede Station Road. The property is a one-Ranch style dwelling and was constructed by Prosperity Construction Company in 1959. The property's original owner was Norman Johnson. The dwelling has an asphalt-shingled cross-gabled roof, exterior brick, and a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (west) façade has a central recessed bay situated between primary cross-gabled end wings. Within this bay is the primary entry which is off-center and holds a paneled door offset by an eight-light sidelight. Offsetting the entry to the south is a multi-panel large window. The central recessed porch bay is supported by three

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square wood columns. The north gabled façade holds a four-panel multi-light window. The south gabled façade has three sets of small double-hung windows. An interior end brick chimney is situated near the north end of the dwelling.

1239 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1239 Laclede Station Road is a one-story Ranch style dwelling constructed circa 1959 by G.C. Kirn. The property's original owners were Elmer C. and Dorothy Sharpe. The dwelling has a flat gabled roof, exterior brick and stone, and a continuous pre-cast panel foundation. The primary (east) façade has a central gabled bay with exterior limestone. The façade of this bay holds five large two-panel lights. Offsetting the bay to the south is a large single-panel window. To the north of the bay is the primary entry which holds a single replacement door. Side (north/south) elevations have sliding windows. A secondary entry faces south at the south elevation. End gable fields at the north/south elevations hold louvered vents. The dwelling has an interior central brick flue near the roofline ridge.

1242 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1242 Laclede Station Road was constructed in 1960. The original ownership is associated with Frances E. Garcia. This Prairie style-influenced dwelling has a flat metal roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary façade is situated near the north end of the house and holds a single door. A small concrete stoop leads to the entry. Above the door is a flat projecting roof. Paired two-light windows offset the entry at the northeast corner. The west elevation faces Laclede Station Road and features a decorative brick patterned wall. Below the brick wall are two basement level windows and an overhead track garage door.

1248 Laclede Station Road (Non-contributing):

The dwelling at 1248 Laclede Station Road was constructed in 1989, which is outside of the district's period of significance. The property is not considered to be a contributing feature of the district. The dwelling is one-story in height with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary façade is situated at the south elevation. The house was constructed by Pettibone Construction & Design, Inc.

1250 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1250 Laclede Station Road was constructed circa 1951 by E.K. Acklin. The original owners were Elmer V. and Lillian Mosse, who moved into the home in 1955. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style home with an asphalt-shingled gabled roof, exterior stone and stucco, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (west) façade holds an end gable plan wing that projects from the elevation. This wing holds a single-sash window. Above the window (within the gable field) is a louvered vent. Gable fields retain original weatherboard siding. Flanking the gabled projecting wing is a perpendicular primary wing that holds an off-center recessed entry bay. The entrance has a single

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door offset by a single window. A picture style window is situated north of the entry bay at the façade, as is an exterior stone chimney. The dwelling holds an attached garage wing at the south elevation. The garage entry faces west toward Laclede Station Road.

1251 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1251 Laclede Station Road was constructed circa 1954 by Robert Emmett. Original owners were Charles E. and Juanita Kennedy. The Kennedys moved into the home in 1958. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style home with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (east) façade has an off-center shed porch supported by V-shaped columns resting on a stone balustrade. The entry is situated within the porch bay and holds paired doors. Flanking the entry/porch bay are two-light large windows, situated in sets of three and four. The window situated at the north end of the façade wraps to the north elevation. At the roofline ridge is an interior end brick chimney.

1254 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1254 Laclede Station Road was constructed circa 1945 by J.H. Nash. The house was designed by architect Francis G. Avis, who was also the home's original owner. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style home with an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick and stone, and a continuous stone foundation. The primary (west) façade has an off-center entry with original paired paneled doors. The doors are offset by three windows of one-over-one design. Both the entry and adjacent windows are set within a limestone façade detail. At either end of the façade are two-light sliding design windows (north end) and a band of three double-hung windows (south end). The garage is situated at the basement level and faces west at the façade. Limestone is used to offset the garage bay and also as a retaining wall for the primary yard along Laclede Station Road. There is an interior brick chimney at the roofline ridge. The side (south) elevation has an interior/exterior end brick flue.

1280 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1280 Laclede Station Road constructed circa 1968. The original owners were Charles and Eunice Kirksey. The dwelling is a one-and-a-half story Ranch-influenced home with an asphalt-shingled mansard roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The primary (west) façade has a central entry bay with an arched recessed porch. The porch is created by projecting brick pilasters. Within the porch bay are paired paneled doors. Offsetting the entry bay to the south is a large five-panel window bay. North of the entry is a lower level garage entry bay. Above the garage bay are dormer windows of three-light design. Dormer windows feature diamond shaped tracery and awnings.

1282 Laclede Station Road (Contributing):

1282 Laclede Station Road was constructed circa 1958. The original owner was Robert E. James who moved into the house in 1959. The dwelling is a one-story Ranch style home with an

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asphalt-shingled hipped roof, exterior brick, and a continuous concrete foundation. The house has an L-plan. The wing that extends east/west holds a garage bay that faces south. The wing extending north/south holds the primary (west) façade and entry bay. The entry is off-center and has paired doors offset by windows of one-over-one design. There is an attached carport at the south elevation. A secondary entry is situated at the south elevation of the east/west gabled wing. The west elevation of this wing has paired windows of three-horizontal light design and an interior end brick chimney.

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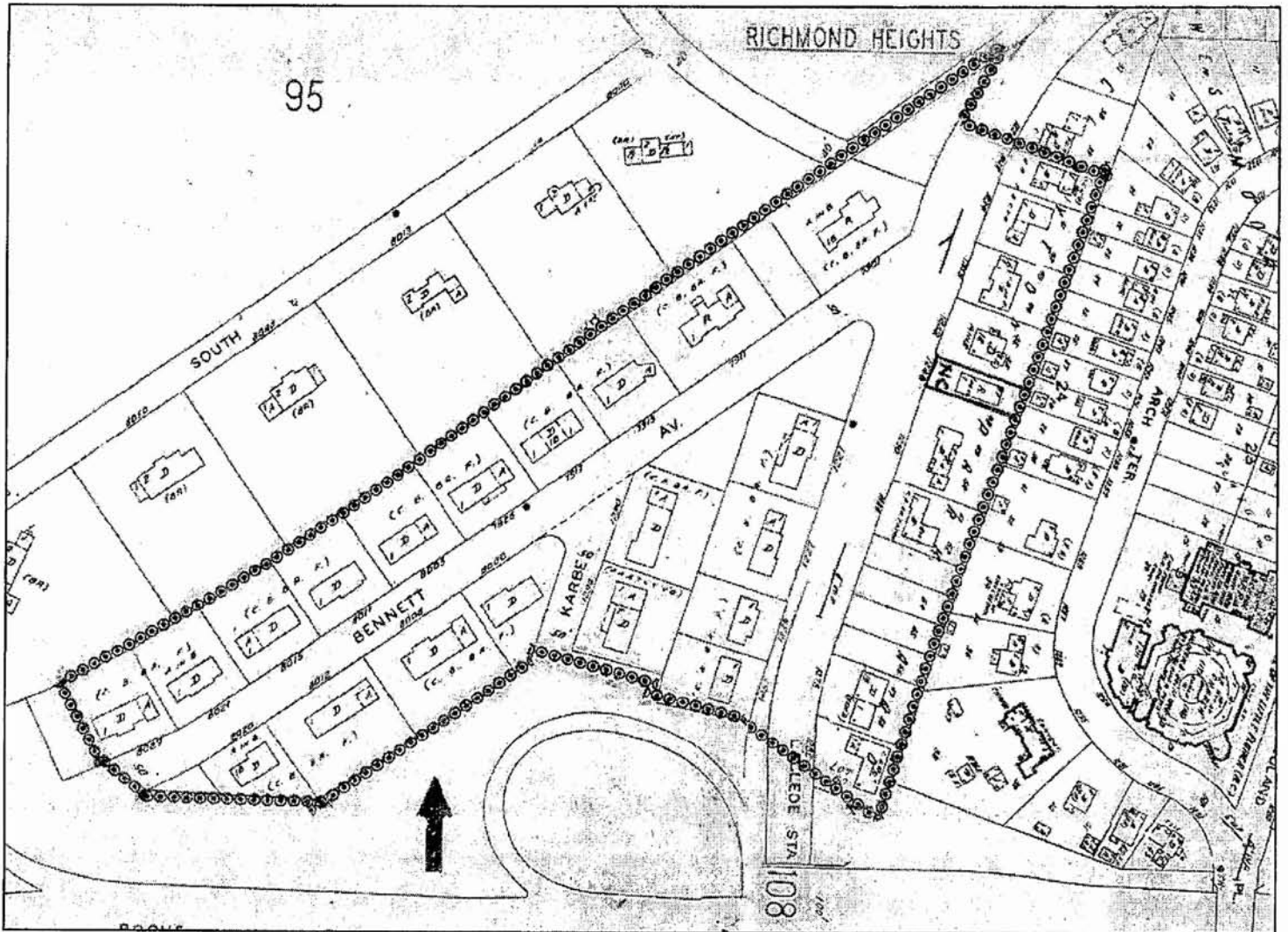


Figure 1. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1985 (revised 1990); Volume 15, pages 9 and 108 (Clayton Park Addition). Map illustrates district boundaries. 1227 Laclede Station Road is non-contributing (NC) as noted. Scale is approximate - 1" = 220'.

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Statement of Significance

Summary

Bennett Avenue Historic District (preferred) is located on 7901-8027 Bennett Avenue and 1221-1282 Laclede Station Road in Richmond Heights, Missouri, an early suburb of St. Louis City that lies within St. Louis County. The neighborhood was established by and for African-Americans during the 1940s - 1960s as a modern suburban development. Today the neighborhood symbolizes the struggle for fair and equal housing in St. Louis County, Missouri – one that continued well into the twentieth century. The neighborhood was developed beginning in the mid-1940s. It is associated primarily with Dr. Thomas and Georgia Rusan. The Rusans were an African American couple who wished to create a suburban neighborhood near Hadley Township, where Dr. Rusan grew up. Hadley Township, situated south of the Bennett Avenue district, was a working-class black neighborhood developed in the early 1900s by the Evens-Howard Brick Company. Although the Rusans wished to remain near Dr. Rusan's childhood home, they also desired a modern spacious home that reflected their lifestyle. The Rusans encouraged other black professionals to join them in creating this unique neighborhood that today is known simply as "Bennett Avenue." The 1950s-60s is a period of time in which very few African Americans were able to create their own suburban neighborhoods. This was particularly true for areas such as Bennett Avenue that were adjacent to exclusive white neighborhoods. The primary reason that blacks could not form their own communities was due to racial restrictions that prevailed even after the Supreme Court's 1948 landmark decision, *Shelley v. Kraemer*, intended to banish housing restrictions based on racial covenants. St. Louis County remained off-limits to blacks and other minorities for many years after 1948. Not until the 1980s did the numbers of black citizens begin to increase significantly within the county. The Bennett Avenue Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A for its social and ethnic contributions to St. Louis County's African American history. The area of significance for the district is "Ethnic Heritage: Black." Its early development was initiated among an elite black social class of citizens that included doctors, architects, and educators. The district also meets Criterion Consideration G due to its exceptional significance as a Civil Rights-era neighborhood developed exclusively by and for African-American residents. The period of significance extends from 1945, when the first home was constructed in the neighborhood through 1968, when the final house associated with the original development was completed.

African Americans and Housing in St. Louis City/County, ca. 1865 – 1950

Bennett Avenue was created during the height of the American civil rights movement, which began to receive widespread national attention by the late 1950s. One factor in particular catapulted the movement – television. The medium brought, for the first time in history, mainstream attention to

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matters that in the past remained unnoticed by the general population.¹ For African-Americans, however, the unrest that marked the movement's modern character began at least a decade earlier. The aftermath of World War II brought African Americans back from service during the war to the same racial restrictions and prohibitions that had always existed for blacks and other minorities. Concern at the national level about these inequities was confirmed when President Harry Truman issued an executive order establishing a Committee on Civil Rights on December 5, 1946. The mandate for the members of this committee was "... to strengthen and safeguard the rights of the American people. The Government's policy, announced in the same order, was that civil rights were guaranteed by the Constitution and essential to domestic tranquility, national security, the general welfare, and the continued existence of our free institutions"² The final report of the committee was published in 1947 as a one-hundred-and-seventy-eight page document entitled, *To Secure These Rights*.³

In relation to housing, the Committee agreed that problems escalated after World War II due to extreme housing shortages and increasing household sizes. Although all Americans expected and deserved fair and equal housing, it simply did not exist for blacks. Per the Committee's report, it was determined that individuals of color faced "a double barrier" in that not only was there a housing shortage, but based on widespread discrimination "based upon race, color, religion or national origin," individuals who were not white faced an even greater challenge in attempting to find adequate housing options. This, combined with the fact that many individuals were also veterans of World War II, boldly marked the disparity and "inadequacy" of the nation's "housing record."⁴

Although the African American experience in St. Louis is similar to the nation's broader civil rights struggle, there were some differences, particularly in relation to housing. After the Civil War, blacks in St. Louis were mobile because (at the time) there was no legal means to prevent them from living in white neighborhoods. Not until the late nineteenth century did the city begin to draw absolute lines that "legally" separated neighborhoods by the color of residents. This was accomplished primarily through zoning ordinances and racial covenants, the latter of which were in place for most neighborhoods by the turn of the century. Despite the absence of early housing restrictions, however, blacks in St. Louis were not always free to live wherever they wished. There existed an unspoken rule that blacks were expected (by whites) to remain in "their place" – outside of predominantly white neighborhoods. Restrictive housing clauses were even more pronounced in St. Louis County

¹ Glenn T. Eskew. *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 23.

² Harry S. Truman Library & Museum (ed). "To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights," [original document, 1946] (Available at: <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/civilrights/srights1.htm>). Access date 21 November 2007, p. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Steven F. Lawson (ed). *To Secure These Rights: The Report of Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

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than in St. Louis City. A few black communities in the county, such as that in Rock Hill, were created when wealthy landowners granted land to their former slaves following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Others communities, such as Kinloch, grew out of neighborhoods that although created by whites, provided segregated areas for blacks.⁵

To fully comprehend the housing limits that St. Louis City and County placed on black residents, it is imperative to evaluate the population statistics for whites and blacks prior to and after 1876; the year that St. Louis City and County created separate governments. In 1860, St. Louis recorded 157,456 white residents and 3,297 "colored" citizens. The numbers rose significantly afterward, as noted in 1870, when St. Louis supported 288,737 white residents and 22,088 "colored" residents (these numbers exclude "foreign" citizens). Although census data recorded shortly after 1876 reflects little change in black and white proportions, this stability was short-lived. In 1880, 328,191 white citizens resided in the city and 28,008 lived in the county. The black population in 1880 was recorded as 22,256 residents in the city and a mere 3,880 in the county. By 1890, a remarkable difference in the county's racial composition was clear. In that year, only 1,460 blacks were recorded as county residents (whereas 28,846 lived in the city). White citizenship, in contrast, increased significantly in the county to 32,824 residents in 1890.⁶ These figures confirm that the county welcomed white residents; but not blacks. The disparity remained entrenched for more than a century.

Although blacks have lived in St. Louis – both free and enslaved – since the mid-nineteenth century, their presence (as noted above) was limited to certain areas of the city, predominantly those that became slums by the early 1900s. As noted in the city's preservation plan issued in 1995,

St. Louis mirrors the national experience. Slavery existed and flourished alongside free blacks. "Free" was, of course, a relative term. African-Americans in antebellum St. Louis needed licenses to live in the city, and were banned from voting or testifying against whites in court. While a "black aristocracy" of merchants and professionals existed here by the late 1850s, their lives were far more restrictive than those of their white counterparts. Blacks were subject to housing restrictions, curfews, [and] bans on education.⁷

Census data from 1870 indicates that slightly fewer blacks lived in the state in 1870 – an estimated 118,071 persons, than had in 1860 when the black (slave and free) population was recorded as

⁵ Glen E. Holt (ed). "The African-American Heritage of St. Louis: A Guide," 2002 (Available at: <http://www.umsl.edu/services/library/blackstudies/slplndx.htm>). Access date 11 June 2007.

⁶ United States Census. Historical Data (Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0056/twps0056.pdf>). Access date 17 April 2007.

⁷ Heritage and Urban Design Division, City of St. Louis. "A Preservation Plan for St. Louis," (Unpublished Document, 2005), 80.

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118,503. African Americans who left Missouri after the Civil War did so for several reasons. In the rural sections of the state, guerilla raids continued long after the war; and blacks remained a target. Additionally, few jobs were available to individuals of color. After 1865, more than two-thirds of the state's African American population was engaged in farm labor, and few owned property.⁸ The movement of blacks out of the state was short-lived; however, and most shifts occurred in rural areas. Blacks (primarily from the South) began moving into St. Louis following the end of Reconstruction (1877). Between 1870 and 1880, the city's African American population rose by a little more than 6%. A second – and even larger – wave of black migration occurred during the 1910s as industry began to offer jobs to blacks due to labor shortages associated with World War I.⁹

As St. Louis' black population increased steadily during the 1910s, segregation began to shape definitive neighborhood boundaries. It is true that like blacks, foreign immigrants created enclaves within the city. However, there was a major difference. In most cases, immigrants who lived in separate neighborhoods chose to do so. African Americans were forced to remain in separate areas because their skin color prevented them from moving freely in white society. In fact, most black neighborhoods were situated in areas abandoned by whites, such as The Ville and Mill Creek Valley. Many of these neighborhoods were slums – created by industry, blight, and overcrowding. Although the city's "black aristocracy" continued to exist after the Civil War, these individuals were also limited as to where they could reside. Most moved into former private places developed during the late nineteenth century for wealthy white citizens; which, ironically, were those neighborhoods that first attempted to oust blacks.¹⁰

Black population shifts caused increasing apprehension among whites who wished to preserve "peace" and prevent "conflict and ill feeling between the white and colored races in St. Louis."¹¹ As a result, the city proposed an ordinance in 1916 to "separate blocks by white and colored people for residences, churches and schools."¹² Not only would blacks be prevented from residing on an established "white block," they would also be unable to live across the street from whites, across an alley from white residents, or in any residence "facing in the direction of an intersecting street" that abutted white blocks.¹³ The proposed legislation passed in a special election held on February 29, 1916.¹⁴

⁸ Lorenzo J. Greene, Gary R. Kremer and Anthony F. Holland. *Missouri's Black Heritage* (St. Louis: Forum Press, 1980), 92.

⁹ Heritage and Urban Design Division, City of St. Louis, 82-83.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹¹ Missouri Historical Society (comp). "Segregation Scrapbook" (Unpublished collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis), 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

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Racially segregated laws were not uncommon after the Civil War. Most cities enacted similar legislation by 1915. However, St. Louis was the first American city that passed such a law by popular vote.¹⁵ When segregation codes were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1917, real estate agents and property owners struck deals – contractual agreements known as covenants – that kept blacks out of neighborhoods intended for “whites only.”¹⁶ In St. Louis, this arrangement was upheld by the city’s United Welfare Association (UWA) that in 1911 formed a powerful alliance with the Real Estate Exchange organization. These two agencies continued to keep blacks in St. Louis in restricted areas. The organizations were especially effective in placing restrictions within areas bordering historically black neighborhoods.¹⁷ By 1930, “almost 74 percent of the city’s blacks lived in or near predominantly black neighborhoods,” and most of these areas were overcrowded and/or consisted of substandard housing. “Fifty-one percent lived downtown, from Eighteenth Street to Grand Avenue and from Choteau to Cass Avenues. Another 22.5 percent lived in an area of the central west end known as ‘Ville’: from Belleglade to Taylor Avenues, and from St. Louis to Enright Avenues.”¹⁸

In 1939, J.D. Shelley, a black St. Louis resident, purchased a home for his family at 4600 Labadie. The house was within a restricted area created by the UWA, and a covenant was in place that restricted African Americans from purchasing a home for a period of at least 50 years following the dwelling’s construction. When the Shelleys moved into the white neighborhood, their neighbors across the street, Louis and Ethel Kraemer (who were white), filed a lawsuit. The home was sold to the Shelleys by a black real estate agent, James T. Bush, Sr., who in response to the Kraemers’ lawsuit created the Real Estate Brokers’ Association of St. Louis. Additionally, Bush engaged a black attorney, George Vaughn, to take the case which went all the way to the Supreme Court. In 1948, the court ruled that restrictive covenants violated the Constitution’s 14th Amendment. This landmark case, however, did little to change the existing and immediate conditions for blacks in St. Louis. It is true that restrictive covenants were deemed illegal, however whites found other ways to incorporate restrictions against blacks.¹⁹ Therefore even after 1948, St. Louis’ black population remained primarily within the city’s limits, and most resided in the northern sector of the city.

¹⁵ Margaret Lo Piccolo Sullivan. “St. Louis Ethnic Neighborhoods, 1850-1930: An Overview.” (Master’s Thesis, Department of History, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1975), 18.

¹⁶ Gwendolyn Wright. *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983), 212.

¹⁷ James Neal Primm. *Lion of the Valley St. Louis Missouri* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1981), 436.

¹⁸ Sullivan, 19.

¹⁹ Heritage and Urban Design Division, City of St. Louis, 87-88.

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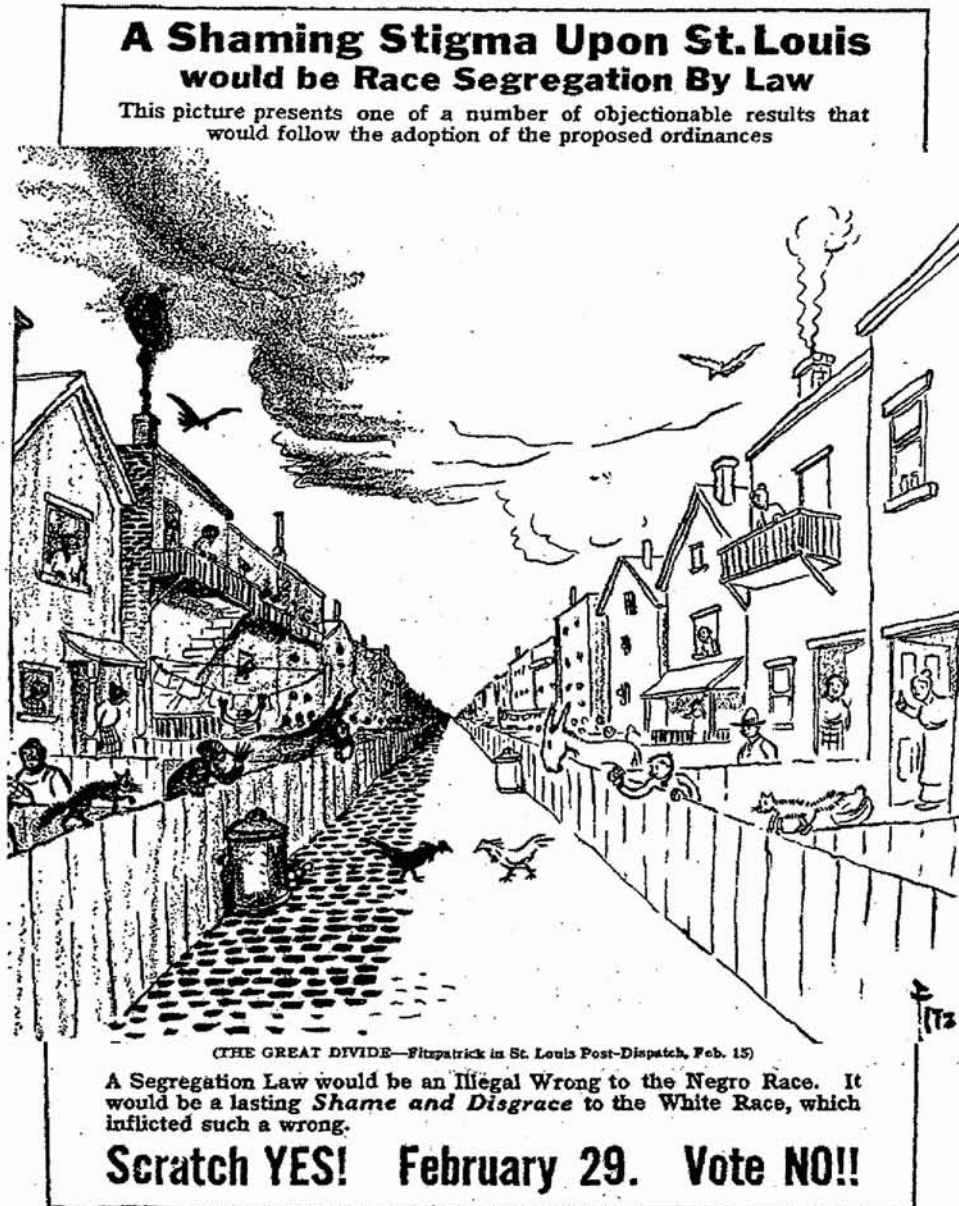


Figure 2. Image from Missouri Historical Society "Segregation Scrapbook," p. 60 (St. Louis, Missouri).

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In 1964, the City passed a "Fair Housing Ordinance," which defined that it was "unlawful to discriminate against anyone because of his race, religion, national origin or ancestry in the sale, lease or rental of any housing unit; in the financing of the purchase of any housing unit; and in the use, management or disposition of any housing unit."²⁰ This legislation was extremely limited in that it applied only to the City of St. Louis and failed to assist blacks who wanted to build new homes. It also reflects what was happening in the nation's civil rights movement that reached a pinnacle during the 1960s.

Attempts to create black suburban neighborhoods in the county were evident long before the 1948 Shelley decision. One example is that initiated by Pearl Abernathy, a black real estate agent who in 1926 proposed development of an African-American subdivision located in today's Bellefontaine Neighbors municipality (north of St. Louis City).²¹ To date, no documentation has been found to verify that the proposed development was ever initiated. With the exception of the Bennett Avenue Historic District in Richmond Heights, it is not known how many (if any) such developments were completed in St. Louis County. Although Kinloch became the state's "first fourth-class, all-black city" in 1948, this neighborhood was not solely created by African Americans. Rather, it was a turn-of-the-century streetcar suburb eventually abandoned by white residents during the 1910s.²² The Bennett Avenue district, on the other hand, was created entirely for and by African Americans. Also of note is that the neighborhood was not formed by a professional developer or real estate agent, but evolved as a grass roots movement initiated by Thomas and Georgia Rusan.

Not until the 1980s did black residential numbers in St. Louis County rise above 10% of the total population. In 1950, only 4% of the county's population was black; this fell to 3% in 1960, and in 1970 reached 5%.²³ New housing for African Americans was virtually unobtainable for blacks, even as late as the mid-twentieth-century. Between the years 1950 and 1957, an estimated 95,000 African Americans moved into St. Louis City; however in those years, less than 100 new homes were constructed for African Americans.²⁴

Bennett Avenue Historic District (Clayton Park Addition)

The development of Bennett Avenue Historic District (originally platted as Clayton Park Addition in

²⁰ Urban League of St. Louis, Inc. "A Statistical Profile of the Negro in St. Louis" (Unpublished document available at St. Louis Public Library - Main Branch, 1965), 32.

²¹ "History of Real Estate as Applied to the Colored Race in St. Louis." *Souvenir Greater St. Louis Exposition* (September 4-19, 1926), 117.

²² Holt, 2.

²³ Richard J. Hardy, Richard R. Dohm and David A. Leuthold (eds). *Missouri Government and Politics* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 364.

²⁴ Greene et al, 129.

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1932) is primarily associated with Dr. Thomas and Georgia Rusan. The Rusans encouraged other black citizens to join them in creating an upper middle class neighborhood for black professionals. Together, the Rusans and their counterparts acted with courage and fortitude to undo the stigma of segregation that restricted access for all black Americans to housing, education, business, the trades, loans and insurance, public and private facilities throughout the 1950s-60s. The people who bought land and built their homes in Clayton Park Addition endeavored to develop a family-centered, modern, safe neighborhood in which to raise their families. As a result, they rose above many barriers to develop their own unique neighborhood – commonly known today as “Bennett Avenue Historic District.”

The Bennett Avenue district in Richmond Heights lies within an area that during the mid-nineteenth century was owned by Edward J. Gay.²⁵ The parcel remained in the hands of the Gay Family in the 1890s, owned in 1893 by John H. Gay.²⁶ When Clayton Park Addition was platted in 1932 by a development company, this area held no residential or commercial buildings. It remained undeveloped as late as 1940 for unknown – or unspoken – reasons. Obviously, the area physically separated the black and white neighborhoods in Richmond Heights. Over the years, much of Clayton Park Addition had been purchased by residents of Hampton Park who chose neither to sell or develop the area. Hampton Park was an exclusive white neighborhood (north of Clayton Park Addition) developed in 1910. Its developers promoted the neighborhood’s “careful restrictions [and] desirable neighbors.”²⁷

The area south of Clayton Park Addition failed to meet the restrictive stipulations offered by Hampton Park. This neighborhood, Hadley Township, was developed in 1907 by Evens-Howard Brick Company for its African-American laborers.²⁸ Dr. Rusan grew up in Hadley Township on Argus Avenue.²⁹ When he returned to St. Louis after receiving a medical degree from Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee, he wanted to live in an area near his aging parents. Dr. Rusan also wished to provide a modern home for his family that reflected his professional lifestyle. Such options were not available in Hadley Township which was comprised primarily of small workers’ cottages. Additionally, there was no room left to build homes in Hadley Township. The Rusans decided there was no alternative but to develop a new subdivision where they – as well as other black professionals – could reside in a contemporary setting.³⁰ The Rusans began to purchase parcels in Clayton Park Addition during the 1940s. There was evidence that the neighborhood was

²⁵ Julius Hutawa. *Atlas of St. Louis County* (self-published, c. 1868), 13.

²⁶ Berkley E. Johnson. *An Atlas of St. Louis County in the State of Missouri* (Clayton, MO: C.R. Black, 1893), 29.

²⁷ “Hampton Park,” Advertisement in *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (21 May 1988), 16a.

²⁸ Renee Stovsky. “St. Luke Students Preserve Hadley Township’s Legacy” (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch – West Post*, 2 February 2005), 2.

²⁹ Joellen McDonald. Interview with Roscoe Abram (November 2002).

³⁰ Joellen McDonald. Interview with Georgia Rusan (January 2003).

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attractive to professionals as noted in 1945 when architect Francis (Frank) G. Avis designed a home for himself at 1254 Laclede Station Road.

Clayton and Hanley Roads **HAMPTON PARK** **Clayton and Hanley Roads**

ALL THE CITY CONVENIENCES AT ACRE PRICES. **ALL THE COUNTRY DELIGHTS, TOWN COMFORTS.**

Clayton Cars United Railways, to Hanley Road, then one block south; or Hodsamont Cars, Kirkwood Division, to Clayton Road, then two blocks east to Hampton Park. Prices, \$2000 to \$5000 Per Acre. Equal \$10 to \$25 Per Foot. All improvements made.

Careful Restrictions, Desirable Neighbors, Splendid Roads. **Town Comforts, Sewers, Gas, and Water, Electric Lights.**

COMMANDING VIEWS. **STATELY FOREST TREES.**

FOR PLATS AND PRICES SEE

McNair & Harris Realty Co., Columbia Building, Eighth and Locust Sts., St. Louis

Figure 3. Advertisement for Hampton Park, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 21 May 1911, 16a.

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As noted, the Supreme Court decision, *Shelley v. Kraemer*, struck down racially restricted land transfers in 1948. Even so, it took many years for blacks to eliminate the true barriers that remained following this landmark case. In relation to Bennett Avenue, many white residents and several government officials in Richmond Heights openly (and strongly) opposed the Rusans. On July 7, 1950, in an attempt to stop the development, Richmond Heights' City Council members approved Bill #2096, Ordinance #2022 – which called for a special election to pass a bond issue in the amount of \$300,000. If passed, the bond money would be used to create a park and playground on the same land that the Rusans wished to purchase for their development.³¹ An earlier bond issue in 1945 (also to develop Clayton Park Addition as a park) was defeated primarily through the efforts of Dr. Rusan's mother, Mildred. Georgia Rusan continued her mother-in-law's crusade six years later, assisted by Reverend J. E. Fiddmont, pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church on Hanley Road in Richmond Heights. On January 9, 1951, voters said "no" to the bond issue.³² Shortly afterward, the Rusans were finally able to gain all of the property that today comprises the Bennett Avenue district.³³

The Rusans constructed their first home in 1952, not knowing that the property on which the house was located was directly within the path of the new interstate system constructed in St. Louis in the 1950s-60s. The couple refused to abandon their plans and moved the house to a lot at 1227 Laclede Station Road. This second site was (and remains) slightly north of the planned highway. The Rusans remained at 1227 Laclede Station Road until 1956, at which time they completed a second home at 7911 Bennett Avenue. Mrs. Rusan (who is a widow) continues to live in her second home today. Both of the Rusans were well known among their peers and this provided them with ample opportunity to encourage others to join them in developing the Bennett Avenue neighborhood. They held barbeques and invited friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Dr. Rusan was successful in gaining other black physicians such as his mentor, Dr. William Sinkler, to purchase lots and build homes in the neighborhood. Georgia Rusan, who earned her masters degree in social work from Columbia University, recruited her co-workers at St. Louis' Family and Children's Services.³⁴

Despite the Rusans' gains in 1951, opposition to the black suburban neighborhood continued. Because virtually no licensed black architects or builders existed in St. Louis during the 1950s, it was extremely difficult for black citizens to engage professionals willing to work for them.³⁵ Bennett Avenue was not a private street, yet each family in the subdivision paid for road construction and

³¹ "Resolution of the Richmond Heights Civic Playgrounds Committee." City of Richmond Heights, St. Louis County, Missouri. Bill #2096; Ordinance #2022 (1950).

³² Ibid; "West Richmond Heights Improvement Association." Leaflet advocating against the 1950 bond issue (1951); McDonald interview with G. Rusan.

³³ Dr. Thomas and Georgia Rusan. (1951) Personal Property Tax receipts.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ McDonald interview with G. Rusan.

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was held individually responsible for obtaining utility hook-ups and financing installation. These barriers did not exist for the city's white residents. Due to the heavy financial burden imposed on early residents, many were unable to build their homes until the 1960s. Additional delays resulted when the City of Richmond Heights and St. Louis County officials delayed building permits. Inspectors were sent to building sites, often on a daily basis, to slow construction and discourage progress. One example involves the Rusans who applied for permits to connect to the City's sewer system. Officials' interference slowed the procedure to the point that the Rusans finally gave up and installed a septic tank. Another example involves Dr. William and Blanche Sinkler, whose residence at 7901 Bennett Avenue was completed in 1953. The Sinklers experienced heavy delays and financial burdens associated with expanding Bennett Avenue. Like the Rusans, they gave up and constructed a private drive that linked directly to Laclede Station Road.³⁶

Despite the consistent difficulties, Bennett Avenue grew rapidly and a large number of professional black citizens constructed homes. In most cases (as noted in the table below) both husbands and their wives worked in white collar professions. A large number of these individuals were educators – teachers and principals; many also worked as doctors and dentists.

Table 1. Bennett Avenue Historic District: Residential Information.

Name(s)	Address	Year House Constructed*	Profession(s)
William / Blanche Sinkler	7901 Bennett Avenue	1953	Physician and hospital administrator / Teacher
Thomas / Georgia Rusan	7911 Bennett Avenue	1956	Physician / Social Work Administration
Benjamin F. / Ann R. Davis	7915 Bennett Avenue	1957	Dentist and entrepreneur** / Librarian
William E. (Jr.) / Blanche Lee	7917 Bennett Avenue	1962	Educator & architect / School administrator
Harold G. / Lillyan Russell	7920 Bennett Avenue	1958	Physician / Educator
Edward B. / Jacqueline B. Williams	7924 Bennett Avenue	1960	Physician and hospital administrator / Public relations, Famous Barr
Charles / Mary White	(moved into 7924 Bennett in 1965)	--	Tuskegee Army Airman (pilot) / School administrator & Teacher
Sylvester Burke	7925 Bennett Avenue	1965	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Scott R. / Wilma L.	8000 Bennett	1956	Physician / Registered Nurse

³⁶ Ibid; Joellen McDonald. Interviews with Eugene Alper (January 2003); Thelma Willis (February 2003) and Mary Whorton (January, 2003).

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Name(s)	Address	Year House Constructed*	Profession(s)
Barrett	Avenue		
William D. / Gussie Fultz	8003 Bennett Avenue	1959	Salesman / Teacher and school administrator
Luther A. Jr. / Ruth N. Forrest	8008 Bennett Avenue	1963	Dentist / Registered Nurse
William M. / Evelyn Tandy	8011 Bennett Avenue	1959	Postal employee / Teacher
Patrobas (P.C.) / Kathryn C. Robinson	8012 Bennett Avenue	1959	Teacher and real estate business owner / Business partner
Tyler B. Reddick	8015 Bennett Avenue	1960	Chemical worker - Monsanto
Edmond / Thelma Willis	8020 Bennett Avenue	1966	Employee of McDonnell Douglas Aircraft Co. / Teacher
Garland F. / Mary Whorton	8021 Bennett Avenue	1965	Postal employee / Teacher
Ruges / Maxine Freeman (Jr.)	8027 Bennett Avenue	1960	High school principal & College professor / Social worker
Richard A. / Jane Hudlin	1221 Laclede Station Road	1960	Teacher & coach / Registered Nurse
John F. / Bernice R. Benson	1227 Laclede Station Road	1952	Physician / Dental hygienist
Albert K. Smith	1228 Laclede Station Road	1950	Carpenter & Contractor
Wirt D. Walton	Moved into 1228 Laclede Station in 1955	--	Educator, music teacher, organist, & choral director
Richard Kelly	1230 Laclede Station Road	1950	Unknown
Louis F. Temm	1234 Laclede Station Road	1949	Engineer at Monsanto
Norman Johnson	1238 Laclede Station Road	1959	Post Office clerk
Elmer C. & Dorothy Sharpe	1239 Laclede Station Road	1959	Owner of "The Sharpe Shop" on Olive - interior design and furniture / School psychologist
Francis E. Garcia	1242 Laclede Station Road	1960	Anesthetist
John H. Seabaugh	1248 Laclede Station Road	1989	Unknown
Elmer V. / Lillian	1250 Laclede Station	1951	Hospital administrator / Social

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Name(s)	Address	Year House Constructed*	Profession(s)
Mosse	Road		work administrator
Charles E. / Juanita Kennedy	1251 Laclede Station Road	1954	Upholsterer (2 nd generation) and fabric store owner / Teacher
Francis G. Avis	1254 Laclede Station Road	1945	Architect
Melvin / Doris Goldman	Moved into 1254 Laclede Station in 1953	--	Physician / unknown
Charles / Eunice Kirksey	1280 Laclede Station Road	1968	Postal employee / Sales
Robert E. / Bobette S. James	1282 Laclede Station Road	1958	Teacher / Teacher

*Dates of construction are based on building permits, interviews, and city directories.

**Dr. Davis operated several McDonald's franchises, including one on a boat (on the Mississippi River, downtown St. Louis).

Many of Bennett Avenue's early residents (in addition to the Rusans) deserve further elucidation regarding their status in the local black community, such as Dr. William and Blanche Sinkler of 7901 Bennett Avenue, who were close friends of the Rusans. Dr. Sinkler moved to St. Louis in 1932 after receiving a degree from Harvard University's Medical School. He initially worked as an intern at People's Hospital constructed in 1903 at 1221 Locust Street. For many years, this was St. Louis' public hospital open to black patients and doctors.³⁷ Sinkler was the first black surgeon appointed to Washington University's School of Medicine faculty in 1941. That same year, he became Medical Director at Homer G. Phillips Hospital, a black hospital constructed in 1932-37.³⁸ Sinkler later became the hospital's Director of Surgery. In 1948, Sinkler was one of the nation's first black members of the American College of Surgeons. "It has been said that during his lifetime, Sinkler influenced at least one-third of all black physicians who received postgraduate medical training in the United States."³⁹ Sinkler's wife, Blanche, was a member of a distinguished St. Louis family. Vashon High School constructed in 1927 in The Ville was named for her grandfather, George B. Vashon and her father, John Vashon, both of whom were well known black educators.⁴⁰ Mrs. Sinkler

³⁷ Heritage and Urban Design Division, City of St. Louis, 273.

³⁸ "Origins and History of the Washington University School of Medicine: The Modern Era, 1930 - 1991." (Available at: <http://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/wusm-hist/modern/index.htm>) Access date 12 July 2007; Richard Hannon (ed). *St. Louis: Its Neighborhoods and Neighbors, Landmarks and Milestones* (St. Louis: Regional Commerce and Growth Association, 1986), 70.

³⁹ Frank O. Richards and William F. Sasser. "The History of Surgery in St. Louis," *St. Louis Metropolitan Medicine* (January 2000, Volume 22, No. 1), 30.

⁴⁰ John A. Wright. *Discovering African American St. Louis - A Guide to Historic Sites* (St. Louis: Missouri

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taught in St. Louis City Public Schools for many years. She returned to teach following the death of her husband in 1960.⁴¹

Another prominent resident was Patrobas C. (P.C.) Robinson, who moved to Bennett Avenue from The Ville in 1961. Mr. Robinson resided at 8012 Bennett and was instrumental in encouraging others to move into the neighborhood through his professional real estate connections. He attended the University of Iowa where he received a chemistry degree in 1927, and taught at Tuskegee Institute afterward until 1929. After moving to St. Louis, Robinson taught at Vashon High School, prior to receiving his master's degree from the University of Chicago in 1941. He returned to teach at Vashon until 1953, at which time he opened a real estate office. Mr. Robinson was first black real estate agent to be accepted to the St. Louis Metropolitan Real Estate Association.⁴²

Mary and Charles White resided at 7924 Bennett Avenue. The Whites purchased their home in 1965 from Edward and Jacqueline Williams. Mr. White was a principal at Cook Middle School in St. Louis City when the Whites moved to Richmond Heights. Prior to that time, he served in the Army-Air Corps and was trained as a Tuskegee Airman – becoming a highly decorated fighter pilot during his years of service during World War II.⁴³ Mr. White lived in his home on Bennett Avenue until his demise in Spring 2007.

Historical Press, 2002), 100; Don Dillon. *So Where'd You Go to High School? The Baby Boomer Edition* (St. Louis: Virginia Publishing Co., 2005), 236.

⁴¹ McDonald. Interview with G. Rusan.

⁴² Elyse McBride. Office of Historic Preservation, Missouri – Historic Inventory Form for 8012 Bennett Avenue (Unpublished 2003), 2.

⁴³ Joellen McDonald. Interview with Charles White (February 2003).

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Figure 4. Photographs of Georgia and Dr. Thomas Rusan, date unknown. Images from John Wright's *St. Louis Disappearing Black Communities*, 2004 (p. 58).



Figure 5. Dr. William Sinkler (1906 – 1960). Image available at Washington University Medicine's website.

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Richard A. Hudlin lived at 1221 Laclede Station Road. Hudlin was a teacher at Sumner High School – the first black high school established west of the Mississippi River in 1875 at Eleventh and Spruce Streets. The building where Hudlin taught remains in use today, constructed in 1911 in The Ville neighborhood.⁴⁴ During his lifetime, Hudlin achieved national recognition as a tennis player and coach.⁴⁵ He descended from a long line of civil rights activists. His family worked with Owen Lovejoy as “conductors” in Underground Railroad activities in St. Louis and Chicago. After the Civil War, Hudlin’s father, a newspaper journalist and publisher (also named Richard), worked with W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington as a member of the National Negro League.⁴⁶ Richard Hudlin was one of the first black tennis players on the University of Chicago’s tennis team. Later, he worked with national tennis associations to discover talented black youths and provide training and scholarship opportunities to foster their careers. His students included Althea Gibson (the first African American to win the United States Open, Wimbledon, and the French Open tournaments) and Arthur Ashe (the first African-American to play on the United States’ Davis Cup team). In 1960-61, Ashe lived with the Hudlins at 1221 Laclede Station Road. Hudlin trained Ashe on the clay court he built in his side yard, the remnants of which can still be seen today. Ashe attended Sumner High School, graduating in 1961. The Richard A. Hudlin Tennis Courts, located south of Barnes Hospital, were named in honor of Mr. Hudlin. Richard Hudlin’s son, also named Richard, grew up at 1221 Laclede Station Road and became prominent in his own right, recognized today as the first black chief judge in the state of Illinois.⁴⁷

In the 1960s, Wirt Walton lived at 1228 Laclede Station Road. He was a black educator who at that time, served as Head of the Music Department at Vashon High School in St. Louis City. One of Walton’s best known students was Robert McFerrin, Sr. Mr. McFerrin received some of his early training and performing opportunities from Mr. Walton while attending Vashon. McFerrin went on to become an internationally acclaimed baritone, and was the first African American male to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in 1955. McFerrin returned to St. Louis after his retirement in 1973 and lived on Laclede Station Road until his death in 2006.⁴⁸

A retired educator who continues to live in her home at 8020 Bennett Avenue is Thelma Willis. In 1961, Thelma and her husband, Edmond, engaged John Waterhout as their builder to ease problems with obtaining permits and passing inspections. Mr. Waterhout was then the Building Inspector for

⁴⁴ Dillon, 224.

⁴⁵ Edward W. Hudlin. Letter to the Editor (Available at <http://www.siu.edu/ALESTLE/library/spring99/mar.30.99/letter.html>) Access date 28 June 2007.

⁴⁶ Center for Historical Research. “Dr. Lucille-Hudlin-McClelland” (Available at <http://members.tripod.com/~tibetan/cr-lucil.htm>) Access date 12 July 2007.

⁴⁷ Center for Historical Research. Website.

⁴⁸ “Robert McFerrin.” *AfroCentric Voices in “Classical” Music* (Available at <http://www.afrovoices.com/mcferrin.html>), Access date 12 July 2007.

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Richmond Heights. The arrangement worked, but racial animosity reared its ugly head one morning when the construction crew found a swastika painted on the newly installed front door of the Willis' home.⁴⁹

Mary Whorton, who built her home with her husband, Garland, still resides in their house at 8021 Bennett Avenue. Like Mrs. Willis, Mrs. Whorton is a retired St. Louis City educator. She and Garland were recruited by P.C. Robinson in 1959. The Whortons worked hard to save money to pave the road in front of their home, and also paid to add utilities through the end of their street. Due to these costs, the Whortons could not afford to begin construction of their house until 1965.⁵⁰

The above noted residents are but a few examples of the unique individuals who comprised the character of the Bennett Avenue neighborhood. Also important to the subdivision's development were the builders and architects who placed their professional careers on the line to assist these residents. These men were well known professionally – two of them, William E. Lee, Jr. and Frank G. Avis, were also residents, living at 7917 Bennett Avenue and 1254 Laclede Station Road, respectively.

Bennett Avenue Historic District's Architects and Builders

As noted previously, very few white architects or builders were willing to work with the residents of Bennett Avenue due to the racial barriers that existed when the district was first planned by the Rusans. One willing individual, who began the process with the Rusans, was Robert G. McMahon. McMahon was a highly respected architect and member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). McMahon designed the University Club Tower (Richmond Heights) and St. Anthony's Medical Center (South St. Louis County).⁵¹ In addition to designing the Rusans' house at 7911 Bennett Avenue, McMahon designed the houses at 7915 and 8012 Bennett Avenue, as well as that at 1227 Laclede Station Road. McMahon had become acquainted with Thomas Rusan prior to his work in the Bennett Avenue neighborhood; as he designed Dr. Rusan's office building (no longer extant) on Brentwood Boulevard. Builder Nathan W. Alper worked with McMahon on all of his projects completed for Bennett Avenue. Alper also constructed houses at 8003, 8008, 8021, and 8027 Bennett Avenue.⁵²

⁴⁹ McDonald. Interview with T. Willis.

⁵⁰ Joellen McDonald. Interview with Mary Whorton (January, 2003).

⁵¹ "Robert G. McMahon, 79; Was President of Architectural Firm." (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 16 August 1986), Clipping available at St. Louis Public Library, Fine Arts Department, St. Louis Architects file.

⁵² McDonald. Interview with E. Alper.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1972

The Old Pro And The Newly Great Together



Richard Hudlin, former Sumner High teacher and the great tennis pro, Arthur Ashe, who attended Sumner and thrived and learned the art of tennis under Hudlin smile together. Ashe made an appearance Thursday night and defeated pro-Marty Riessen.

Figure 6. News article illustrating Hudlin and Ashe, *The Evening Whirl*, 25 January 1972.

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Architect Edward B. Kelley designed the houses at 7920 Bennett and 1228 Laclede Station Road. Oliver Littage (who also constructed 7924 Bennett) and Truman L. Yard worked as the building contractors on these properties. Kelley was known for his residential, church, and school designs. He began working as an architect in St. Louis in 1921. He completed a number of projects in St. Ann, Missouri. During World War II, he worked for Mauran Russell and Crowell, Giffels and Vallet architects/engineers at which time he designed a number of small arms plants. When Kelley died in 1960, he was employed as the Richmond Heights Building Commissioner.⁵⁶

Ferdinand H. Peipers was the architect for 8015 Bennett. The building contractor was F. Korsek. Peipers was an architect/draftsman for McQuay-Norris Manufacturing Company. He retired in 1957, prior to his work with Bennett Avenue's residents. Peipers died at the age of 76 in 1967.⁵⁷

Very little is known about the additional architects and builders who assisted in the development of Bennett Avenue; with the exception of two of the neighborhood's own residents, William E. Lee, Jr. and Frances G. Avis.

William E. Lee, Jr. was a resident of the Bennett Avenue District. He resided in a home that Frank McGuire designed at 7917 Bennett Avenue. Lee designed the house at 1238 Laclede Station Road; this property was contracted to Prosperity Construction Company. Lee received a Bachelor of Science degree from Hampton Institute in 1928. In 1938, he completed a Master of Arts in Education degree at Hampton. It is unclear as to whether Lee actually gained an architectural degree, but he did work as an "architect," and was admitted as a corporate member of the AIA. He was one of the nation's first black architects/builders to gain such recognition. Lee taught industrial arts at numerous schools and colleges in Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Missouri. When he retired in 1976, he was working as a teacher at O'Fallon Technical School in St. Louis. One of Lee's most noteworthy designs was a bell tower for Arkansas A.M. & N. College, where he was an instructor.⁵⁸

Another resident, Frank (Francis) G. Avis, designed and lived at 1254 Laclede Station Road. The builder who worked with him was J.H. Nash. Avis opened an architectural office in Maplewood in 1926 and later relocated to Kirkwood or Richmond Heights (resources conflict on exact location). Avis was born in St. Louis in 1898. He is best remembered for residential and apartment designs, most of which were located in the Central West End, Clayton, and University City areas of St. Louis City/County. One of his most notable projects in St. Louis (City) is a large apartment complex,

⁵⁶ "Edward B. Kelley Funeral Friday." (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 September 1960), 3C.

⁵⁷ "Ferdinand H. Peipers Dies; Was a Retired Architect." (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 February 1967). Newspaper clipping available at St. Louis Public Library, Fine Arts Department, St. Louis Architects files.

⁵⁸ Tracey Scott. Office of Historic Preservation, Missouri – Historic Inventory Form for 7917 Bennett Avenue (Unpublished 2003), 2.

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constructed in 1928, at the corner of Belt and Cabanne Avenues.⁵⁹

Of note, Frank McGuire was the architect for 7917 and 8021 Bennett Avenue. The builders for these homes were Charles E. Kirksey (7917 Bennett Avenue) and Nathan Alper (8021 Bennett Avenue). L.P. Roth completed the design of 8000 Bennett Avenue. His office was situated at 4401 Hampton Avenue. Vincent Mueller designed 8020 Bennett and worked with builder John Waterhout (noted previously in this document). Contractor Frank Ott completed 1234 Laclede Station Road; and G.C. Kirn built the house at 1239 Laclede Station Road. The home at 1250 Laclede Station Road was completed by E.K. Acklin (contractor). Robert Emmett constructed 1251 Laclede Station Road.

Conclusion

The Bennett Avenue Historic District (Clayton Park Addition) created much controversy throughout its development in the 1950s-60s. Today this neighborhood remains recognized as one exclusively designed for and by black professionals although its residents now consist of both African-American and white citizens. Its existence is significant – it marks events that up until that time were virtually unheard of, particularly in St. Louis County where residents remained primarily white. In the particular case of Bennett Avenue, not only were African American citizens building and moving into new housing – they were doing so within a traditionally white upper-class suburb of St. Louis. These contrasts are even more sharply illustrated by the location of Bennett Avenue Historic District, bordered (until very recently) at the south by a working-class black neighborhood, Hadley Township; and at the north by a wealthy white development, Hampton Park. When Interstate 64 (Highway 40) was constructed during the 1950s-60s, the highway split Hadley Township (black) and Hampton Park (white) and created a prominently physical barrier between whites and blacks. The creation of Bennett Avenue – a new upscale black neighborhood on the “white side” of the highway resulted in an even greater social rift. Today, Bennett Avenue holds a mixture of white and black residents, yet it continues to illustrate – through its very existence – the racial barriers that were prevalent at the time of its development.

⁵⁹ Elyse McBride. Office of Historic Preservation, Missouri – Historic Inventory Form for Office of Historic Preservation, Missouri – Historic Inventory Form for 1254 Laclede Station Road (Unpublished 2003), 2; Ruth Keenoy, Karen Bode Baxter, Timothy P. Maloney, and Mandy K. Ford. “Locust Street Automotive District” (National Register Registration Form, 2005), 8:18.

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BILL McCLELLAN

Perseverance
built homes;
history now
preserves them

Georgia Rusan lives in the neighborhood that she and her husband started 57 years ago. It was then and is now an upper middle-class kind of place for doctors, teachers and other professionals. It is called the Bennett Avenue Historic District, situated in Richmond Heights about a block north of Dale Avenue, along Laclede Station Road and Bennett, just north of Highway 40.

In the early days, it was a struggle. These were, and mostly still are, black professionals, and there was nothing like this in St. Louis County. In fact, it was hard to get a builder willing to do the work. There were threats, too. But all that is long in the past.

I visited Mrs. Rusan on Tuesday. She is 86 years old. From

her front window, she looks out on the Richard Hudlin house. Hudlin was the first owner. He taught at Sumner High School. He also was a tennis player of some renown. He had been captain of the tennis team at the University of Chicago. He had a tennis court in his yard. The court is gone, but it's easy to see where it was. Hudlin worked with young tennis players, and in 1960, a youngster from Virginia came to live with him. The youngster's name was Arthur Ashe.

I asked Mrs. Rusan if she remembered him. Oh yes, she said. She used to watch him play across the street. He was always friendly. Always a little grown-up, too.

Her daughter, Francille, kind of liked him.

Francille, by the way, is now a professor of African-American studies at the University of Maryland. It's easy to see how she became interested in the field. Her neighbors all had stories. Hudlin's family had been active in the Underground Railroad. Another neighbor, Charles

White, had been a Tuskegee Airman.

And, of course, there were her mother's stories.

Henry and Sylvia Coleman were slaves in Alabama. When they were freed at the end of the Civil War, they headed to Arkansas and began farming. A daughter, Ollie, married Israel David Roscoe. He could do anything. He was a minister, a general contractor and a bricklayer. He became the grand patriarch of the family. His daughter, Alma, married Victor Tallier. Georgia was their daughter.

Victor was a laborer, and Alma was a housewife. They insisted that Georgia read. The libraries in Arkansas were segregated in those days, and Georgia read every book in the storefront library for blacks. Read them again, her mother said.

Georgia went to Lincoln University, and then won competitive scholarships to the University of Chicago and Columbia University in New York. She also won the heart of Thomas Rusan. He graduated from

Lincoln and went to Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn. Georgia went to Columbia to get a master's degree in social work.

Rusan had grown up in Richmond Heights, and so when he and Georgia married, St. Louis is where they came to live.

Rusan would have been happy to live in the black section of Richmond Heights, but there were no houses for sale. Blacks weren't welcome in white neighborhoods, and so Thomas and Georgia got the idea of creating their own neighborhood. The area that is now the Bennett Avenue Historic District was then vacant. Still, it was vacant land in a white section of the town.

"We had meetings after meetings," Mrs. Rusan recalled. "We wanted like-minded people to make a sustainable neighborhood. We encouraged people to buy land, and that was very, very difficult because most plots were owned by absentee owners."

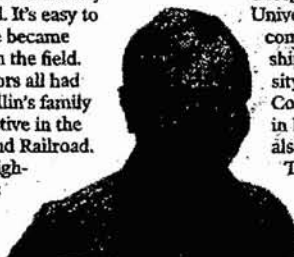
People bought into the idea. One of the first was Rusan's friend and colleague Dr. William Sinkler, a graduate of Harvard University Medical School.

His wife's father was an educator, George Vashon, for whom Vashon High School is named.

There was plenty of resistance. Permits were delayed. Inspectors visited job sites on a daily basis, and slowed progress. Architects and builders feared repercussions if they helped build the neighborhood. But build it they did.

Then came Highway 40. By chance or not, the highway was slated to go right over the Rusan house, which was on Laclede Station Road. So the Rusans moved their home down the street. In 1956, they moved into their current home on Bennett Avenue. Dr. Rusan died in 1987. His obituary cited his medical career but made no mention of the neighborhood he helped establish.

When I left the Rusan home Tuesday, I spent a few moments gazing at the site of the old tennis court across the street. I imagined a young Arthur Ashe, tall and graceful, hitting overhead after overhead, while children played in the street in a neighborhood that has proven to be sustainable -- just as Thomas and Georgia Rusan envisioned.



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Figure 8. Newspaper editorial / Bill McClellan interview with Georgia Rusan. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 23 May 2007, D1.

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Saint Louis County, Missouri

Verbal Boundary Description

The properties all lie within the Clayton Park Addition, Assessor's Book 2, Pages 89-90. Lot Numbers include: 12-35; 37-41; 43; 45-51; 57; 59; 59a; 69-85; 97; 99-107. The boundaries are illustrated on the scale map of the district as shown on page 12 of the nomination.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the Bennett Avenue Historic District encompass all of the extant property that was purchased by Thomas and Georgia Rusan in the 1940s – early 1950s for the development of the neighborhood. These lots are within the 1932 platted Clayton Park Subdivision. Land originally included in the Rusan's holdings (at the south end of the neighborhood) was obliterated during interstate construction (Interstate 64/Highway 40) in the 1950s-60s.

Photo Log

1. 8020 Bennett Avenue (SE)
2. 8027 Bennett Avenue (NW)
3. 8015 Bennett Avenue (NW)
4. 8003 Bennett Avenue (NW)
5. 7915 Bennett Avenue (NW)
6. 7911 Bennett Avenue (NW)
7. 7901 Bennett Avenue (NE)
8. 1221 Laclede Station Road (SW)
9. 1221 Laclede Station Road – grass tennis court (NW)
10. 8012 Bennett Avenue (NE)
11. Streetscape – Laclede Station Road (S)
12. 1230 Laclede Station Road (SE)
13. 1234 Laclede Station Road (SE)
14. 1250 Laclede Station Road (SE)
15. 1282 Laclede Station Road (NE)
16. 1239 Laclede Station Road (SW)
17. Streetscape – Laclede Station Road (SW)
18. Streetscape – Bennett Avenue (SE)
19. Streetscape – Laclede Station Road (NE)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#1 SE

8020 Bennett Ave.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenoy - March 2005

MO-SHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#2 NW

8027 Bennett Ave

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keeney - March 2005

MO-STPO (neg)



Bennett Avenue. Historic District

#3 NW

8015 Bennett Ave
St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keeney - March 2005

MO-SHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#4 NW

8003 Bennett Ave.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keeney - March 2005

MO SHPO (neg).



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#5NW

7915 Bennett Avenue

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenway - March 2005

MO-STPO (neg)



#7 NE

Bennett Avenue Historic District

7901 Bennett Avenue

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Heenoy - March 2005

MO-STHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#8 SW

1221 Laclède Station Rd.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keeney - March 2005

MO-STPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#9 NW

1221 Laclede Station Rd - grass tennis court

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenoy - March 2005

MO-SHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#10 NE

8012 Bennett Ave.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keeney - March 2005

MO-STHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#11 S

Streetscape - Laclede Station Rd.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Kenney - March 2005

MO-STHP 0 (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#12 SE

1230 Laclede Station Rd

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenoy - March 2005

MO SHPO (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#13 SE

1234 Ladled Station Rd

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenoy - March 2005

MO-SHPO (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#14 SE

1250 Laclede Station Rd.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenoy - March 2005

MO-STPO (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#15 NE

1282 Laclede Station Rd

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keenoy - March 2005

MO-SHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#16 SW

1239 LaClede Station Rd.

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keanley - March 2005

MO-SHPD (neg)

SPEED
LIMIT
25

Bennett Avenue Historic District

#17 SW

streetscape - Ladde Station Rd

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Keeney - March 2005

MO-STHPD (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District

#18 SE

Streetscape - Bennett Ave

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Greenway - March 2005

MO-STPO (neg)



Bennett Avenue Historic District
Streetscape - Laclede Station Rd.

#19 NE

St. Louis County, MO

Ruth Kenney - March 2005

MO-STHPD (neg).