

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY: The Lincoln Courthouse Square Historic District encompasses approximately 10 square blocks, or about half of the original town of Lincoln that was laid out in 1853 (See Figure 1). The District includes the public courthouse square, an area paralleling the railroad, and the central business district. Early business growth occurred both near the railroad and around the courthouse square, which was some distance from the railroad. This caused the business district to take on a twin-node character from its inception. (See Figure 2). The District includes a variety of building types and architectural styles, ranging from the 2½ story, domed, neo-classical style courthouse to a one story, mission style arcade building. There are also a sizeable number of two and three story, brick, Italianate Commercial buildings remaining from the District's major growth period in the late 19th century. While other commercial areas have developed in Lincoln during the past 25 years, the central business district remains a strong commercial center.

SHAPE OF DISTRICT, TYPES OF STRUCTURES, ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND APPEARANCE: The Lincoln Courthouse Square Historic District is situated near the center of Lincoln, which is the county seat of Logan County. The District and Lincoln are located in a flat prairie region in central Illinois, 170 miles southwest of Chicago and 125 miles north-east of St. Louis, Missouri. The population of Lincoln is currently about 16,400. The city has a fairly stable, diversified economy based on light manufacturing, state governmental and educational institutions.

Since the early town was laid out parallel to the railroad, which ran in a northeasterly direction between St. Louis and Chicago, the early town's grid pattern was also askew, rather than being on a direct N, S, E, & W pattern. The District is dominated by the 2½ story, domed courthouse, which is located in the center of the courthouse block. Traffic from the railroad caused many businesses to establish themselves along both sides of the tracks, while courthouse activity prompted many to set up facing the courthouse. Other businesses built along the walk from the train depot to the courthouse. This pattern of development is reflected in the delineation of the Courthouse Square Historic District (See Figure 1), which is generally bounded by Pekin Street on the north, Hamilton on the east, the alley between Pulaski and Clinton on the south, and Logan on the west.

Most of the structures in the Courthouse Square Historic District are two and three story commercial buildings that date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ten disastrous fires (1870 through 1878) left few buildings remaining from the era 1853-1880. Building materials include brick, limestone, terra-cotta, stucco and frame. In addition to the commercial, public and quasi-public structures in the District, there are six frame, Queen Anne duplexes, four on the west and two on the east edges of the District. The boundaries of the District were drawn to circumscribe the continuous grouping of these buildings, while excluding intrusions of unrelated development.

While several of the commercial buildings appear to have relatively unaltered storefronts, most of the storefronts have been altered over time with changes ranging from wood infill of glass transoms, to the addition of asphalt shingled awnings over the lower front, to the total replacement of the lower front with vinyl and metal framed openings.