

## Local residences reflect 125 years of trends in building types and styles

Written by Becca Brandt

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Seen walking around town last summer armed with cameras and clipboards, Abbey Christman and Diana Krogmeier have returned to Holyoke to report on their research of the historic buildings in Holyoke.

Their presentation, *Building Holyoke: 125 years of History as Seen through its Architecture*, took place as part of the city's 125th anniversary celebration.

A 2003 HHS graduate, Krogmeier studied her hometown as an intern with the Center of Preservation Research through the University of Colorado College of Architecture and Planning. Krogmeier began her internship in the spring of 2012.

Surveying buildings in Holyoke, Haxtun and Paoli, the team of Christman, Krogmeier and Joe Coleman gathered data for many buildings. The area surveyed in Holyoke was mapped out by decade and function.

Krogmeier was immersed in historic architecture in Mount Vernon, Iowa while she was attending Cornell College. She began investigating historical architecture as an intern with the Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission.

Many of the buildings in Holyoke have been destroyed or heavily altered, but some of them have been well preserved.

Krogmeier remembers the layout of Holyoke from the 1990s, but did not think about the story behind the buildings until she began her research of the city.

The history about Inklings Bookstore and Krogmeier's house in Amherst were revealed as Krogmeier researched more.

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The bookstore was built in 1915 and served as the Holyoke Automobile Company. The bookstore has been well preserved and looks fairly similar to the automobile company.

Looking at her own house, Krogmeier did not immediately realize it was originally a three-room building. Prior to modifications, it was apparent that the house was a hipped box type. A hipped box is characterized as one-story, square buildings with a hipped or pyramid roof. The Burlington and Missouri Railroad provided an early route to Holyoke for building materials.

Popular in Holyoke, 74 hipped box homes were included in the survey of Holyoke.

In total, 640 sites were surveyed including 540 houses. In order to build their report, the team surveyed all structures built before 1970. The survey provided types of buildings found in the area along with significant buildings and historic districts to be included in a database of all the buildings surveyed.

With the information collected, historic district recommendations were made. A National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form was also created to provide guidelines to evaluate the significance and eligibility of the buildings and district in the county.

The different architectural styles of the residences in Holyoke were presented by Christman.

Many of the structures were found using the assessor's database and modifications were discovered by comparing homes to photos found at the Phillips County Museum.

In addition to the hipped box, gable front structures dominate the area. Eighty-four gable front structures were identified, along with 43 other gable front and wing structures.

The gable front was the ideal house for narrow lots as it faced the street and extended backward.

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Hall and parlor homes were popular housing types in the 19th century, but only 10 remain in Holyoke today.

Bungalows are characterized as one or one-and-a-half story structures with low pitched roofs and usually large porches. Fifty-three bungalows were included in the survey.

Folk Victorian houses are less common in Holyoke, only totaling 12 in the survey.

Even less common is the foursquare house. It resembles the hipped box, but had two or two-and-a-half stories. The team reported only three foursquare houses in Holyoke.

Most of the homes built in the early days of Holyoke were made from less expensive materials. Following World War II, masonry became more affordable.

As a result, English cottages were brought to the area. Identified by their steeply-pitched roofs and arched doorways, there are six English Cottages in Holyoke.

A mid-century type of house was the minimal traditional. This house usually has a projecting front gable and minimal ornamentation. The surveying group counted 53 minimal traditional style homes in the area.

The single-story, low to the ground ranch houses arrived in Holyoke in the 1950s and 1960s. Often including large picture windows and an attached garage, 83 ranch houses remain in Holyoke.

Along with giving audience members an idea of the current residential characteristics, Christman explained building trends throughout the history of Holyoke.

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Today, none of the sod houses remain that were built by homesteaders in the 1880s. In an area once referred to as the “Great American Desert,” settlers came with high hopes.

Most of the early buildings were put up very quickly, making use of the limited resources in the area. Drought in the 1890s discouraged the settlers and many buildings were abandoned. Those that weren't were replaced or renovated. Only three structures remain from the 1890s.

The early development of Holyoke boomed between 1910 and 1920. Of the surveyed buildings, 212 sprang up during the 10-year span. 194 of the sites were residential and the other 18 were commercial buildings.

The town's population fluctuated based on agricultural trends, so a push in farming in the early 1900s brought in many settlers.

The biggest building boom in Holyoke occurred in 1918 when 103 houses were built. Following World War I, there was a greater demand for land, bringing in more settlers.

The commercial buildings used to have gable or shed roofs that would be covered with a rectilinear front. The fronts were used to make the town look more prosperous and gave business owners more room to advertise on the front of the buildings.

There are 10 false fronts remaining in Holyoke. The Wolf Auto Center building, built in 1905, provides a good example of how a false front can be utilized for large signs.

False fronts over frame buildings were replaced by brick buildings as the town became established.

Simple houses were also being replaced by styles that were popular across the nation. A push

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toward cleanliness and efficiency led to small homes with built in furniture.

Access to popular styles came in the form of catalog homes. Mass produced materials meant the home could be made at a cheaper cost or the ready-cut materials could be put in a railcar to be delivered to a building site to be assembled.

Throughout the years, single story homes became more popular. The kitchen became the central part of the home and floor plans became more open and large windows were used to make small homes feel larger.

From the survey, Christman and Krogmeier realized many of the buildings in Holyoke are much older than they appear and the alterations on the buildings reveal the trends in building styles.

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