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STATE Illinois

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NAME CHRISTIAN HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT	
AND/OR COMMON	
LOCATION Most of the area bounded by Bell State, Cliff, interior property River	le, 7th, interior property lines NE o lines NW of Bluff and the Mississipp
CITY, TOWN	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Alton VICINITY OF	
STATE CODE	COUNTY CODE Madison
CLASSIFICATION	
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DATE 1) October 1973; 2) May 1974FED	ERAL XSTATE _COUNTY _LOCAL

Illinois Department of Conservation

CONDITION

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CHECK ONE

_EXCELLENT

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Christian Hill neighborhood of the City of Alton lies on the Mississivu River bluffs immediately west of and adjacent to the city's central business district. Topographically, those bluffs, rising vertically nearly 200 feet from the level of the flood plain, are the dominant and prominent feature, forming, as they fall somewhat more gently but still steeply to the northeast and east, the actual hill of Christian Hill. Cut by ravines on the southwest, giving rise to considerable undevelopable open land, this hill terminates in a narrow ridge extending northwest along present State Street and clearly defines both the extent and the character of the Christian Hill neighborhood.

The Christian Hill Historic District includes all of this traditional neighborhood and actually extends *lightly beyond its boundaries to the northwest along State, on the eastto Belle, and on the south below 4th. The actual boundary of the district -- like its character -- was determined first and foremost by the lay of the land and corresponds quite closely on the east, south and southwest to the base of the hill/bluff. Northeast of State, where the hill descends again, there is also a distinct and sudden change in the character of the extant structures along the descent. The boundary here, thus, runs much closer to the crest of the hill; despite the fact that structures of similar character and quality re-appear near its base along 9th Street: the intervening developments along the slope are simply too different and extensive to be overlooked or bridged. Unified first by topography, the district also reflects a visual continuity of character. Thus, though the area of Bluff, Belleview and adjacent streets at first seems quite different than that of State and Beacon, that difference is not germane but only temporal: seen in context, these differences simply represent the extremes of a relatively unbroken development extending from ca.1830-1910. This matter of character represents the second major criterion applied in defining the limits of the historic district: the eastern boundary, for example, not only reflects the base of the hill but the different character of the central business district to the east as well.

Land use within the district is primarilly residential, but there are a number of commercial and related uses on lower State and William streets as they approach Broa way. Almost all of these, however, arose very early and do not represent encroachment by the central business district. Religious and educational uses are dispersed in a manner consistent with the district's residential nature and the extensive open land is mostly topographically conditioned and subject to little or no threat of unsuitable development. There are no federal properties within the district.

The street pattern of Alton's Christian Hill, as may be expected, is completely conditioned by the topography, with only slight reference to Illinois' pervasive rectangular grid. The major thoroughfare is State Street, which rises from the river valley and extends through the district generally along the crest of the hill. Most other streets — the notable exception being Summit paralleling the brink of the bluffs — intersect State at a variety of angles and at irregular intervals, creating several magnificent vistas. Most of these streets, i.e. other than State, are paved with brick, greatly enhancing their historic character. Another visual factor adding significantly to the picturesque street-scape is the number of native limestone retaining walls, the most prominent along the north side of Bond from Beacon to Prospect. Of streets through the district, only State carries appreciable traffic, while three boundary streets, Belle, Broadway and State below 4th, actually bear heavy volume. The steepest grade — both in the district and the whole City of Alton — is 7th between State and Belle, hazardous when dry and nearly suicidal when wet.

Structural density, though moderate on the average and lower than that of the City of Alton as a whole, varies significantly within the district. The highest density is encountered on lower State Street, with a closed commercial wall extending for a full block north from Droadway and a residential ensemble ascending the hill from 4th to Bond that, while composed of detached dwellings, has the effect of a nearly closed wall. The latter,

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combining high density with a relatively steep ascent, constitutes an urban landscape most probably unique in the State of Illinois. Proceeding up State Street from Bond, density gradually diminishes, as it does when moving along intersecting streets from State towards the verge of the bluffs. Most residences in the district are single-family, detached, and generally 2-2½ stories high. Masonry construction is dominant for those built before or shortly after the Civil War and is more heavily concentrated on and in the vicinity of lower State Street, while frame predominates in areas developed later, ca.1890-1910, such as Bluff and its environs. Commercial structures are all of masonry construction and between 2 and 3½ stories high. The tallest building in the district is the Cld Cathedral on State opposite Prospect. Relationships between buildings in the district are generally very strong in terms of siting, scale, material, style, etc., but there are moments where the topography and oft times dense vegetation obscure any comprehensive view.

Of 274 structures encompassed within the Christian Hill Historic District, excluding minor outbuildings and garages, 72 have been evaluated as possessing special architectural and/or historical significance and an additional 13 were photographed by the Illinois Historic Structures Survey. Of the background structures, almost all are pre-world War I and thoroughly in sympathy with the historic fabric, while several pre-date the Civil War and transcend background by dint of theer age. Modern siding material is a problem -- 39% of the background structures are inappropriately sided -- but much of this is of an older type, i.e. not aluminium, steel or vinyl, and was applied without loss of original detailing. Continuing restoration, which has been quite extensive and rather well-executed during the past few years, can therefore be legitimately expected to return at least some of these to a more prominent and proper place in the streetscape. Intrusions -- most notably a new bank at 4th and State and an older commercial structure at Belle and 6th -- and intrusively remodeled older structures together account for only 8 buildings, or 2.9% of those extant -- remarkably low considering both the relative age of the district and its proximity to the central business district.

The oldest buildings in the district date from the early 1830's and are almost all cast in a Federal idiom. Even respecting Alton's early prominence in the state, the extent and quality of surviving Federal architecture in Christian Hill is extraordinary, moreso since it embraces both commercial and residential structures (including Nos.2,5,8,9,16-20 below). There are also a number of buildings characteristic of the transition from Federal to Greek Revival (including Nos.22-4 below) and a few that even reveal Federal, Greek and Italianate traits, but almost none in an even approximately pure Greek Revival vein. Based on available information regarding dates of construction, it appears that the Federal Style retained its popularity in Alton virtually up to the outbreak of the Civil War, to then be almost immediately superseded by the Italianate. The latter style is also very well represented in the Christian Hill district (including Nos.1,3,7,10,12-14 below) and seems, in its guise as mansarded Second Empire, to have effected a number of early remodelings (including Nos.6,21 below). A small number of buildings documents the transition from Italianate to Queen Anne (including No.11 below), with a larger number in that latter style, particularly on Bluff, often with a strong Classical Revival admizture. Other 19th Century styles occurring include non-archaeological Gothic (v.No.15 below) and Romanesque Revival (notably the Hayner Library at 4th and State by Theodore Link), while the only 20th Century style in evidence is the bungaloid.

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	XRELIGION
1400-1499	X ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599 ´	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	XSOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
X_1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
<u>X</u> 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	X INDUSTRY	XPOLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE N.E. -- Of the above categories, only architecture applies to the district as a whole. Others refer to individual sites and structures.

JNVENTION

- With both commercial and residential structures surviving from Alton's first period of rajor growth, the Christian Hill Historic District contains within its bounds one of the finest and densest concentrations of pre-Civil War architecture in Illinois, a concentration that produces, in concert with a varied topography, an urban landscape of unique character. Although there are several individual structures of outstanding excellence, the significance of the ensemble would in no way be diminished were these of lesser stature, for it is precisely the ensemble -- including numerous buildings that would be considered minor if judged individually -- that is so striking.

Though the density and quality of this earliest fabric is the single point of greatest significance, it is not the only one. The Christian Hill neighborhood -- all of which is included within the district -- continued to develop through out the 19th Century, producing residential passages of high quality from virtually every period up to the First World War. Since this development rarely proceeded at the expense of earlier structures, it produced a remarkably tight-knit, yet varied texture, in which every particular phase can be clearly distinguished.

HISTORY

The history of Christian Hill, it being principally a residential neighborhood, is difficult to separate from that of Alton as a whole, yet certain points can be gleaned from these more general works. When Alton was laid out and platted by Col.Rufus Easton in 1817, Christian Hill lay somewhat to the west, the original western boundary of the prospective settlement having been Market Street. In fact, the very existence of the hill was cited in 1831 by John M.Peck in his <u>Guide for Emigrants</u> as a disadvantage, it being one of the features making Alton "too much confined for a pleasant situation."

A very tenuous undertaking for years after its foundation, Alton began to blossom in 1831 and underwent a period of phenomenal growth from that year until the Panic of 1837, six years that also mark the beginnings of the Christian Hill neighborhood. Most significant among these first developments was that of the Illinois State Prison, opened in 1833 (v.No.4 below), but commercial and residential activity also progressed quickly, beginning at State and Broadway and ascending the hill up State and William streets. Several structures from this initial phase are still extant and play a major role in the district. Another early development, not technically part of Christian Hill but included in the district, was that of Belle Street between 3rd and 9th, the street soon becoming the most fashionable in pre-Civil War Alton. Unfortunately, only three structures remain from this period, all of them within the same block (v.Nos.16 & 17 below and 612 Belle).

Judging from the extant building stock, growth of the Christian Hill neighborhood was not entirely halted by the Panic of 1837, but proceeded up the hill and then towards the

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CONTINUATION SHEET

SIGNIFICANCE

ITEM NUMBER

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verge of the bluffs until about World War I, seemingly without major interruption or significant change in character. That character — residential and quite fashionable despite the presence of a penitentiary — seems to have existed from the very beginning and was definitely confirmed in 1855 and 1857, first with the erection of SS Peter and Paul Catholic church (v.No.15) and then with its elevation as the Cathedral of the Alton Diocese. This same church was also directly responsible for the neighborhood's name: when the old catholic church at 3rd and Alby burned in 1853 and its site was sold to the Unitarians, the new location's hill came to be known as Christian while that of the old became Pagan.

Remarkably few changes have affected Christian Hill over the past 50-60 years. There has been some deterioration -- now largely halted and partially reversed -- have been a few losses, and a very few recent replacement structures. But, on the whole, Christian Hill remains the fashionable and extraordinary neighborhood it was from the start.

SITES AND STRUCTURES OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Numbers refer to the corresponding map. In cases where more than one area of significance applies, that of the greater is cited first.

1. FOUR COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES ca.307-13 West Broadway Built ca.1870 et seq.

These four structures also mark the approximate site of the mob murder of Elijah Loveto in 1837. Elijah Lovejoy assumed editorial charge of the St.Louis Coserver in November 1833, but was forced to abandon that place in 1836 when his anti-slavery views raised the ire of its inhabitants. Removing his press to Alton on 21 July of that year, it was cast into the Mississippi that same night. With contributions from Alton ilizens, however, a new press was purchased and the first number of the Alton Observer issued on 8 September 1836. A staunch abolitionist, Lovejoy restrained himself until July of 1837, when he editorialized in favor of the formation of an Illinois State Anti-Slavery Society (editorial written 4 July, appeared 6 July). The events precipitated by the editorial led to the destruction of the Observer's press on 21 August, of its replacement on 21 September, and, on 7 November, to Lovejoy's murder while he and 19 others were defending a fourth press. The murder and subsequent trials received national attention and were of major importance in the developing conflict over the slavery question.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (STRUCTURES)
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (SITE)

2. COL. SAMUEL BUCKMASTER HOUSE 514 State Built after 1835

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2. Continued

Samuel Buckmaster, one of Alton's earliest settlers, was very prominent in local and state politics. He was Mayor of Alton in 1853-4 and 1862-3; a delegate to the 1862 Constitutional Convention; a State Representative in the 17th, 182, 23rd and 30m Illinois General Assemblies, serving as Speaker of the Illinois House in the 23rd; a State Senato in the 21st and 22nd Assemblies; and a delegate to the Democratic National Conventions at Baltimore and Charleston. A Stephen Douglas supporter, he defeated Joseph Gillespie, Lincoln's candidate, in the 1858 election for State Senator and was a key to Douglas' election to the U.S.Senate. For much of the period 1838-67, he was the lessee, i.e. warden, of the State Prison at Alton (v.No.4 below).

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

3. LUCAS PFEIFFENBERGER HOUSE

708 State

Built ca. 1868; Lucas Pfeiffenberger, architect

Lucas Pfeiffenberger, the most important of Alton's 192 Century architects, was born in Germany and brought to the United States by his parents at an early age. Settling in Chio, Lucas was apprenticed to a carpenter. He later spent time in the California gold fields and while on a second trip west in 1857 settled at Alton. He practiced as an architect from that time until his death in 1918 the last years in partnership with his son, and many of his works remain in Alton, particularly in the Middletown neighborhood (under separate nomination to the National Register).

Lucas Pfeiffenberger also served four successive terms as Mayor of Alton (1872 et seq.), was one of the organizers of the Alton Board of Trade (1866) and its president (1885-191) and was involved in banking as well.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

4. ALTON STATE PENITENTIARY SITE (ALTON MILITARY PRISON SITE, entered on NR 12-31-74) Bounded by William, 4th and Mill

Though the history of Illinois' first state prison -- and the state's first public institution of any kind -- begins in 1827, with the appointment of commissioners to procure a suitable site at or near Alton, that site was not selected until 1829 and construction not begun until late in 1830. The prison was opened in 1833 with 24 cells and grew to 256 cells by 1857, when the Alton facility was closed and the penitentiary removed to its present location at Joliet. The prison's most infamous period, however, began in 1862 when it was occupied by the U.S.Government as a military prison.

All that now remains above ground is a section of wall, itself relocated in 1974. A large part of the site is paved and in use as a parking lot.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL (HISTORIC PERIOD) SIGNIFICANCE

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5. EDWARD KEATING HOUSE 307 Carroll Built ca.1835

Edward Keating, a lawyer, came to Alton from Maine in 1835. A man of some prominence, he was Mayor of Alton in 1847-8 and also served in the State Legislature.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

6. JOHN J. AND WILLIAM H.MITCHELL DOUBLE HOUSE AND COACHHOUSE 310 Mill

Built before 1858; mansard possibly added somewhat later

The Mitchell brothers settled at Alton in the 1840's and achieved considerable prominence and wealth in railroading, river shipping, banking, and flour milling. They also owned considerable Illinois farm land and, after 1864, were co-lessees of the Alton Prison with Col.Samuel Buckmaster. Both later left Alton, John J. for St.Louis and William for Chicago.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

7. SPARKS FAMILY HOUSE
410 Prospect
Rear built ca.1835-40; front, ca.1860

The Sparks family was early associated with Alton's prominent flour milling industry. ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

8. (DR. CHARLES DAVIS) HOUSE 517 State
Built ca.1847

Dr. Davis, a prominent Alton physician, lived here around the turn of the century. The original owner has not been determined.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

9. PETER WISE HOUSE I 605 State Built ca.1852

See No.13 below.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

10. LOUIS HAAGEN HOUSE 617 State Built ca.1863 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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10. Continued

Louis Haagen was an early Alton dry goods merchant ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

11. RESIDENCE 707 State Built ca.1870

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

12. HENRY WEAVER HOUSE
711 State
Built ca.1860 by George Ginter, contractor
ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

13. PETER WISE HOUSE II 1128 State Built between 1859 and 1865

Peter Wise and his brother Sebastian were among Alton's most prominent citizens around the time of the Civil War, together founding the important National Mills in 1858. They also operated a steam mill and packet steamers on the Mississippi. A later resident of the house (1898 et seq.) was Franklin W.Clin, founder of the Olin Corporation and a major philanthropist.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

14. HESKETT MACHINE SHOP 211 William Built in 1870

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

15. SS. PETER AND PAUL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (OLD CATHEDRAL)
721 State

Built in 1855 by Thomas Walsh, architect, of St. Louis; steeple modified

Alton was made the See of Illinois' second Roman Catholic diocese in 1857, indicative of the city's early importance, and remained an episcopal seat until 1923, when the See was removed to Springfield.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

16. DOUBLE HOUSE

606-03 Belle
Built ca.1840

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

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17. (DR. B. K. HART) HOUSE 522-24 Belle Built before 1850

Benjamin Kirtland Hart was Alton's first physician, arriving in 1832, and one of the early settlement's most prominent men. He was elected to the board of town trustees in 1836, was president of that board in 1837 when Alton was incorporated as a city, and served for years on the city council. Dr.Hart was also instrumental in establishing Alton's public school system, one of the first and most extensive in the state. Though there is no record that Dr.Hart ever actually lived at this address — he apparently had it built as an income property — it is the only extant structure associated with this important early settler.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE EQUALLY

18. FRANKLIN HOUSE (NOW:LINCOLN HOTEL)
208 State
Built ca.1835

One of two early hotels to survive, Franklin House was originally run by Samuel Pitts. The south half of the first floor was also the original location of the Alton Marine and Fire Insurance Company, the first such firm in the state. Though Abraham Lincoln never slept here, he, his family, Sen.Lymar Trumbull and others did dine here before the 7th and last Lincoln-Douglas Debate, 15 October 1858.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

19. MANSION HOUSE 506 State Built in 1834

The second early hotel to survive, the Mansion House was built, owned and operated by one Captain Botkin. It was later the site of two boarding schools, run successively by the Daughters of Charity and Ursuline Sisters (1857-62), and was then a quasi-medical establishment to aid the sick and wounded at the Alton Prison and stem the smallpox epidemic that had broken out there in 1863.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

20. MICHAEL CARROLL HOUSE 512 William Built 1838-40

Michael Carroll settled in Alton by 1832, having opened a harness and saddle shop that year. For over thirty years subsequent, he was the leading member of that trade in the city.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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21. JOSEPH WISE HOUSE

505 Bond

Built ca. 1854 by Sebastian Wise; mansard probably added somewhat later

Joseph Wise was the son of Sebastian Wise and the house was deeded to him by his father in 1858. See also No.13.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

22. JOHN E. HAYNER HOUSE 304 Mill

Built before 1858

John Hayner settled at Alton in 1848 and went on to become one of the city's most prominent and successful businessmen. His many pursuits included the hardware, sawmill, and box businesses, but he was best known as president of the Alton Savings Bank and vice-president of the Alton National Bank. Civic-minded throughout his life, The Hayner Memorial Library at 4th and State is his most visible contribution to the city.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

23. J.T.HUDSON HOUSE
410 Belleview
Built ca.1856 by J.T.Calvin

J.T.Hudson was the publisher of the <u>Spectator</u>, an early Alton newspaper (founded in (1832).

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

24. JOHN DRURY HOUSE 1011 State Built before 1860

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC History of Madison County, I Norton, W.T., ed., Centennia Coombs & Elgin, Historic Bui Alton Area Landmarks Assn., Nedde, Paul R., A Plan for t Neighborhood, Alton,	llinois, W. l History o ldings Surv Bluff City he Historic	H.Brink & Confidence of Madison Confidence o	Co., <u>Ill.</u> , C) <u>Ill.</u> , St.Jar Alton 1974. on of the C	hicago & I mes, Mo.,	N.Y. 1912. 1967.	
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property lines themselves to the interior property lines W of State, N on these to Cliff, E on Cliff to State, N on State to the N line of 1231 State, E on this to the interior property lines E of State, S on these and the E line of 356 Bluff and generally SE on the interior property lines NE of State to 7th, E on 7th to Belle, S on Belle to the S line of 522 Belle, W on this to the interior property lines E of State, S on these to 4th and then W on 4th to the point of commencement.

N.B.: Unless otherwise specified, boundary segments along streets and alleys follow the midline of those streets and alleys