Courthouse Square Historic District
(Approximately 8.5 acres)

The Courthouse Square Historic District is located in the earliest platted section of Chillicothe and contains some of the oldest commercial buildings in the city. All of the Courthouse Square Historic District is located within the original town of Chillicothe, which was laid out in 1837 and officially platted in 1859. The boundaries of the original town extend from Walnut Street on the west to Vine Street on the east and from Polk Street on the north to Ann Street on the south. The original town was laid out in 240' square blocks with streets set in an orthogonal grid. **Included in the district boundaries are the Courthouse Square, one building in the 600 block, and all of the 700 block of Locust Street, part of the 600 and all of the 700 block of Webster Street and the 600 and 700 blocks of Washington Street.** The buildings on the immediate periphery of the Courthouse Square are the oldest in the district. Buildings in the district date from circa 1877 to circa 1950. More than half (19 of 32) of the buildings in the district were constructed between 1883 and 1900, a period of prosperity, extensive commercial development, and significant population growth in Chillicothe. During this period in Chillicothe and around the country, Victorian styling and ornamentation proliferated and the use of mass-produced architectural elements became commonplace. Common features of these late 19th century buildings included projecting bay windows, pedimented rooflines, cast iron lintels, pilasters and cornices, and pressed tin panels and cornices. Between the turn of the century and 1940, 14 buildings were constructed within the district boundaries. The new commercial buildings were, in general, quite plain. The Livingston County Courthouse, the anchor of the district, is located on the Courthouse Square and was constructed in 1913-14. The Chillicothe City Hall, constructed in 1926, is located one block north of the Courthouse.

The Courthouse Square, a full square block in the heart of downtown Chillicothe, is the focal point of the district. It forms part of the southern boundary of the district and part of the eastern boundary of the district. Washington Street and Locust Street, respectively, run along the north and south sides of the Courthouse Square. **(The historic names below represent the first known owner of the property or the earliest business in the building; the date in parentheses indicates the first year that owner or business is known to have owned or operated out of the property.)**

**Locust Street** is 16 blocks long and runs north and south from First Street to Park Avenue. Locust Street runs through the middle of the district. Of the seven buildings on Locust Street that are included in the district limits, six are contributing buildings.

- **Courthouse Square, the Livingston County Courthouse (1914) 1913-1914.** A 3-story Beaux-Arts stone courthouse with clay tile hipped roof. Designed by R. Warren Roberts; the contractor for the project was L.W. Dumas.
- 619-621 Locust Street, the Wallbrunn Building (1899) ca. 1898. A 3-story brick, two-part commercial building.
- 701 Locust Street, the First National Bank Building #2 (1906) 1906. A 2-story stone bank building with classical detailing.
- 706-708 Locust, the L.A. Martin/O.B. Ostrinder Building (1890) 1890. A 7-bay, brick, two-part commercial building with elaborate Victorian detailing.
- 709-711 Locust, the Tanner Brothers Building (1885) ca. 1884-1895. A modern metal false facade covers the entire upper section of this 2-story building.
- 713 Locust Street, the H.W. Schulte Building (1910) 1910. A brick one-part commercial block which retains much of its original appearance.
- 724 Locust Street, the Barnes Implement Co. Building (1940) ca. 1939. A one-story brick commercial building with no ornamentation.

Washington Street is also known as Missouri State Highway 65. The road becomes Washington Street at the southern city limits. It runs through the center of downtown, continues on to the northern city limits, where it reverts to Highway 65. Washington Street forms the western boundary of the district. The west half of the 600 block and all of the 700 block of Washington Street are included in the district.

- 606 Washington Street, the Nick J. Rensch Building (1885) ca. 1877. A 2-story, brick two-part commercial building.
- 608-612 Washington Street (1885) ca. 1884, ca. 1920. The brick facade of this 2-story commercial building dates to the 1920's, but the structure of the building probably dates to the late 19th century.
• **618–620 Washington Street, the Davis/Milbank Building (1885) ca. 1880.** A 3-bay brick commercial building with a symmetrical facade and Italianate detailing.

• **622 Washington Street, the Hartman Building (1884) ca. 1884.** A 2-story brick commercial building.

• **702 Washington Street, the Leeper Hotel (1884) 1884, ca. 1915, 1929.** An L-shaped 4-story brick hotel building. The building was originally constructed in 1884. A fourth story was added ca. 1915, and the hotel was remodeled in 1929 at which time the entire facade was rebuilt with red brick and stone.

• **708–710 Washington Street (1883) ca. 1883.** A 3-bay, 2-story brick commercial building.

• **711 Washington Street (1927) ca. 1926.** The original facade of this 2-story commercial building is completely obscured by a metal and glass false facade.

• **715 Washington, the Chillicothe City Hall (1926) 1926.** A 3-story, brick government building with a three-bay Classical Revival facade.

• **718 Washington, the Burch & Dobson Grocery Building (1896) ca. 1895.** The original facade of this 2-story brick commercial building is completely obscured by a metal facade.

• **720–722 Washington, the S. Palmer Building (1895) ca. 1894.** A 3-bay, 2-story commercial building with a symmetrical facade and cast iron and pressed tin detailing.

Webster Street forms part of the northern boundary of the district. It runs east/west and is approximately 25 blocks long. Webster Street begins at Broadway Street on the south and ends near the western limits of the city. The 600 and 700 blocks of Webster Street are included in the boundaries of the district. Of the 12 buildings on Webster Street included within the district boundaries, eight are contributing buildings.

• **605 Webster (1899) ca. 1899.** A 2-story brick commercial building with a 3-bay facade.

• **607–609 Webster, the P. Kirby Building (1900) 1900.** A 2-story brick commercial building.
• **610 Webster, the People's Telephone Exchange Building (1908) 1908.** A free-standing two-story brick commercial building with a symmetrical facade.

• **613 Webster (1890) ca 1889.** The upper half of the facade of this two-part commercial building is covered with metal.

• **701 Webster, the Ostrinder/Wigely Building (1885) 1884.** A 2-story commercial building with a 1940s-era storefront.

• **703 Webster, the First National Bank Building #1 (1887) 1887.** A 3-bay, 2-story brick commercial building with symmetrical Italianate detailing.

• **705 Webster, the William E. Crellin Building (1885) ca. 1884.** The narrowest extant commercial building in the survey area, this 2-story brick commercial building still retains all of its original cast iron detailing. However, the first floor storefront is not original.

• **707-711 Webster (1925) ca. 1925.** A 2-story brick building which is divided into three commercial spaces on the first floor.

• **713-715 Webster, the Sipple Clothing Co./Broyles Land Co. Building (1890) ca. 1889.** A 2-story, 7-bay, two-part commercial building.

• **717 Webster (1885) ca. 1884, ca. 1990.** The facade of this 2-story commercial building has been completely changed over the years.

• **719 Webster (1885) ca. 1884, ca. 1990.** The facade of this 2-story commercial building has been totally replaced within the last 20 years. The new brick facade is devoid of ornamentation.

• **721 Webster, the Owl Pharmacy Building (1884) ca. 1884, ca. 1991.** The facade of this 2-story commercial building was totally replaced in the 1990s. The new brick facade is devoid of ornamentation.
History

Early Settlement: 1837-1851

None of the buildings in the district date from this period. The original town of Chillicothe, Missouri, was laid out in 1837 by Nathan Gregory and officially platted in 1859. Although a block of the Original Town was designated as a public square and the first courthouse was constructed in 1837, Chillicothe was not officially named the county seat of Livingston County until 1839.

The Railroad Era: 1852-1882

Two of the 32 (6%) buildings in the district date from this period. Both of the buildings are contributing buildings. In 1852, construction began on the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, and Chillicothe was announced as one of the stops along the new railroad's route. Chillicothe began to experience both commercial and population growth as soon as construction on the railway began. The town's first boom period lasted from 1852 to 1860. By 1860, Chillicothe's population reached nearly 1000, and more than 25 different stores were in operation there. However, the town's growth and prosperity were temporarily interrupted when the Civil War began in 1861. As soon as the Civil War ended, Chillicothe's economy began to recover. With the completion of two additional rail lines to Chillicothe in 1867 and 1869, the town quickly became an agricultural, commercial, and industrial center. Both the Rensch Building and the Davis/Milbank Building are good examples of early commercial buildings in Chillicothe.

The Victorian Era: 1883-1900

Nineteen of the 32 (59%) buildings in the district were constructed during this period. Of the 19 buildings, 12 are contributing buildings. Chillicothe's location on three major rail lines continued to draw new business and industry during the last two decades of the 20th century. As a result of the town's growth and prosperity, Chillicothe's downtown area continued to develop and new buildings were constructed on all of the streets in the district during this period. Because the demand for downtown commercial space was great, during the last two decades of the 20th century, many businessmen constructed new buildings for their own use, but also as commercial rental space. The Walbrunn Building is a good example of such a building. One of the largest buildings erected in the district during this era was the Leeper House, which was later known as the Leeper Hotel. It was built by Andrew Leeper and S. McWilliams. Andrew Leeper came to Chillicothe with his parents in 1854; his father was president of the first bank in Chillicothe, a branch of the State Bank of Missouri. The Leeper Hotel was so successful that a fourth story was added to the building around 1915. The Leeper Hotel is the oldest hotel building in Chillicothe, and it is the only hotel in the Courthouse Square Historic District.

The Highway City: 1901-1952

Eleven of the 32 (35%) buildings in the district were constructed during this period. Of the 11 buildings, 10 are contributing buildings. Automobiles and trucks began to gain popularity in the early 20th century, and Chillicothe became a highway crossroads. By the second decade of the 20th century, Chillicothe had earned the nickname, "The Highway City." The Pike's Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway, now Highway 36, runs east and west just south of town. In addition, Washington Street (Highway 65), the western boundary of the district and the major north/south route in Chillicothe, became part of the "Jefferson Highway - Blue J Route." As a result of the use of automobiles and the development of the highway system, many new commercial buildings were constructed in Chillicothe in areas beyond the immediate.
downtown area. Despite this fact, the Courthouse Square Historic District continued to develop. Two new bank buildings were constructed - The First National Bank Building #2 constructed in 1906, and the Peoples Trust Company Building constructed in 1916.

By the turn of the 20th century, the courthouse square area and the surrounding blocks were fully developed. Older buildings were often destroyed by fire, but some buildings were demolished simply to make room for new buildings. Most buildings constructed after the turn of the century had plainer facades with little or no ornamentation. The Lambert Building at 614 Washington Street is typical of this trend. The Lambert Building was constructed on the site of the New York Store Building, which was erected in 1871. The most significant new buildings constructed in the district during this period were the Livingston County Courthouse and the Chillicothe City Hall, which were constructed in 1913-14 and 1926, respectively. They are the only two buildings in the district known to be designed by professional architects, and they are among the few high-style buildings in Chillicothe.