

IRON, WINE, AND A WOMAN NAMED LUCY:  
LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY IN ST. JAMES, MISSOURI

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A Thesis  
presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
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AUGUST 2008

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

IRON, WINE, AND A WOMAN NAMED LUCY:  
LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY IN ST. JAMES, MISSOURI

presented by Brent Alexander,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Soren Larsen

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Professor Larry Brown

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Dedicated to the people of St. James

...and to Lucy – we are indebted to the love you had for this town.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Soren Larsen for being an outstanding advisor to me during my graduate school experience. I learned a lot.

I would like to thank the other members of my thesis committee – Dr. Larry Brown and Dr. Elaine Lawless – for all of their great ideas, challenging critiques, and the time they devoted to proofreading this lengthy piece of work.

Thanks are due as well to other members of the Geography Department faculty and the greater academic community who offered advice and constructive criticism throughout the development of this research project. I would like to send a special thank you to Dr. John Fraser Hart for giving me the opportunity to say that I have fielded criticism from a legend in the discipline.

I would like to thank all of my fellow graduate students who have provided some scholarly – but mostly emotional – support over the past two years in Room 2.

I would like to thank the Center for Arts and Humanities and the Department of Geography at the University of Missouri for helping me fund my field research in St. James.

But most of all, I would like to thank all the people in St. James who assisted me during my field research. I would like to thank my parents for providing accommodations; Kristin Whitaker and the *Leader-Journal* for helping me spread the word about my work; and Mayor Dennis Wilson, Verna Brand, Myra Ortvals and Bob Wilson for sharing your thoughts about St. James with me. I would especially like to thank the twenty-seven people whom I interviewed, on whose words much of this thesis is based. Without the valuable memories, perceptions and opinions you shared with me, I would not be writing this. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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ABSTRACT

The research presented here explores sense of place in the town of St. James, Missouri by examining place perceptions and attachments among residents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted within a stratified sample of 27 individuals to explore the individual and collective memories, perceptions, and lived experiences that contribute to the residents' sense of place. This lived reality is posited against the "official vision" of St. James – the image presented by tourism, government, development and official history – to explore the question of authenticity on the landscape. The lived reality offers three alternate landscapes of St. James. "St. James as palimpsest" presents a landscape built on memory, legacy, pride and change. "St. James as Mayberry" presents a landscape based on quality of life, place attachment, civic obligation and the outside perspective. "St. James as cruisescape" presents a landscape built on young adult memories of childhood and teenage years lived in the town, the natural setting of the town, and visions of the future. An additional element to this research concerns the issue of reflexivity in ethnographic research: the investigator grew up in St. James but has been away for many years, making him neither a true insider nor outsider. The research concludes with an assessment of the situation of small Midwestern towns at the brink of the twenty-first century.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Literature Review

#### St. James, Missouri

St. James is a town of about four thousand people at the southern edge of central Missouri. It has a central location relative to other places in the state: it lies on Interstate 44, one hundred miles southwest of St. Louis, one hundred miles northeast of Springfield, an hour and a half south of Columbia and Jefferson City, and at the northern edge of the Ozarks region of southern Missouri. In many ways, St. James is a typical small town along a Midwestern interstate highway. The interstate has allowed moderate growth, or at least prevented it from dying like so many other rural towns. It has a highway services core along the interstate, with gas stations and chain restaurants, as well as a traditional downtown centered on the railroad tracks and historic Route 66. St. James residents are largely employed in services; the school district; a handful of manufacturing plants; in the nearby towns of Rolla or Cuba, more distant Fort Leonard Wood, and very distant St. Louis; and at a Wal-Mart Distribution Center, which located in St. James to take advantage of its central location and major road network intersection. St. James has a regional niche for tourism, promoting its location as a gateway to the Ozarks and its five local wineries and proximity to Maramec Spring Park, whose history provides the reason for St. James' existence. St. James sits on a small plateau that has more dramatic relief to the north and south, where the land descends towards river valleys. The town rests amid a patchwork of forests, prairies and farmland typical of the mid-Missouri hill country.

This description could be of any number of small towns throughout the Midwest or indeed throughout the United States. It could also be an adequate summary for a travel

guide, a regional planning document, or a report on the economic geography of Missouri. But this description does little to distinguish St. James from all the other towns like it, to tell us what makes St. James a unique place, not just another space on the Earth containing small town number 8,194. What gives St. James its character, its identity, its meaning? What makes St. James *St. James*?

But how does a researcher learn a town's character, identity or meaning? The town's history books will talk about the reason for its founding, the great families who worked to create the landscape, and the events that shaped the town's present situation. The architecture and layout of the buildings and streets will give an indication about the town's wealth, culture, and speed of growth. A study of the way the town's private and public society is organized can reflect power distribution and belief systems. But none of these really convey the *meaning* that makes the place a home and bestows a sense of belonging to the people who live and work in the town. To do that, the researcher must attempt to understand the place by understanding how a person who has an attachment to the place feels about it; the researcher must try to see the place as the person sees it by entering their lived experience.

Attaining the meaning that people ascribe to a place, or a person's "sense of place," is the main goal of this thesis. Specifically, I want to understand how people perceive St. James and give it meaning, and how their perceptions, built through lived experience in the place, contribute to their sense of place and make St. James a unique landscape among a sea of similar places in the United States.

In addition to exploring the sense of place residents have about St. James, I have three other goals for this thesis: to test the application of humanistic geography (like

phenomenology) and landscape studies in attaining residents' sense of place; to situate St. James as a case study in the assessment of the state of small towns in the United States in the early twenty-first century; and to explore the extent to which individual and cultural memory contribute to small town sense of place. I also hope this work will help the people of St. James become more aware of their relationship with place, and of how this affects their outlook on, and relationship with, mainstream America.

### **Sense of Place**

The term sense of place is widely, but loosely used in academic and popular literature. I define it here as the experience of place in all its dimensions: physical, social, psychological, intellectual, and emotional. It includes the symbolic meaning of place and the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes held toward a place. Residents' attachments to place, both conscious and unconscious, are also part of sense of place, as are their feelings about local political and social issues and about relationships with other places.

Cultural geography, and social sciences in general, tend to emphasize the general over the specific. One is traditionally expected to study specifics only for the purposes of scholarly generalization. In my sense-of-place research, I go against this grain. I focus on the specific elements of experience in a particular place at the level of the individual, not as exceptions or mere anecdotes, but as legitimate parts of the whole worthy of attention in their own right. The study of the subjective, immeasurable, and aesthetic elements of people's relationships with place has lately been termed "humanistic" geography (Cloke, Philo, & Sadler 1991, 57-59). Sense-of-place study is a subset of this

relatively new field, an examination of whom and what people in a place conceive themselves to be as a consequence of that place.

Although the study of sense of place does not solve a problem, avert a crisis, or preserve our environment in any direct way, it does reveal to readers the day-to-day lives of the geographical “other”: people who live in places and lead lives very different from the reader’s own. This sort of knowledge helps promote intercultural understanding. Its absence leads to misperceptions and sometimes to political and social conflict (Ley 1974, 23-41; Clifford 1988; Kipniss 1988; Frenkel 1992). Urban dwellers, for example, can easily condense the cultural category of “rural small town residents” into a group of uneducated rednecks who live unmotivated, boring lives away from the offerings of modern urban culture as long as they can preserve their ignorance of an individual small town resident’s way of life. Many political battles are waged on the basis of such geographical ignorance.

A lack of place knowledge is not easily redressed. It may not be enough to tell an urbanite that small town residents are just as skilled and educated as they are, leading happy and successful lives. What may finally bring home the reality of the small town resident’s life to our urbanite is a detailed, specific rendition (including the small town resident’s own words) of the thoughts, feelings, and experiences that lie behind life in the small town, of the small town resident’s struggle to preserve a way of life and a relationship with a place that may be generations old, of the hardships endured in order to continue that way of life. At this scale, personal identification with individual experience can occur and the urbanite may learn that the rural resident is motivated by a passionate, if seldom expressed, relationship with land, landscape, and place, and with a livelihood

that makes that relationship possible. An intimate understanding of place meaning also can help members of the studied culture understand themselves better as a group, an understanding that is especially important for group members who are working for political or social change.

In addition to the enhancement of intercultural and intracultural understanding, sense-of-place studies can address broad questions about human nature as it relates to specific locales. How much of who we are is where we live; how much is where we are from? What effect does moving to another place have on our identity as a person or as a member of a group? These questions can best be answered through humanistic investigation, by studying, in other words, the personal thoughts, feelings, and images individuals associate with place (Smith 1984, 357).

### **Sense of Place and Cultural Geography**

It would be sad if geography should permit itself to become identified principally as a discipline that can provide techniques and mechanics of control and manipulation for urban, regional, and environmental management. Ours is a major opportunity that transcends mere method. The faculties of description and evaluation are those most in need of cultivation if we are to interpret the relationships of land and life and better illuminate the esthetic qualities of landscapes so that men may live more wisely and happily.

James J. Parsons  
“Geography as Exploration and Discovery”  
(Parsons 1977, 2)

Whereas much of cultural geography deals with material culture and outwardly observable characteristics such as religion, language, food, and livelihood, sense of place focuses on the actual experience of place. The personal aspects of experience will be different not only from one culture to another, but also from place to place within what is

perceived to be a single culture. The United States, for example, has the Pacific Northwest, New England, the Midwest, and other regional subcultures, each of which manifests a different sense of place. And within any of these regions, say the Pacific Northwest, we have the different place experiences of Appalachian emigrants, American Indians, ranching women, fisher people, or organic farmers. We know little of such experience at either regional or more local levels. To understand a culture thoroughly, we need some knowledge of how its people think and feel, how they experience time and space, and how they perceive themselves and others in their respective contexts of place. Knowledge of this sort is essential to geographers if they are to interpret and describe the huge amalgam that we call American culture. I argue that sense of place should be an essential part, rather than a sideline of cultural geography research.

Interest in place and sense of place is cropping up in many academic disciplines outside of geography. Environmental historians are now examining relationships with place and the effect they have on our attitudes toward the natural world (Cronon 1991; Worster 1992). Sociologists have taken up sense of place as an important contributor to a community's ability to survive, especially in declining rural areas (Flora & Flora 2008). In anthropology, an important object of study is indigenous people's changing sense of place as they are introduced into global society, and the implications it has for their cultural integrity (Basso 1990). Literary scholars have recently heralded evocation of place in literature as a topic worthy of study. They especially attend to "regional" authors such as Thomas Hardy, Willa Cather, Annie Dillard, Mari Sandoz, William Faulkner, Barry Lopez, and Henry David Thoreau (Pocock 1981a; Pocock 1981b; Turner 1989; Simonson 1989; Slovic 1992). In mental-health professions, scholars are beginning to

consider the effect place has on people's sense of well-being, and how dislocation or place transformation can bring the same manifestations of grief that other major losses can (Palinkas et al 1993; Gallagher 1993; Kirmayer 1994, 28). Architects, too, are concerned with sense of place (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein 1977; Alexander 1979; Canter 1977; Steele 1981), as are folklorists (Cochrane 1987; Allen & Schlereth 1990; Ryden 1993), artists, and art historians (Gussow 1972; Gohlke 1992). Given all the above interests, it is also no surprise that cross-disciplinary interest in sense of place is growing in the academic world, and that sense of place has become a popular theme for academic colloquia, symposia, and conferences.

This surge of interest in places and place experience by other disciplines began in the midst of geography's own downplay of the significance of place description (Lewis 1985, 469). The study of particular places first began to lose status in academic geography during the 1960s and 1970s when the adoption of new quantitative techniques encouraged many geographers to discount what could not be measured. The feet-on-the-ground, person-to-person study of places has never quite recovered and, lately, many who study the human aspects of geography have begun to focus on theoretical discussions of space and place, on applications of critical social theory, and on socially "relevant" geography, rather than returning to an attempt to accurately portray places themselves. Nothing is inherently wrong with these pursuits, but some who participate in them seek to legitimize their work by further deriding the geographic tradition of empirical place studies (Price & Lewis 1993). Many in the discipline now consider the evocative description of place and landscape "old-fashioned." As we abandon our original realms of expertise as old hat, other disciplines are picking up long-standing geographic

traditions like landscape study as new and exciting stuff, with little consciousness of the work already done in these areas by geographers (e.g. Limerick 1992). I fear that if we do not claim sense-of-place study as ours, other fields happily will. As James J. Parsons has pointed out: “As we seek out paths to expanded awareness through teaching or writing we would do well not to forget that our subject was originally rooted in the comparative observation and analysis of places” (Parsons 1977, 16).

Geographers can also enliven their writing and better fulfill their task of satisfying public curiosity about places by including sense of place in their geographical descriptions. The engaging depiction of places is one of geography’s founding traditions, and furthermore lies at the core of public expectations for geographers.<sup>1</sup> The public interest in evocative place descriptions is evident in the growing popularity of place-oriented, experiential writers such as John McPhee, Gretel Ehrlich, William Least Heat-Moon, Terry Tempest Williams, and Kathleen Norris. Even so, works that vividly portray places in terms of experience are lacking in modern academic geography.

To be sure, many geographers have prescribed evocative, experiential place descriptions as a vital element of geographical study. As far back as 1924, John K. Wright recommended the inclusion of “local color” in regional descriptions, calling it “an

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<sup>1</sup> “Geography as a chorographic (or chorologic) study has always found its justification in the widespread desire of many people to know what other parts of the world are like” (Hartshorne 1939, 306).

“Perhaps the simplest definition of the task of the geographer is that he has the responsibility to describe and explain ‘what other places are like’” (Clark 1962, 23).

“Geography assumes the responsibility for the study of areas because there exists a common curiosity about that subject” (Sauer 1963, 316).

“Geography is the formal expression of man’s universal interest in the earth about him and his curiosity concerning unfamiliar places” (Kniffen 1976, 51).

“We have an unmatched entrée to our supporting public in the naturally given interest of students of all ages in the wonders of the world about us” (Parsons 1977, 2).

“Most people are inherently curious, and they want to know more about the world in which they live – about their home area, about what’s over the hill, about what’s beyond the horizon, about what’s across the sea – and it is our duty, as geographers, to satisfy their curiosity” (Hart 1982, 1).

“After all, most people possess a powerful inborn curiosity about places – places nearby and far-off. They want to be told about those places – where they are, what they are like” (Lewis 1985, 466).

evasive quality, revealing itself in different hues to different seekers. It exists, none the less, and the geographer should be among the last to disdain its existence. A colorless regional monography falls short of the geographical truth” (1924, 659). Carl Sauer wrote on a similar theme in 1956:

We may have more latent artistic talent than we know, but we don’t encourage it and so it becomes suppressed. Many a letter is written from the field that enlivens and enlightens the study, but no trace thereof gets into the finished report (1963, 403).

In more recent years, many other geographers have taken up the cause of evocative place depiction. Throughout his career, Yi-Fu Tuan has suggested that the best geographical description is a synthesis of objective observations and subjective experience (Tuan 1957, 1961, 1978, 204-205). He offers an eloquent case for the profession to adopt a lighter touch:

Geographers, I think, might take time off from their practical duties, and join – at least now and then – the artists and the poets in portraying the splendor of the earth. I do not mean that we should all start describing landscapes, and grimly plan on some future date when the entire earth will be covered with such portraits. We need no plan, we certainly have no obligation, to describe any area other than the one for which we have a special fondness or inexplicable fascination. Geographers have an advantage over architects, town planners and wildlife conservationists, for unlike these harassed people we are not called upon to give immediate judgment. Like poets and artists, we have greater leisure to taste the various fruits of the earth. Our chief duty is to give accurate and sensitive portrayal of their impact on us, and if a fruit, however beautiful to look at, tastes sour, we need not hesitate to say so (Tuan 1961, 32).

Donald Meinig has eloquently and convincingly argued for a more experiential, subjective, engaging approach to characterizing places (1971a, 1971b), and Bret Wallach persuasively contends that the real aim of geographic writing is to convey to the reader how a place feels (1986, 49, 1995, 373). Other voices have risen to specifically advocate an experiential, humanistic approach. The most notable of these are Edward Relph (1970,

1976), Anne Buttimer (1976), David Seamon (1979), and Edmunds V. Bunkse (1981; 1990). Of these, Bunkse offers the most compelling arguments in favor of a humanistic approach to geographical studies. Much to his credit, he goes beyond just a prescription and presents examples from the work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (Bunkse 1990) and Alexander von Humboldt (Bunkse 1981) that illustrate how geographic description can be compelling, humane, evocative, and yet purposeful.

The calls for experiential studies still far outnumber the works that actually employ such approaches. Defining sense of place has thus typically been left in the hands of novelists, poets, and writers of non-academic literature (Lewis 1985, 472). It seems ironic that geographers, those people who supposedly most earnestly study and compile information on places, are also rarely read by people who want to know a place. Given the current state of academic geographical writing, the reading public is making a justifiable choice. I suspect that a traveler would be better prepared for the cultural phenomena of Texas has she read Stephen Brook's lively *Honkytonk Gelato* (1985) rather than Donald Meinig's stolid *Imperial Texas* (1969). Perhaps evocative, accessible renditions of place are just the thing to reaffirm the legitimacy of our discipline and revive public interest.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Wallach (1986, 49). Wallach (1995, 373) has also couched a compelling statement on this matter in a review of John C. Hudson's *Making the Cornbelt*:

Perhaps geographers are doomed to solving questions of unbearable obscurity, yet to the point of fatigue we tell ourselves that we want a larger audience. How shall we get it? That's where we have trouble.

I often think that part of the answer lies in how we write. Professor Hudson, for example, writes a prose that positively shines in comparison to the writing of most geographers. It is direct, clear, without pretension. Yet it is also flat, almost never personal or emotive. Professor Hudson might say in his defense that emotive prose is unsuited for this subject, but is it so? After all, he is not writing about the Corn Belt because he wants us to do something. He is therefore writing because he wants us to feel something, to appreciate the place. This bespeaks his own love of the Midwest, though he never admits to such a thing. Real men don't, of course. But is this behavior smart for a writer? How can we hope to make readers share our feelings when we hide them?

## Understanding Small Town Sense of Place

A more general purpose of this work is to help bring an understanding of rural experience and culture to urban dwellers who might otherwise have little opportunity to encounter rural life. Aside from the promotion of intercultural understanding, this is important for a number of reasons. First, urbanites can learn much about their cultural heritage by studying rural lifeways. Not so long ago, small rural towns were thriving, self-contained societies with a rich set of cultural traditions that sustained them (Dickenson 1995). Today, rural culture is thought of as something almost foreign.<sup>3</sup> Most of us grew up knowing nothing about it, and consider the notion of small town life repugnant, or even frightening. Our stereotypical images of the small town are of quaint simplicity, redneck hostility, or oppressive conservatism, reinforced by literary works such as *Our Town* (Wilder 1957 [1938]), *Main Street* (Lewis 1920), *Picnic* (Inge 1958), and *The Last Picture Show* (McMurtry 1966). Urban society tends to stereotype and ridicule rural life (Shortridge 1989, 39-41), but until nearly 1920, most Americans were rural.<sup>4</sup> No matter how urbane modern Americans may be, we are all, to some extent, influenced by a rural heritage. Urban culture, like popular culture is a relatively new thing. Urban society has come into being much faster than social conventions have been able to adapt, and understanding our rural origins may help us see how much the move from rural to urban society has fundamentally changed our values and traditions. It might

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<sup>3</sup> Osha Gray Davidson, for example, observes that as, “A child of suburbia (Des Moines, as it happens, but it could have been Pittsburgh or San Francisco for all the contact I had with rural Iowans), I knew about the thousands of small communities that dot America’s heartland mostly from the jokes at their expense in Johnny Carson’s monologues” (1993, 111).

<sup>4</sup> Or even later if you consider that the United States Census’ definition of “urban” is any settlement with more than 2,500 people. I personally consider anything under 5,000 to be a small town, essentially rural in character.

also offer clues about problems frequently bewailed in mainstream society, such as a lost sense of community, cooperation, and trust, and the disintegration of traditional family structures.

I think the estrangement between urban and rural populations is at least partly caused by the urban tendency to discount rural culture as inconsequential, and to make such judgments without any real knowledge of what rural life or people are like. The gap between these two fundamental elements of American society cannot be bridged without some attempt at mutual understanding. Rural people, to be sure, have some distorted and exaggerated ideas of what urbanites and urban life are about, but they, at least, have many opportunities to experience and hear about the city. Urban people's ignorance of rural experience is that much greater because they lack windows into rural life. I hope this work will provide such a window.

### **Cultural Landscape Theory**

In addition to being a study of people's sense of place in St. James, this research was also an examination of the cultural, and to a lesser degree physical, landscape that comprises St. James. The geographic discipline has identified four discreet approaches for experiencing a cultural landscape. A landscape can be seen simply as a section of space, or as Carl Sauer (1963) described it, a "naively given section of reality" (316). Landscape is simply everything that is physically present in an area of space that can be identified and quantified on a map. A landscape can also be experienced as a text (Lewis 1979b), where one can "read" what the landscape says about its existence. In this view of landscape, individuals or groups authored the landscape by making changes, building

structures, erecting signs, and other ways of leaving an imprint of their existence on the landscape. The other side of experiencing landscape as a text lies in interpretation; those “reading” the markings of culture upon a landscape interpret them in different ways, depending on their backgrounds and their knowledge about the authors who created the landscape.

Landscapes can also be experienced as work; they are the physical manifestations of the output of labor and creation (Mitchell 2000). Cultural landscapes are the products of the work that people put into making them. A farm landscape, for example, displays the results of workers plowing and sowing the fields, building the barn and farmhouse, diverting water for irrigation and building fences. An urban landscape is a reflection of the many hours of labor that were spent to create the skyscrapers, streets, electric lines and manicured parks. A landscape, then, can be a visible expression of the labor used to make it as well as the power that determined how the labor was spent. Finally, a landscape can be conceived as a way of seeing, experiencing, sensing, or perceiving (Rose 1992; Waitt & Lane 2007). A landscape is the milieu in which a person experiences his or her daily life. The landscape exists not singularly in space, but differently in the mind of each person who experiences his or her own unique “lifeworld.” In this sense, features on the landscape are ascribed different values by each person. Some places are seen as more beloved or attractive to some people, while other places are frightening or less meaningful to others.

When I conceived this research project, it was in essence a conceptualization of landscape as a section of space – I wanted to identify and map the places on the St. James landscape that residents felt were most important for town identity. But the strongest

theoretical approach to landscape that guided this research was that of using landscape as a way of seeing. I wanted to know what St. James meant and how it appeared to individual people. How do they experience the place?

As the reader will see later, I created a presentation device of three alternate landscapes of St. James – St. James as palimpsest, St. James as Mayberry, and St. James as cruisescape. I conceptualize these landscapes in two ways. I see them as a section of space, in that certain places on the cultural landscape stand out as prominent within the space of each of the three presentation landscapes, and the three can be overlaid to generate the collective landscape that is deemed important by the people I interviewed. I also conceptualize the three landscapes as individual ways of seeing the landscape. St. James as palimpsest is a way of seeing the landscape through the eyes of older residents, for example. Examining St. James through the different theories of landscape is one way to use landscape to approach sense of place.

### **Landscape of Memory**

The study of sense of place is also the study of memories associated with the place. One way to uncover and explore sense of place is through the memories people have of personal, lived experience in the place. Memories contribute to sense of place by allowing people to analyze the experiences they have and subsequent emotions they feel in a place. In this thesis I attempt to gain and communicate a clearer understanding of who the residents of St. James are and what their lives are like as a consequence of place. This is achieved primarily through the residents' freely-elicited recounting of memories, both distant and recent, that they have created while living in St. James.

The study of the landscape of memory is a fairly recent path of research within the field of cultural geography. The emphasis of much of this research has been on the politics of the landscape serving as a memorial and presentation of heritage, and associated social justice issues of groups not being represented in the memory presented by a landscape. This research asks how memorial landscapes function as markers of particular identities and particular historical narratives – as markers of who owns and controls the landscape. Geographer Dydia DeLyser's (1999) study of Bodie, a California 'ghost town' reinvented as a heritage tourism destination, shows that the entire landscape is produced by, and reproduces, a particular hegemonic cultural memory of the nineteenth-century American West:

The false-fronted facades and ramshackle miner's cabins of this gold-mining ghost town call forth images to visitors from movie Westerns: heroic images of American pioneers. And since ghost towns like Bodie have few or no surviving residents, it is largely through the landscape of ghost towns, and the artefacts that are part of that landscape, that this American essence is apprehended. (DeLyser 1999, 603)

Through the assertion and reproduction of the dominant cultural values on such a landscape, the memory of the place is controlled and alternative memories are nonexistent.

However, the presence of people who have lived experience on the landscape allows the opportunity to present individual memories of the landscape to complement the hegemonic cultural memory that is formed by the parties with power. Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) suggest that "Research on these and many more such sites of memory reveal that most validate and authenticate consensual notions of the past while they simultaneously invite alternative readings" (349). Owen Dwyer said that monuments are

to be conceived of as in the process of becoming instead of existing in a static, essentialized state. Rather than possessing a fixed, established meaning, monuments are momentarily realized in a nexus of social relations as the result of attempts to define the meaning of representations, which nevertheless remain open to dispute and change. (Dwyer 2004, 425)

Thus, the landscape is both a material entity and full of symbolic meaning, both persistent in form and changeable in meaning.

In this regard, St. James itself can be treated as a monument to the span of St. James community, so the memory it presents is the collective memory of all of its residents. The landscape, as controlled by the official vision of the town, does create and maintain a particular hegemonic cultural memory. However, individual residents, through their own lived experiences, form their own unique memories through their interaction with the place. In their own lived reality, the landscape creates individual memories, while the same landscape maintains a collective cultural memory. According to the social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1985), communities are constructed of symbols, such as those expressed on the landscape, that are shared and interpreted collectively by the whole community, but also interpreted individually by community members who create unique personal constructions of community. Thus, landscapes should be examined not only for the hegemonic cultural memory they produce, but also for the unique lived memories individuals form through their interaction with the landscape. In St. James, a hegemonic cultural memory is presented on the landscape by the agents of power that may not represent the true authenticity of St. James. I contend that the living residents create authenticity on the landscape through their lived experiences and interaction with the landscape, countering any inauthenticity placed on the landscape by the dominant powers.

## Previous Work

Sense of place is not a coherent body of research with a well-articulated methodology. Most often the best observations and insights have been tangential to other purposes. One can find them in the work of anthropologists, folklorists, and geographers, in travel writing, place essays, journalism, fiction, and popular non-fiction. Among the few studies specifically on the subject is the geographer John Eyles' well intentioned, but dreadfully dull *Senses of Place* (1985), a work that drains the life from the town he is studying by relying upon statistical tables of survey responses. A much better example is folklorist Kent Ryden's *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (1993), a humanistic study of attachment to place in the Coeur d'Alene mining district of north Idaho. Geographer John Western's *A Passage to England* (1992) is another effective sense-of-place study, one that relates the experience of England in the words of Londoners of Barbadian descent.

Many geographers have conveyed a sense of place within more general regional studies. John B. Jackson (1960), David Lowenthal (1968), Peirce Lewis (1972), Bret Wallach (1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1981), and Ben Marsh (1987) are notable examples. The discipline of folklore studies also produces works evocative of place (Gillespie 1984; Gutierrez 1984; Stewart 1990). These studies usually focus on some specific aspect of folk life, but, in so doing, reveal a great deal about the overall values, experiences, and thoughts of ordinary people in specific places. Henry Glassie has provided a particularly vivid portrait of life in an Irish community called Ballymenone (1982), and Gerald Pocius (1991) has created a detailed, though dry, rendition of a Newfoundland fishing village.

Anthropologists, too, describe sense of place on occasion. Richard K. Nelson, for example, has painted a hauntingly vivid portrait of life in the Koyukuk valley of Alaska in *Make Prayers to the Raven* (1983), and Keith Basso (1990) has depicted a lively relationship between the Western Apache and their home landscape in Arizona.

The most evocative sense-of-place work appears in popular literature (Lewis 1985, 472). The best of this genre includes Aldo Leopold (1949) on the Wisconsin woods, Tom Wolfe on Las Vegas (1965), Kathleen Norris on the Great Plains of the Dakotas (1993),<sup>5</sup> John McPhee on the New Jersey Pine Barrens and Alaska (1967, 1976), Peter Matthiessen on the Himalayas (1978), Wallace and Page Stegner on American places (1983), Gretel Ehrlich on Wyoming (1985), Stephen Brook on Texas and Canada (1985, 1988), Barry Lopez on the Arctic (1986), Bruce Chatwin on the Australian Outback (1987), Edward Abbey on the desert West (1968, 1988), Sam Wright on northern Alaska (1988), William Least Heat-Moon on rural America and the Flint Hills of Kansas (1982, 1991), and Richard Rhodes on the Midwest (1991).

The field of cultural landscape studies has a rich history linked to geographer Carl Sauer. In his classic 1925 work, “The Morphology of Landscape,” Sauer defined the landscape as an amalgam of physical and cultural forms: “Culture is the agent,” he wrote, “the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (1963, 343). A sense-of-place study of an American small town includes the principles of reading the cultural landscape by residents and researcher alike. To Denis Cosgrove:

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<sup>5</sup> The irony of Norris’ ability to render a sense of place effectively is that she is neither social scientist nor journalist; she is a poet. The success of *Dakota* should wake all scholars of place to the possibility of improving their work with what they can muster of a poetic sensibility. It would do no harm to geographic writing to revive the more colorful tradition of prose employed by respected geographers of the past, such as Vidal de La Blache, Alexander Von Humboldt, and John Wesley Powell.

Landscape is thus ultimately linked with a new way of seeing the world as a rationally-ordered, designed and harmonious creation whose structure and mechanism are accessible to the human mind as well as to the eye, and act as guides to humans in their alteration and improvement of the environment. (1989, 121)

Landscapes are texts that tell the story of the people residing in a place. The literature on cultural landscape studies provides many discussions on the approaches to reading and interpreting landscapes (Lewis 1979b; Lewis 1983; Meinig 1979a; Schein 1997; Groth & Bressi 1997). Duncan and Duncan (1988) suggest that landscapes can be seen as texts which are transformations of ideologies into a concrete form, and Jackson (1986) distinguishes political and vernacular landscapes, with the former an expression of power and the latter an expression of survival. Meinig (1979b) and Cosgrove discuss the symbolism in landscape, which “serves the purpose of reproducing cultural norms and establishing the values of dominant groups across all of a society” (Cosgrove 1989, 125). Other works on the study of cultural landscapes examine aesthetic qualities of landscape perception (Hiss 1990; Lynch 1960; Jakle 1987; Appleton 1975), the relationship between landscape and community (Jackson 1994), and the spectrum of individually subjective to culturally objective landscape evaluations (Unwin 1975). Assessing and preserving rural, small town cultural landscapes is part of the historic preservation literature (Alanen 2000; Copps 1995).

Works that convey a sense of place for rural areas of the Midwest, much less for small towns in Missouri, are scarce. Though histories, memoirs, and collections of traditional Ozark folk tales abound (Schroeder 2002; Christensen 1988), little has appeared concerning contemporary existence and culture. James Shortridge (1989) examined the meaning of the Midwest region, looking at the history of the label, the

perceptions of its extent, and the images and ideals it conjures in American culture. This work investigates the elements that comprise the meaning of a large scale place, but it does not fully explore the experiential aspect that creates sense of place. Rhodes (1991) and Martone (1988) present wonderful essays about the Midwest which manage to capture the character of their settings. Many of these essays also present lived experience in their narration that gives the reader an intimate portrayal of life in the rural Midwest. Allen & Schlereth (1990) have compiled a good collection of modern American regional folklore, some of which portrays sense of place quite well, but the only contribution that is set in Missouri discusses the relationship Ozark trappers have with their natural environment and with government agencies that regulate their activity (Brady 1990). Russell Gerlach's book *Immigrants in the Ozarks: A Study in Ethnic Geography* (1976) has a section about the Italian settlers of Rosati, a village east of St. James. Although valuable to my study for its description of the Rosati community and its history of the viticulture industry in the St. James region, Gerlach's work is a historical account lacking experiential perceptions of sense of place in Rosati.

There is much in the literature of rural sociology (Flora & Flora 2008; Fitchen 1991; Lewis 1979a; Davidson 1996) and town planning (Mattson 1989) that provides useful information about the concepts of society and community and issues facing rural communities. However, experiential case studies of small towns, both sociological and sense-of-place studies, are lacking in scope and relevance. Throughout the twentieth century there were many sociological studies of rural small town communities that documented all aspects of society in places like Middletown (Lynd & Lynd 1929, 1937), Plainville (Withers 1945; Gallaher 1961), Mineville (Blumenthal 1932), and others

(Williams 1906; Vidich & Bensman 1968). These detailed examinations of small-town society and economy provided deep accounts of places, but their age makes them useful for nothing except potential comparative revisitations of those places. Geographers in the cultural landscape studies tradition wrote vivid but brief descriptions of a typical but fictional Midwestern town (Jackson 1952), a Kansas county (Wallach 1987), and travel along Midwestern country roads (Quinney 1986). Peirce Lewis's influential (1972) study of Bellefonte, Pennsylvania offered a thorough, updated geographical look at the special and central role of the small town in American culture and the modern trends of small town disregard and later exurbanization. Very recent community projects (*Creative Communities Initiative*, 2006; *Albuquerque's Environmental Story: Educating for a Sustainable Community*, 2008) attempt to explore the physical and cultural essence of their respective communities from an urban planning and community development perspective. A few other recent studies demonstrate strong attempts to capture sense of place in rural communities: McCormick's (1997) experiential approach to assessing sense of place in small Arizona towns; and Parker's innovative (1989) look at the town of Bird, Kansas, which is comprised almost entirely of simply the transcripts of interviews the author had with town residents. The emphasis is on the town's society and culture, but the reader experiences life in the small Plains town firsthand very well, although the work lacks analysis by the author.

David Lowenthal says that "Only through our own memory and that of others do we truly understand any scene or object," but also that "The past we remember or reconstruct is always shaped by the bias of the present" (1975, 1). The relationship between place and memory is discussed well in Pierre Nora's *Between Memory and*

*History: Les Lieux de Memoire* (1989). His notion of ‘sites of memory’ – or *lieux de memoire* – gives prominent attention to the various ways in which memory is especially constituted. For Nora, memory is attached to ‘sites’ that are concrete and physical – the burial places, cathedrals, battlefields, prisons that embody tangible notions of the past – as well as to ‘sites’ that are non-material – the celebrations, spectacles, and rituals that provide an aura of the past. The role of that memory for society is best summarized by Edward Said (2000). Whether one refers to ‘collective memory’, ‘public memory’, ‘historical memory’, ‘popular memory’ or ‘cultural memory’, most would agree with Said that many “people now look to this refashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world” (179). Said continues by arguing that the

study and concern with memory of a specifically desirable and recoverable past is a specially freighted late twentieth-century phenomenon that has arisen at a time of bewildering change, of unimaginably large and diffuse mass societies, competing nationalisms, and, most important perhaps, the decreasing efficacy of religious, familial, and dynastic bonds. (ibid.)

Ours is an age of both rapid social transformation and a search for roots, of time-space compression as well as people looking for a past seemingly removed from the unrelenting social-political-economic forces that have come to be called globalization (Harvey 1989). That social groups today employ various recollections as vehicles for their constitution, or for their dissolution, as Said reminds us, points to the usability of this freighted phenomenon.

Most literature in the field of memory on the landscape deals with collective cultural memory rather than personal memory. According to Zelizer (1995, 214), “collective memory thereby presumes activities of sharing, discussion, negotiation, and,

often, contestation. Remembering becomes implicated in a range of other activities having as much to do with identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction as with the simple act of recall.” Accordingly, the major focus of memory studies in geography has examined contestations over the portrayal of memory on the landscape. These studies have dealt with diverse topics on the same theme of the politics of memory: the politics that go into designating commemorative street names (Alderman 2003) and using them to merge hegemonic ideology and everyday life (Azaryahu 1996); the religious contestation over symbolic space at Auschwitz (Charlesworth 1994); the discussion about what constitutes authentic memory on the landscape (DeLyser 1999, 2003, 2001); contradictory expressions of memory and belonging in Israel (Fenster 2004); the competing practices of memorialization that inform the construction of national identity (Edensor 1997; Forest & Johnson 2002; Forest, Johnson, & Till 2004); the intersection of representations of the past and the everyday politics of social movements (Bosco 2004); the politics of the memorial practices of the Civil Rights movement (Dwyer 2000); and the politics of competing commemorative ideas prior to a memorial’s construction (Simpson & Corbridge 2006).

Memory on the landscape is explored in other ways besides the politics of commemoration. Crang (1996) suggests that different memories, and thus senses of history, are created by different ways of envisioning a place. Cresswell and Hoskins (2008) discovered that acts of historic preservation are more often implemented based on the structural value of a place rather than from cultural wealth built from lived experience. In his examination of performances of whiteness in the southern United States, Hoelscher (2003) suggests that hegemonic cultural memory is made and maintained by the

performance of roles. Marsh (1987) examined the relationship the residents of declining coal-mining towns in Pennsylvania have with their landscape. He contends that meaning, or sense of place, is provided by the cultural experience on the landscape, and residents' judgment of whether a declining economic landscape can support them into the future depends on the strength of the cultural meaning in the landscape. In a similar study (Harner 2001), the author demonstrates how hegemony, or the collective cultural memory implanted by those with power, can also strengthen sense of place. Additional works in the field of memory and landscape explore the politics of historical preservation (Barthel 1996); the role that place plays in the production of heritage and memory in urban landscapes (Hayden 1995); the use of history and memory in tourism (Philo & Kearns 1993); and the powerful influence memory has on the landscape of Hiroshima, Japan (Yoneyama 1999).

In summary, most academic and popular accounts of life in a small Midwestern town provide a dated view that either stereotypes negative urban perceptions or idealizes small towns as pure and simple. Small town life offers a much greater variety of life experiences than most existing literature suggests. I hope in the following pages to add flesh to the prevailing bare-bones conception of small town experience.

My first task in this work is to examine the prevailing, or official, vision that St. James presents to its residents and to the outside world. In the first of my two discussion chapters, I will focus on the ways St. James is portrayed through its official history, planning documents that have guided development of the city, places of official vision housed on the landscape, and interviews with city leaders. This look at the surface level

of St. James shows how it is “meant” to be perceived, although as we will see, this official vision may not be the authentic version of St. James.

In the second discussion chapter, I explore the lived reality of St. James as seen through the eyes of its own residents. Their daily experiences and collections of place-based memories create a sense of place unique to each of them. I argue that this perception of St. James is the authentic version of the landscape. St. James exists in its truest form in the minds of each of its residents or the travelers who visit it. While St. James is different in each perspective, that perspective is the real St. James in that person’s mind. The second discussion chapter also examines some of the various landscapes that can be construed from the perceptions of different groupings of individual residents.

I close the thesis with further analysis of some of the key ideas that the research and its findings presented. I address the role of my reflexivity in conducting the research. I further position my findings within the literature about memory on the landscape, pondering the concept of authenticity in my research setting. I critique my interpretation of life in a twenty-first century small town against various academic and popular works of the past one hundred years that deal with the situation in small towns. Finally, I revisit the three landscapes I constructed from residents’ perceptions of St. James, comparing the features that are emphasized and presenting residents’ sense of place as garnered from these landscapes.

## Chapter 2

### Methods

#### **Hermeneutics**

Sense of place is a personal, experiential quality that is not well suited for study by positivist science. A St. James resident's sense of place is not readily measured by data like economic activity, traffic flows, or architectural styles. Sense of place examines the meanings individuals ascribe to their relationship with a place and their interpretation of their emotions about a place. Hermeneutics, the study of interpretation and meaning, is best suited to explore these phenomena.

Hermeneutics has its origins in the study of biblical texts, attempting to elucidate the meaning of texts not at face value, but based on what the authors intended. In this tradition, one must attempt to interpret meaning from the perspective of the worldview and experience of the author. When applied to social science, hermeneutics arose in the late twentieth century to contest the approach of empiricism and positivism and the notion that there are fixed methods for revealing truth. This new application of hermeneutics was fostered by Gadamer (1975), and its integrity and process explored by several authors (Gregory 1978; Bernstein 1983). Meaning is found in all kinds of activities and objects – in written texts, but also in landscapes, art, and social dialogue. This meaning cannot be understood by natural science, with its strict rules for analyzing a closed system. Hermeneutics challenges the approach of natural science and, in particular, the notion that there are fixed methods for revealing truth. Proponents of hermeneutics argue that cultural products or personal perceptions such as someone's sense of place cannot be measured by empirical means that operate apart from lived

experience. Cultural products and personal perceptions can only be interpreted from within the lived world where they are found; knowledge of the situation and historical tradition is required for understanding, both of which natural science does not consider. Natural science denies experiential meaning by its methods, and the object of study in the human sciences is lost. Gadamer saw hermeneutics as a form of repressed knowledge and understanding abruptly curtailed by the procedures of empiricism and positivism (Lawn 2006, 44).

Qualities like sense of place must be studied from within the lived experience by trying to gain empathetic access to the feelings and perceptions of individuals. Reflexivity is a hallmark of hermeneutics; it is impossible to investigate meaning from a disengaged position or subjectivity. The investigator reflects upon his or her interpretation of the subjects, as well as the interpretations of the subjects being interpreted, tacking between them both individually and as a whole. Hermeneutics interprets subjects from within a shared experiential context, reflecting on their situation as they are in it.

This method of interpretation is known as the hermeneutic cycle, a process of interpretation that involves tacking between the interpretations of investigator and subject. Bohman (1991) says that the hermeneutic cycle is circular, indeterminate, and perspectival. It is *circular* because it involves a constant movement from the interpreter to the interpreted and back, thereby also implying that every interpretation is itself interpreted. It is *indeterminate* because that loop of interpretation has no end. And it is *perspectival* because interpreters are embedded in their situations, which makes their knowledge always partial and incomplete. Thus acts of interpretation in the hermeneutic

cycle are dialogical and iterative, a process whereby one builds upon and influences the other in the pursuit of genuine understanding of meaning.

The hermeneutic cycle is an appropriate method for studying sense of place in St. James. I had my own perceptions and interpretations of meaning from my own lived experience in the town, which were of course influenced and modified during the course of my research. But to obtain answers about how others sense their place, one has to know how to ask the questions that yield those interpretations. Through interviews and participant observation, I tried to experience the perceptions and interpret the meanings St. James residents ascribe to their town, thus learning how to ask the questions that articulate of their experience. By tacking between my personal observations and the lived experiences of residents, I attempted to obtain a grounded interpretation of sense of place in St. James. During the iterative process I also tacked between individual residents' interpretations and their interpretations as a group, and even townspeople as a "community", to generate meaning and understanding. After identifying distinct meanings, I repeated the process, because these initial meanings informed and altered new understandings, which could then be interrelated to produce a robust "sense" of place. There is no "true" or "singular" sense of place in St. James, but rather a method for generating robust interpretations that accord with residents' own lived experience.

### **Case Study Research**

To study sense of place in St. James, I conducted a case study using hermeneutics as the analytic method. According to Yin (1989, 23), "A case study is an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when

the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Based on these criteria, I found the case study to be the best primary strategy for my research purposes, supplemented by archival analysis. A case study is the best strategy given that Yin’s three criteria match my own (ibid., 17): I am asking how residents perceive St. James and why they have those perceptions; I am focusing on contemporary events in St. James; and I have no control over the behavioral events being studied. This research is a descriptive (rather than explanatory) case study, since I elucidate the sense of place of St. James residents from within an experiential context, and do not seek to apply the findings to other populations in pursuit of common explanations.

The case study was designed with reliability and validity in mind, as all qualitative research must be in order to maintain rigor. Reliability entailed documenting the research process thoroughly in field notes so that theoretical replication of the study could be achieved. Validity lay in the rich, contemplative answers of the residents I interviewed. The size of the case study was small, because the richness of the data I obtained was more important than the quantity of data. Because the goal of the research was to use residents’ lived experiences to unearth their perceptions of specific places in St. James, the quality and thoughtfulness of participants’ answers in the interviews was more valuable for this study than achieving a truly random sample of the St. James resident population. This research explored the sense of place and place attachment experienced by a particular population towards its unique environment. The results of the research are not meant to be generalized beyond the study sample, but the process of the research may be applied to other communities of comparable size. This approach offers

low levels of external validity, but high levels of internal validity, which is most important for the humanistic methodology.

The design of the case study began with the research question: How is sense of place constructed by St. James residents individually and collectively? I expected wide variation in the expression of sense of place among individuals, formed by each unique experience with the town. But I also expected that some elements would be shared by many residents, both in the greater population and in qualitatively similar groups (e.g., by age, occupation, gender). By selecting an interview population, I intended to explore individual senses of place to discern unique and shared perspectives. The unit of analysis in the case study, then, is each individual St. James resident. The town of St. James is the spatial unit of analysis, and sense of place is the interpretive result. For my case study design, I planned to interview St. James residents, asking questions about St. James to try to get a sense of how the residents perceived and talked about their town. I planned to interview about thirty residents, which I estimated to be a sufficiently sized sample to capture diversity of experience, but small enough to accomplish within time and labor constraints. I then planned to analyze the interviews using a technique known as “pattern matching”, to see how sense of place is expressed uniquely and shared among residents.

This case study is a single-case holistic design (Yin 1989, 46). The goal of the research was to explore residents’ sense of place about St. James, so the single case of the town was used for the primary field data collection. I then compare the results of St. James to other case studies of towns from secondary sources, but my study only involved primary data collection in St. James itself. The case study used a single case instead of multiple cases primarily because of accessibility, expedience, and financial constraints. I

had a pre-existing familiarity and access to residents, and the limited amount of time and funding I had for fieldwork only allowed me to do thorough data collection in a single case. However, it should be stressed that St. James is a unique case, with a combination of qualities that are not common in towns of similar size, so studying St. James alone has the potential to yield results not normally found in case studies of small towns. This case study is holistic, rather than embedded, because I am looking at the overarching, complex and dynamic phenomenon of sense of place as experienced by residents. Although I am exploring individual perceptions, I am ultimately exploring one unified theme that involves disparate elements, and not distinct qualities or analytical units in isolation. The research question I am investigating is of a holistic phenomenon that is comprised of individual perspectives.

After gathering my data from semi-structured interviews, free elicitation interviews, participant observation, and archival research, (discussed in detail below), I analyzed the data. I engaged in pattern-matching to code responses to semi-structured interviews. I sifted through the interviews and grouped participants' responses into categories of topics that were generated inductively. As I conducted the coding, new patterns would emerge among the interview subjects that would cause me to go back and consider coding lines from previous interviews under the newly discovered topics. Using this iterative process, I explored the sense of place the participants held individually and in common with others.

I used a form of the analytic strategy of explanation-building to glean meaning from the other sources of data – the free elicitation interviews, participant observation, and archival research. The goal of explanation-building is to analyze the case study data

by building an explanation about the case (Yin 1989, 113). This analysis was conducted in narrative form, rather than pattern-matching or coding. The data from these sources were used to supplement and expand upon the topics elicited from the semi-structured interviews. This explanation-building process is an example of abduction, a reasoning logic suited for ethnographic studies. Instead of deriving hypotheses from theory or searching for data to fit propositions, this abductive research treats the data as having unknown patterns and meanings that are important for understanding the subject of the study. Analysis of the many concepts for their own sake, not simply to solve a hypothesis, results in producing new knowledge that brings the researcher better understanding of the group being studied (Agar 1996, 35, 40).

### **Methods Overview**

The field research consisted of three basic sets of method. I conducted free elicitation interviews with seven St. James residents with the intention of familiarizing myself with the community and the language that residents use when discussing the town. I also conducted free elicitation interviews with four members of the St. James power structure to learn how the town's decision-makers and image creators see the town and promote an "official vision" within and beyond the community. I then conducted twenty seven semi-structured interviews within a stratified sample of St. James residents, which were tape-recorded and later transcribed, with the goal of obtaining individual perceptions through the lived experience of a diverse sample of residents. The third part of the field research involved various methods of participant observation, archival research, and literature (discourse) analysis.

## **Initial Free Elicitation Interviews with Residents**

I began my field research by conducting informal, free elicitation interviews with residents and representatives of the town's power structure. The dominant vision that these interviews yielded will be discussed in the next section. The goal of the free elicitation interviews with residents was to help familiarize myself with St. James and the language that residents use when discussing the town. Since I was a resident of St. James until I was seventeen years old, I had my own prior knowledge of the town and the language residents used, but in order to develop objective questions for my semi-structured interviews, I needed views from diverse perspectives. In short, I needed to challenge my pre-conceptions. I needed to experience how residents talk about the town so that I could pose questions that would not be limited by my own perceptions.

My selection of residents for the free elicitation interviews was conducted within a judgmental sample. I chose people that I knew in St. James: my father (66+ age group) and two sisters (31-45 age group), two friends (18-30 age group), a longtime family friend (66+ age group), and an amateur historian and family friend (46-65 age group). The purpose (described above) of these free elicitation interviews did not require a "representative" sample of residents. I simply needed a few people to guide me around the town using their words and, in one case, literally showing me around the place, so that I had a good grasp of the basic language and idioms before proceeding.

I had a goal of interviewing ten residents for this initial free elicitation phase. After I had interviewed seven residents, I felt that I had obtained all the information I needed for the purpose of the free elicitation interviews. I was comfortable with my

understanding of how the seven residents perceived and talked about St. James, combined with my prior firsthand knowledge of my former home and that of my family. Many similar descriptions and topics were emerging in the interviews, so I felt conducting more interviews at this level would be redundant, a case of theoretical saturation (Agar 1996, 172).

I initially asked the free elicitation interview participants to draw me a cognitive map of St. James, and I initially planned to ask all the semi-structured interview participants to do the same. I received three maps from three of the free elicitation interviewees, and I was waiting for the other four while I started conducting the semi-structured interviews. Because several of the first semi-structured interview participants were not interested in drawing the maps, I decided to stop the exercise, because I anticipated a similar response from future interviewees, and I felt the maps were a time-consuming burden for my volunteers. I told the four free elicitation interview participants who had not yet drawn the maps to disregard my request to draw them. The three maps that I did receive highlighted the major streets and landmarks. Each labeled a few different landmarks, however, reflecting each person's perception of the important identifying features.

I asked each of the free elicitation participants to describe the town to me. In a few cases that instruction alone resulted in the person talking freely about St. James. I often would provide follow up situations or questions to obtain more description: If you had a friend visiting who had never been to St. James, what places would you point out to him or her? Where would you say the north, south, east, and west ends of town are located? What are some qualities that describe St. James?

I took notes during each of the resident interviews and wrote a summary of each interview afterwards.

### **Free Elicitation Interviews with Official Representatives**

At the same time that I was conducting these initial interviews, I conducted four free elicitation interviews with town officials, people who represent the power structure and make the plans and decisions that promote a vision of the town that ideally would align government, businesses, and planners' interests. I interviewed Mayor Dennis Wilson, Chamber of Commerce President Verna Brand, Tourism Director Myra Orbals, and Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Coordinator Bob Wilson. All four of them seemed willing to talk to me and were interested in my project. The questions I asked them were more structured than in the interviews I conducted with residents, but they remained fairly open for free elicitation. I asked each of them slightly different questions, tailored towards their individual roles. I took notes during the interviews and wrote up a summary of the interviews afterwards.

Dennis Wilson was recently elected mayor when I interviewed him, and had only been in office for about three weeks. St. James has a volunteer government, with a mayor and six-member ward-based city council, and no full-time, paid city administrator. I asked Mayor Wilson to describe the strengths and weaknesses of St. James; what changes the town has seen in the last ten years; what development is being planned; which (if any) long-term plans have been followed in the town's modern history; how the town tries to attract industry; what he wants to see happen during his mayoral term; and which places in St. James are most important for the town's history and identity.

The Chamber of Commerce (COC) in St. James is also a volunteer organization without a full-time, paid director. Verna Brand, an officer at Phelps County Bank, was nearing the end of her service as COC president when I interviewed her. I asked Verna to tell me what the role of the COC is in St. James; what major changes the town has seen in recent history; who the largest employers are; what the strengths and weaknesses of St. James are; what industries are unique for the community; how strong commerce and industry are in the town; what programs are in place to attract industry; and to simply describe the place.

St. James operates a tourist information center (TIC) situated at the Interstate 44 exit ramp that keeps brochures and publications advertising tourist destinations in the region and areas farther away like Branson. The TIC is managed and operated by tourism director Myra Ortals. I interviewed Myra at the TIC, where I observed her greeting and assisting numerous visitors who came into the center. During the interview, I asked Myra what the TIC does; what the most important tourist attractions are; what places are most important for town identity and history; who is moving to or buying property in St. James; where the visitors to the TIC are coming from and going to; how St. James markets itself; how it compares to other towns in the region in terms of self-promotion; and to describe the town.

I had heard the perceptions of St. James from its commercial and industrial sectors, and discerned the image created and marketed to visitors from the mayor, the COC president, and the tourism director. I still wanted to explore economic development schemes that have been implemented and planned for the future, so I interviewed Bob Wilson, a member of the COC who had been charged with spearheading the city and

COC's economic and industrial development possibilities. I asked Bob to explain the town's economic development situation in the past, present and in the future; what strengths and weaknesses St. James has; what St. James needs to do to develop; what incentives St. James offers to attract commerce and industry; and to tell me about a development plan he has been working on and that he was going to present to the city council in the near future at the time of the interview.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

After I had conducted the free elicitation interviews, I moved on to semi-structured interviews with St. James residents. I conducted two-thirds of the interviews during June 2007, and the rest during a week in August with the final two in September. My goal was to interview thirty residents, and I almost met that goal with twenty seven. In an interpretive study such as this, small sample sizes are appropriate because the richness of the data is more important than quantity.

I created a list of standard questions that I would ask during the interviews (Appendix 1). I used the knowledge I had gained about people's perspectives of the town from the free elicitation exercise to inform the creation of the questions that I used for the semi-structured interviews. The questions were designed to enable the residents to reflect openly upon the places, qualities, and experiences in St. James that are significant to them in their understanding of the town's identity. The intention of the interviews was to document participants' subjective perceptions of an everyday, real-world phenomenon (the St. James landscape), and then to evoke their sense of place and attachment, as a way of grasping how the town exists in the minds of its residents, and finally how this case

study compares to other rural areas and small towns. Appendix 1 is an interview script of all of the prepared questions I asked participants.

For the purposes of this study, a resident is a person who currently resides in St. James, or a person who lives in a rural area outside the town and interacts with the community through business, employment, religion, postal service or the school district. A field test I used to determine if a rural resident had a relationship with the St. James community was if they had a St. James ZIP code or telephone number prefix, worked in St. James, or had a child who was in the St. James school district. The person must have lived in the community for a minimum of one year, and the person had to be a current resident at the time of the interview. The person also had to be at least eighteen years old on the date of the interview.

In order to obtain a study sample that captured the diversity of the population, I devised a stratified sample of residents. A stratified sample creates strata (in my case gender, age, length of residence and occupation) for the population, which are filled evenly to maintain diversity. I first used demographic data obtained from the City of St. James website (*City of St. James, Missouri Homepage*) about the distribution of age groups to determine how many interview subjects I would need in each of four age groups to obtain a relatively accurate stratification. I devised four age groups: 18-30, 31-45, 46-65, and 66+. The construction of these ranges was based on natural breaks in terms of life experience and stages. I planned for gender to be split evenly within my stratified sample. The resultant sample required:

- three or four 18-30 year old males and three or four 18-30 year old females
- four 31-45 year old males and four 31-45 year old females

- four or five 46-65 year old males and four or five 46-65 females
- three 66+ year old males and three 66+ year old females.

The demographic data indicated that the white non-Hispanic population in St. James is greater than 95%, so I did not include ethnicity as a criterion in the sample. I used two other criteria in a less rigid manner: length of residence and occupation. I sought interview subjects to first satisfy the age and gender categories, and then I tried to build on that diversity by seeking residents with different lengths of residence and occupations. I did not use any demographic data to meet the actual distribution of lengths of residence and occupation in the sample. In the small sample size, I felt that an attempt to obtain diversity in these two categories was sufficient.

The interviews were obtained through a snowball technique. I first asked my contacts in the town to participate and to refer other town residents who might also be willing to participate. I then contacted the initial referrals and interviewed those who were interested, then obtained additional referrals from each of those contacts. I also had responses from people who had heard of my study and contacted one of my close contacts for an interview. I ended up interviewing all but four of the contacts who requested interviews; scheduling conflicts prevented interviews with three of them, and one contact was less than eighteen years old. Early in the field research, I attended a monthly city council meeting to present my research plans and to request any referrals that they might have. My presentation was included in the article summarizing the council meeting in the local weekly newspaper, the *Leader-Journal*. One week later I spoke to the editor of the *Leader-Journal* about my study, and she wrote a front-page article about it with my contact information for any readers interested in participating. I

received three responses directly from that article, which resulted in two interviews. The article raised awareness of my study in the town, which eased my introduction and explanation when I contacted referrals to gauge their interest.

I did not meet my goal for 18-30 year old males; I only obtained one interview. I also did not meet my goal for 46-65 year old males; I only obtained two interviews in this category. Both of these were due to shortages of males in these age groups in the scope of my snowball; there were just no more males in these age groups that I knew or who people referred me to, and no males in these groups volunteered from the newspaper article. I exceeded my goal for 46-65 year old females, interviewing six. I had even more females in this age group who volunteered to be interviewed, but I did not exceed the six that I did interview so as to not over-represent that group in the study sample. I met my goals in all of the other age groups and gender categories (Appendix 2).

I obtained diversity in lengths of residence, ranging from relative newcomers to lifelong residents. I counted length of residence as the actual number of years a person lived in St. James; if a person had moved away and returned, I counted all the years the resident lived in St. James before and after the period of absence, and did not include any years when the resident was not physically there. Six people lived in St. James ten years or less; fourteen people lived there between eleven and forty years; and seven people lived there for more than forty years.

There was slightly less diversity in residents' occupations. Due to the snowball contact method I used, combined with the fact that I did most of my interviews over the summer, a disproportionately large number of educators were interviewed. I was subsequently short on representation from people employed in manufacturing,

construction, and service occupations. There was, however, sufficient variety among all of my interview subjects in both the categories I used to stratify the sample and in each participant's unique personality and life experience to provide rich data that I could use to interpret residents' perceptions.

A typical semi-structured interview involved contacting the prospective interview participant in person or by telephone. I explained the purpose of my study, the procedure and length of the interview, the request to tape record the interview, and the clause concerning the confidentiality of participation. If the person remained interested, I asked if they would prefer to meet at a public place or at the person's home. I conducted interviews in people's homes, in a back room of the Lucy Wortham James Memorial Library, in Panera Bread in Rolla, outside McDonald's, and in offices and workplaces. When I arrived at the interview, I spent some time conducting informal banter before explaining again the background and purpose of my study and the details of the interview's structure, process, and expected completion time. I reminded the person about the tape recorder and that his or her identity would remain confidential. I told the person that his or her participation was completely voluntary, and s/he could choose to stop the interview at any time and that the recording and any notes I took could be destroyed upon their request. I then gave the person an informed consent form to read over and sign. I explained the main points of the informed consent form while the person read it, and instructed the person to keep a copy of the form.

I always started with simple questions that established the background of the interview participant (refer to Appendix 1 for a list of standard questions). I then moved on to broader questions requiring more thought and, ideally, longer answers. I asked

certain questions depending on if the person grew up in St. James or not. For example, I asked the question “If you grew up in St. James, what kind of memories do you have of the town from your childhood?” only if the person had lived in St. James as a child or teenager. Conversely, if the person moved to St. James later in life, I asked “If you moved to St. James later in life, do you have any memories of first impressions?” In some cases, I did not ask all of the prepared questions. Some questions did not seem relevant or useful with some people, and I made the judgment not to ask particular questions on a case by case basis. One example of that was when I interviewed a law enforcement official and he did not want me to ask him particular questions where he would have to comment on his perception of the good and bad parts of town. As the interview progressed, I often asked follow-up or clarification questions after responses to the structured questions to further explore the person’s dialogue. If a person elaborated on a particular subject that moved off topic, I allowed the person to talk, because the objective of the interviews was to obtain the authentic experiences that support perceptions, which require free thought and exploration of memories, rather than strictly answering prepared questions. I ended every interview by asking if the person had anything else they would like to say, and then I explained the interview transcription and thesis writing process. I usually engaged the person in some more informal conversation, again depending on how well I knew the person prior to the interview. The lengths of the twenty seven interviews ranged from twenty minutes to almost three hours.

As I completed the semi-structured interviews, I began transcribing the recordings. I transcribed the first half of the interviews verbatim, including all of my dialogue. As that process proved too time-consuming, I transcribed the rest of the interviews more

selectively, minimizing my dialogue to just the questions I asked and summarizing long stretches of dialogue that were not relevant to the research.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Coding**

When the transcriptions were completed, I imported them into an NVivo qualitative analysis software project so I could sift through and code them according to inductively generated, hierarchical themes. Before and during the coding process, I created nodes in NVivo of topics, themes, and ideas that were discussed in the interviews. I created four “parent” tree nodes – Structured Questions, Open Tree Topics: Places, Open Tree Topics: Ideas or Qualities, and Community Capital – with numerous “child” tree nodes within each of those four parent tree nodes. Parent nodes are the main headings within an NVivo project, and child nodes are subheadings of further-refined ideas within the parent node topics. “Parent” and “child” nodes are the terms used by NVivo in the software operating manual.

The “Structured Questions” parent tree node refers to the standard questions I asked during the recorded semi-structured interviews. I created a child tree node for each question, and coded each resident’s answers to the questions under the appropriate nodes. Under the “Open Tree Topics: Places” parent tree node, I created child tree nodes with names of places in St. James, as well as a few other places and landscape features such as Cuba, Rolla, and trees, based on what people talked about in depth during their interviews. One node, “Places Mentioned”, has codes of all the different locales identified by residents at least once, so that a count could be made of how frequently

different places appeared. The child tree nodes that I created are briefly explained as follows:

Back roads – Refers to the back roads, typically gravel county roads, outside of St. James in Phelps County.

Caring Center – A nonprofit organization in St. James that operates a thrift store and provides many forms of social services to residents.

Country Mart – The only major grocery store in St. James (there is also a discount grocery store that sells shifting overstock or surplus items), which many people talked about it because they are not satisfied with its service and quality.

Cuba – Cuba is a neighboring community, the next town east on Interstate 44, that is slightly smaller than St. James in population, but has experienced much more industrial and commercial development than St. James in recent decades.

Fall Festival – The Chamber of Commerce-run Grape and Fall Festival, held every September at Nelson Hart Park, is the largest and most important festival held in the St. James city limits.

Golf Course – St. James has a nine-hole public golf course south of town, which began in 1961 with improved landscaping in the past decade.

Interstate 44 – Interstate 44 runs from St. Louis to Oklahoma City, passing through St. James from northeast to southwest.

James Foundation – The James Foundation is a charitable trust that was created from the estate of Lucy Wortham James after her death in 1938.

Library – The Lucy Wortham James Memorial Library is located on the grounds of the city park and is operated by the James Foundation.

Maramec Springs – Maramec Spring Park, six miles south of St. James, is composed of the length of Maramec Spring (from its source to its confluence with the Meramec River) and the associated trout hatchery operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation, the sites of the old James family iron works, museums, and much of the surrounding undeveloped land (a mixture of open floodplain, forests, meadows, and bluffs). The park is operated by the James Foundation.

Movie theater – A movie theater that stood downtown on Jefferson Street until it was demolished in the early 2000s.

Nelson Hart Park – Nelson Hart Park is an activity park, not a nature park, with baseball and soccer fields and basketball courts, a community hall that people can rent, a recreation center, a demolition derby field, livestock barns, and facilities that are used when the Grape and Fall Festival is held at the park.

Park – The St. James city park is land owned and managed by the James Foundation in the southwestern part of the town.

Places mentioned – As stated above, I coded every place mentioned by each participant at least once in order to conduct a frequency count.

Pool – The swimming pool in the St. James city park operated by the James Foundation.

Railroad tracks – Railroad tracks pass through St. James, about a half mile parallel to I-44.

Rolla – Rolla is a larger town, St. James' neighbor to the west, where many residents go to obtain goods, services, and employment.

Ruby's Ice Cream – A locally-owned ice cream parlor that makes its own ice cream and has been in St. James for many decades.

Trees – I made a node for trees because several residents talked about the abundance or display of trees in St. James.

Wal-Mart – The node for Wal-Mart was created to code comments about both the Wal-Mart store in Rolla as well as the Wal-Mart Distribution Center in St. James.

Wineries – There are four wineries in the St. James area, which perhaps bring the most recognition to St. James, and they are a major source of tourism dollars and sales taxes for St. James.

Under the “Open Tree Topics: Ideas or Qualities” parent tree node, I created child tree nodes with various ideas or qualities that people talked about in depth. These are themes that emerged in more than one interview at least briefly. The child tree nodes that I created under this parent node are:

Antiques – St. James used to have a few antiques stores which drew visitors, but there are not as many now.

Attitude changes about town – I used this node to capture comments people made about their changes in attitude about St. James over time.

City and country – This node collected comments made comparing city life to country or small town life.

Community involvement – Several people talked about topics of community involvement and volunteerism.

Downtown impressions – I coded descriptions or comments on the downtown area of St. James under this node.

Drugs and safety – Residents’ discussions of drug use, trafficking, and other issues of crime or safety were coded here.

Education – A common theme heard when discussing St. James with a resident is the high regard most people hold towards the school district. Discussions of the school system and education in general were coded here.

Good place to raise kids – I coded any comments about St. James being a good place to raise a family, for multiple reasons, under this node.

Lack of things to do – Many residents expressed that there is a lack of things for people to do in St. James, mostly for young people, but also a few comments about adults having a shortage of activity options available.

Left and returned – A few interview participants had lived in St. James, left, and then returned to live there again. I coded their observations of that experience under this node.

Negative impressions of places – Any notable comments about negative impressions of particular places were coded under this node.

Other comments – Sometimes there were statements by residents that were very profound or worth analyzing further, but about topics that I had not created a distinct node for and did not foresee any similar statements on that topic in other interviews. I coded those cases in this node, a catch-all node of quotations that I did not want to overlook for my discussion and analysis.

People part of town identity – There are several people from throughout St. James’ history who are well-known, and their discussion in residents’ interviews suggested that

several of these people can be considered a part of the residents' perceptions of town identity.

Poverty – St. James is a relatively poor town in a relatively poor area of Missouri.

Comments about issues of poverty seen, felt and perceived were present in several residents' interviews.

Small town qualities – I coded comments made about unique qualities of small town or rural life under this node.

St. James as home – Several residents discussed their feelings about St. James being their home. These comments were often made to convey an indescribable fondness for or attachment to St. James.

St. James shopping – The issue of shopping in St. James – discussions of the type and quality of available commerce and the choice of shopping in Rolla versus St. James – was brought up by a few residents.

Time moves on – This node was used to code reflections on how things change over time.

Town growing – Several residents made various comments on how St. James is growing, usually meaning physically, but also in reference to maturity and power.

The fourth parent tree node I created, “Community Capital”, was based on a framework created by Flora and Flora (2008) that measures the strengths and weaknesses of communities based on seven forms of capital. The framework provides a categorical, qualitative method of evaluating all aspects of communities. I coded interviews using this scheme so that I could evaluate the elements of the community that St. James residents perceive as being particularly strong or weak, or at least more visible. The child

tree nodes that I created under this parent node are briefly explained as follows, listing characteristic elements of each form of capital:

Built capital – Housing, transportation infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure, utilities, buildings, and healthcare infrastructure.

Cultural capital – Values, heritage recognition and celebration, rituals, language, and dress.

Financial capital – Local tax base, state and federal tax monies, philanthropic donations, grants, contracts, investments, poverty rates, income, wealth, and security.

Human capital – Population, education, skills, health, creativity, youth, and diversity.

Natural capital – Air and water quality, land quality and quantity, natural resources, biodiversity, landscape scenery, and land use.

Political capital – Inclusion, voice, power, level of community organization through the use of government, and the ability of government to garner resources for the community.

Social capital – Leadership, groups, bridging networks, bonding networks, trust, reciprocity, network structure, group membership, cooperation, common vision and goals, and acceptance of alternative views.

### **Participant Observation and Archival Research**

In addition to the free elicitation and semi-structured interviews, I rounded out my field research with various forms of participant observation and archival research. I engaged in participant observation to deepen my understanding of the St. James community and to challenge and enhance my own existing sense of the place. By reading

the weekly newspaper, the *Leader-Journal*, I became immersed in the discourse and events of the town, and I listened to and participated in conversations about local current events with people I talked to in public places. I explored the town by car and foot to acquaint myself with all its parts, especially those I had not frequented when I was a resident, and also to observe how areas had changed in the time since my memory of the place had formed. I attended community events, such as children's ball games, and festivals like the Grape and Fall Festival at Nelson Hart Park in September and the Old Iron Works Days at Maramec Spring Park in October. I attended two city council meetings to listen to the official discourse of town governance, and I attended a community meeting hosted by the Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to discuss ways to address the results of a blue-ribbon, red-flag study that was conducted by MRPC.

I obtained five documents that address community planning, assessment, and development in St. James. The first is called the *Comprehensive Plan for the City of St. James*, created in 1967 by a St. Louis consulting firm (Harland Bartholomew and Associates 1967). The *Comprehensive Plan* is a structural planning document used to guide the development of St. James into the future, written during a time of ample civic funding and optimism about the future of the town. According to Mayor Wilson, the *Comprehensive Plan* still forms the base of city planning today. The other four documents were all produced by the MRPC. The *St. James Strategic Plan*, created in April 2001 (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2001), was an assessment of the goals, strengths and weaknesses of St. James – in categories such as infrastructure, cultural/recreational, and beautification – and ideas to address the issues, created as result

of focus groups and community meetings. *The Community Focus* report of 2006 (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2006a), a more recent attempt at community assessment and improvement, is a collection of data about St. James that was used in community meetings to produce *Community Focus 2006: A Blue-Ribbon, Red-Flag Report for the City of St. James, MO* (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2006b), which designated positive qualities about St. James as well as issues that need improvement. This led to more community meetings to brainstorm ways to address the problem areas and accentuate the positive qualities, resulting in the document *Community Focus 2007: A Plan of Action in response to the Blue-Ribbon, Red-Flag Report for the city of St. James, MO* (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2007)

I spent a fair amount of time in the Lucy Wortham James Memorial Library conducting archival research on the history of St. James. I obtained most of my information from three main sources. In 1976, St. James residents put together an anthology of articles about different topics and eras in community history (Smallwood & Strebeck 1976). This was done as part of the U.S. bicentennial celebration, which also was marked in St. James by sealing a time capsule. The anthology has articles by contemporary town residents (local amateur historians and members of old families), older articles, newspaper clippings, and photographs and other archival documents. The library also maintains an extensive collection of photographs bound in albums based on theme or historical era. Many of the photographs had detailed captions, so I studied them to get a sense of what the town looked like throughout its history and to familiarize myself with family names that have been part of the town's identity. A third source for historical research is a book written by Nancy Genet entitled *Lucy Wortham James 1880-*

1938 (1971). The book is a biography of Lucy James, St. James' most famous resident and benefactor, whose legacy in her James Foundation has tremendously influenced the development and character of modern St. James.

In addition to speaking with tourism director Myra Ortvals, I also explored the marketing of St. James identity to visitors through tourism literature from the St. James Tourist Information Center. The Center has an abundance of brochures, magazines, and displays that "sell" St. James and regional attractions and qualities to visitors. I collected this literature in order to conduct content analysis and explore the images and qualities that are used to create the image of St. James that is presented to visitors.

As a final note regarding participant observation methods, I also kept a field journal. In the journal I maintained my personal observations, accounts of daily activities, notes, and reflections on St. James and the process of conducting my research. The journal will inform topics in the discussion chapters of this thesis.

### **Participant Identity**

In order to improve the participants' comfort with the interview process, I assigned pseudonyms to all of the interview participants except the four city leaders. By not revealing their identities, I hoped that the participants would feel more confident to express their true feelings and not withhold their perceptions of life in St. James. I obtained the participants' permission as part of the consent forms at the time of the interviews to assign them pseudonyms in the final, public version of the thesis. I chose pseudonyms that are characteristic of the culture of St. James, and I maintained typically female names for female participants and typically male names for male participants. In

addition, I tried to generalize the participants' occupations and any other potentially identifying characteristics in such a way that the participants could not be identified by them.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Results**

#### **Initial Free Elicitation Interviews with Residents**

The results of the initial free elicitation interviews I conducted with seven St. James residents provided a framework in which I could proceed to construct and conduct the semi-structured interviews. I had only one instruction for the participants in this interview: tell me about St. James as though I were a visitor. As the interviews progressed, the answers that came from that open-ended exercise, with the help of some supplemental questions to get clarification or to suggest some new areas to discuss, revealed the language that residents use when discussing the town, as well as a preliminary sense of how residents perceive the town and what they find most notable for its identity. These interviews revealed the places and qualities in the town that residents first think of when they consider St. James. Although I began each interview with the same basic instruction for the participant, each one took a different path regarding the focus of the discussion.

Shane Tasus and Brandy Cooper were both residents who grew up in St. James, moved away for a long period, and have moved back in the past seven years. Shane's wife, Jennifer, is a newcomer, having only lived in St. James for two years. Shane, Jennifer, and Brandy all discussed the rural, small-town nature of St. James. Shane and Jennifer focused on the small-town mentality: the concern only with local affairs, the appearance that everyone knows everyone else, a sense of local belonging, and rootedness in the community. They said that St. James is big enough to get everything you need, although you may have to sacrifice certain amenities to live there. Shane

stressed that many residents of St. James have a stronger connection to nature than city dwellers do. People grow crops and gardens, take float trips on rivers, drive and park on county back roads with no destination – the rhythm of their lives is in tune with nature. People hang out on riverbanks in the same way people on the coast go to beaches. Brandy talked about how the town has changed since she was a child. Overall, it remains a good place to raise children, but it has its fair share of drawbacks. She talked about how when she moved back in 2000 after fifteen years living away, the town seemed to have grown suddenly, something she said she had not noticed when she came back to visit during those years. Brandy commented on how she did not know as many people anymore, that the town seemed more family-oriented than she had remembered it, and that one's perception of a place changes over the course of a lifetime.

Shane and Jennifer both expressed strong fondness for Maramec Spring Park. Shane worked in the park, and Brandy concurred that Maramec Spring Park is essential when describing the town. Shane and Jennifer described Maramec Springs as unique, mentioning the natural beauty, wildlife, and old iron works facilities. Shane described being all alone in the park at night, listening to the din of insects and animals, looking at the stars, and spotlighting wildlife. Jennifer described how she liked visiting the portion of the Trail of Tears that runs through the park as well as the old graveyard that dates to the 1820s. Brandy also said the Veterans' Home is important for town identity, while Jennifer mentioned how she wondered what the facility actually was after moving to town – the gravestones in front of its red brick buildings piqued her curiosity. Shane and Jennifer expressed a personal connection with Muttley's Pub, which is owned by Shane's father. Some of the other places mentioned during the course of their virtual tour of St.

James included Little Prairie Lake, Diana's Diner (the old bakery), Ray's Tires, Route 66, the railroad tracks, the park, Spook Hollow Road and Witch's Graveyard. Shane said that grapes and the wineries are vital to describing the town, as are the sweet gum trees that line many streets and drop their gumballs every autumn. Brandy also listed numerous places she would show a visitor to the town, responding to the scenario I used to have her describe St. James. These included the downtown with revolving businesses, Cardetti's Furniture & Appliance, Plaza Fashions, Ruby's Ice Cream, Wilson Lumber company, Stanley's Garden Center, Diana's Diner (the old bakery), Sybill's restaurant, the intersection of Highway 68 and James Boulevard (historic Route 66), the site of the demolished old movie theater, the railroad tracks, all three schools, the park, Nelson Hart Park, and city hall. Brandy said she would point in the direction of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, but would not feel the need to show it to a visitor.

I asked Jennifer what features signified the northern edge of St. James, since her first experiences with the town were in approaching in a drive from Columbia. She said that she senses the edge when she passes the Rolla Horse Auction barn, and she associates seeing Ruby's Ice Cream and Stanley's Garden Center with entering the town itself. Brandy's description of the northern edge of the town matched Jennifer's, and she said that the golf course and the Meramec Woods housing subdivision mark the south end of town.

Tom Sutherland has lived in St. James for the past 37 years, and Melissa Picard has lived there for 33. In initial free elicitation interviews with them, they focused more on St. James' qualities than its places. Tom spent a considerable amount of time recounting his move to and history in St. James as a backdrop for his perceptions of the

town. Besides simply liking the town as a whole, Tom cited three reasons for this affinity and decision to stay after moving there: he liked trout fishing at Maramec Spring Park; he was impressed by all the amenities that the James Foundation provided for the town; and he liked the school system for his children. Tom went on to discuss his involvement with city government and volunteer work to illustrate his attachment to the place. Tom spent considerable time discussing the subjects of municipal growth, positive aspects of the town, and the areas that need improvement. Tom liked that St. James is a small town with little traffic. He was impressed by the Veterans' Home and plans to live there one day, should the need arise. He also liked the proximity to Rolla's services and the central location between St. Louis, Springfield, Jefferson City, and Columbia. He was proud of St. James' situation as a gateway to the Ozarks and its "Forest City of the Ozarks" moniker. When asked to name some places that characterize St. James' identity, Tom said the wineries, Maramec Spring Park, the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, the park, and the school system. Tom also discussed other places, including Nelson Hart Park, Sybill's restaurant, the Golden Age Center, and the Caring Center. Tom was critical of the current work of the James Foundation, saying it does not seem to be as active as in the past, as evident in the dilapidated swimming pool the Foundation maintains in the park.

Melissa Picard similarly discussed how the town had been debating the role of the James Foundation in light of recent deterioration and closure of part of the swimming pool. She said local people are becoming frustrated by the fact that Lucy James created the Foundation specifically to improve the community, but it no longer appears to be meeting its mandate. In her interview, Melissa told me that places she would point out to a visitor would be the park, the pool, St. James Winery, Meramec Vineyards, the

Veterans' Home, and the public library. Melissa, a schoolteacher, went on to discuss how as a child she used to take for granted the public library, which is operated by the James Foundation. It was only when she was older that she realized the library is much better than that found in an average small community. She continued the theme by stressing the importance of Lucy James and the town's history for its identity. As with other interviewees, I asked Melissa to tell me what features mark the boundaries of the town for her. She said she would consider the golf course and the restaurant across the road as the southern end of town, while the north end is marked by Stanley's Garden Center and Sybill's restaurant. The west end of town is evident when the outer road starts to run parallel to I-44. The east end of town is marked along East James Boulevard where the Dillon Clay Mining barn is located.

The last two free elicitation interviews with Alice Luebbecke and Bill Hutton focused on historical perspectives on St. James. Alice spoke mostly about various houses, businesses, and other buildings in the town that were familiar to her, as we drove around town. She related stories from her life about relationships with those places, either their present occupants or past occupants and establishments.

Bill, a teacher and amateur historian, first talked about how the town has changed since his arrival in 1975. The theme was that the town was a sleepy backwater with a mostly vacant downtown at that time. McDonald's arrived in 1990 and served as a catalyst for development. The Econo Lodge opened shortly thereafter, the industrial park was established, the Wal-Mart Distribution Center built, and businesses opened, expanded, or were redesigned. In recent years, St. James has been "forward-looking." Bill's responses to my question of what features or landmarks he would point out to a

visitor reflect his predominately historical perspective. He said he would point out the old public school; the sites of several historic buildings that no longer stand, including Dunmoor, Lucy's father's house, and the Seminary; and he would show a visitor the collection of historic photographs of St. James maintained in the library. Bill said he would also point out the schools, the library, the park, Lucy's playhouse behind the library, the wineries, a natural arch near Boys' and Girls' Town, and James Boulevard, also known as historic Route 66. He said he would bring a visitor to Maramec Spring Park only after he had shown the visitor pictures of what the iron works looked like in the nineteenth century.

### **Free Elicitation Interviews with Community Leaders**

To get a sense of the official vision of St. James – how the power wielders, decision makers, and image creators perceive it – I conducted free elicitation interviews with Mayor Dennis Wilson, Chamber of Commerce President Verna Brand, Tourism Director Myra Ortals, and Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Coordinator Bob Wilson. The interviews generally presented a positive view of a town making progress in its development and offering scenery and a high quality of life, though the interviewees did make suggestions of how the town needs to improve.

Recently-elected Mayor Wilson, a resident for much of his life, described St. James as a vibrant community, growing but at a slow pace. He said St. James is a good place to live and has an excellent quality of life, citing the school district, parks, medical care, and a scenic landscape. He discussed the town's strategic location between cities and the Ozarks, and its proximity to Rolla and its services. When I asked him about

changes the town has seen in the past ten years, the mayor mentioned the slow growth of the industrial park, the downtown revitalization project, the new Wal-Mart Distribution Center, the incremental construction of a five-mile bicycle trail, and the opening of Sybill's, an upscale restaurant that complements St. James' wineries. Mayor Wilson talked about the limited space within the city limits for new housing development, so most new homes are being built in the county, which is beneficial for the town nonetheless since the residents shop in the town. St. James would go to great lengths to offer incentives to attract industries to locate in the town, including tax incentives and provision of infrastructure. When I asked the mayor about any long-term plans that have guided St. James' development, he mentioned a comprehensive plan from 1967 that the growth of the town has generally followed. The main points of the plan were to maintain the downtown niche of traditional, small-town charm, and to develop the area along Interstate 44 to cater to highway traffic. The plan has not been fully realized, however. More retail (rather than service) stores are needed downtown to attract visitor commerce, and landowners along I-44 refuse to develop their property to the potential envisioned in the comprehensive plan. The mayor wanted to attract more chain restaurants to the I-44 area. The city has utilized traffic flow studies to measure growth and inform developers. Mayor Wilson said that in recent years, St. James has become the "go-to community" for Rolla people, and if that makes St. James a "bedroom community," then he will gladly accept that designation, since these residents could benefit the town. When asked what places are most important for town identity and history, Mayor Wilson said the St. James Park and Maramec Spring Park, managed by the James Foundation, are the most

important, as well as the old city hall and old train depot. As an overall theme, the mayor said he wants St. James to keep its uniqueness while continuing to grow.

St. James Tourism Director Myra Ortvals, who is not a St. James native, described the town to me as any tourism director would, pointing out the places and qualities that make St. James a good place to live in and visit. Myra described St. James as small, safe, friendly, religious, and proud of its natural environment and access to outdoor activities. Myra said that the four local wineries and Maramec Spring Park are by far the most important tourism attractions, and she said that the wineries “have done so much good for the town.” Myra also cited river canoeing in the region and St. James’ friendly nature, affordable services, and attractions as important qualities that attract tourists. When I asked what places in St. James are most important for town identity, Myra listed the wineries, Maramec Spring Park, the downtown commercial area centered on the railroad tracks, the Missouri Veterans’ Home, Boys’ and Girls’ Town of Missouri, and Camp Brimshire. When asked what places are most important for town history, her first response was Route 66, which goes through downtown St. James. Her second response was Maramec Spring Park. Myra discussed the role of the tourism director and the tourism budget for St. James, which is devoted mainly to running the Tourist Information Center that she manages along I-44 at St. James’ exit ramp. Because of that, the city advertises itself in free media and in regional and state tourism publications. The Tourist Information Center tries to foster local and state cooperation in tourism promotion. The Chamber of Commerce conducts local advertising and promotes its annual Grape and Fall Festival. Myra said that the wineries and other local private attractions advertise in St. Louis area media, and the wineries get national attention in

wine publications. When asked about areas needing improvement in St. James, Myra said that there are plenty of attractions for tourism, but the town lacks familiar hotel facilities so many visitors stay in nearby Rolla; the town could also use more quality restaurants like Sybill's. Myra spoke highly of some retail stores in the downtown area, but said St. James does not have many antique stores like it used to, unlike its neighbor, Steelville, now known for antiques.

I interviewed Verna Brand, a banker who was serving as the President of the St. James Chamber of Commerce (COC) at the time of the interview. Verna seemed fascinated by my study, indicating that she was interested in how St. James residents think, especially regarding commerce and community involvement, but also regarding their perceptions of the town in general. The St. James COC is a volunteer organization without a full-time, paid director, which serves as the marketing arm of the city, promoting St. James industry, commerce, and tourism. Throughout the interview, Verna returned to the idea that the community needs more citizen involvement. She asked what it would take for people to become more involved. Many community organizations have aging members, and organizations and volunteer boards like the school board need new members with fresh energy and ideas. The construction of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center and the middle school has been a major recent change. Verna said the St. James school district is excellent and receives top rankings, though the high school and elementary school need structural improvements. The largest employers in town are Manchester Packaging, Boys' and Girls' Town of Missouri, Tacony Manufacturing, and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, all of which are very generous towards the community.

Verna said St. James needs to improve its approach to development and administration. She compared the town to the neighboring community of Cuba, which has a full-time COC director and city administrator; development in St. James is about where Cuba was in 1986. The city needs to look to Cuba, not Rolla, as a model for how to develop. Verna said St. James needs to capitalize on its wonderful, colorful history and great figures like Lucy James and Mayme Ousley, Missouri's first female mayor elected in 1921. She said St. James is blessed with history and the benefits of the James Foundation. If the community could work together to capitalize on the benefits, it could achieve much more than it has presently.

I asked Verna what kinds of industries are unique for St. James, and she said the fact that retail is scarce is unique. St. James needs more retail businesses, which would improve the town's image and lead to better development. Verna believes that community members want to do business with their friends in the town rather than go to Rolla to buy things, if given the opportunity. She said she believes volunteering is a good way to get to know the town. If people would become more active in the community, they would grow more comfortable with the town and their fellow citizens, thereby improving the sense of community and fueling local commerce. Verna mentioned that she would like to see more activity in the downtown area.

My last question asked Verna to describe St. James to me. She asked for a hypothetical context; I told her to pretend I was thinking about moving to St. James, was a professional, had a four-year-old child, and did not know anything about the place. Verna said St. James is a great place to raise a family. It has a wonderful school system; the learning environment is very personal, the teachers fantastic, and interacting with the

school is a wonderful experience. If I were a teacher looking for a job, I would have the choice of two great school districts in St. James and Rolla, as well as in surrounding communities. Verna mentioned the city park; Nelson Hart Park and the recreation center there; and Maramec Spring Park, a great place for fishing and getting close to nature. St. James has an award-winning viticulture industry like St. James Winery and Meramec Vineyards. The Tourist Information Center has information on everything I would be looking for in the town. Verna mentioned recreation activities on the Gasconade River to the north. She described Phelps County Bank as an establishment with “big-bank services” but a “small-bank feel.” Raymond James Financial Services located in the bank is a national firm, one of the best in the nation. Verna talked about the great healthcare services in St. James, with two clinics and three pharmacies. She mentioned Wilson Lumber Company as a town institution run by Judy Carney, sister of Mayor Dennis Wilson. Finally, Verna mentioned Sybill’s as a great restaurant for the town. Verna provided me with a copy of a “Blue Ribbon / Red Flag” study that was conducted by the Meramec Regional Planning Commission, which evaluated mostly structural areas where St. James has been very successful and areas that need improvement.

Finally, I interviewed Bob Wilson, a St. James native and brother of Mayor Wilson who, as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, works on economic development issues. Bob said that there were two sides to economic development in St. James: retail and industry. On the retail side, he said St. James has been experiencing flat growth in its sales taxes, which need to increase to fund more services for residents. St. James’ close proximity to Rolla means that it will never attract any big box stores or major retailers, so the retail sector should focus on small local businesses downtown and

chain stores and restaurants in the area along I-44. The town needs to develop small retail in the downtown storefronts to attract visitors and foot traffic. The wineries and a few services pull travelers off the interstate now, but there is so much vacant land along I-44 in St. James that would be a prime spot for chain restaurants, motels, and other familiar places where travelers would spend money. Regarding industrial development, Bob said that St. James is always trying to attract new industry to the large amount of land zoned for industry by advertising it as a clean, rural community that offers a good lifestyle for workers. Some incentives commonly used for economic development in St. James are the cheap utilities, low tax rates, available industrial sites, central location between Missouri urban areas and regions, recreation opportunities, and the town's family orientation. The major industrial companies in town now are Manchester Packaging, Tacony Manufacturing, and the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. Bob spoke of the brilliance of past town leaders who decided that St. James would own and operate its own utilities, charging utility prices at or below cost for its customers and keeping the profits local. Bob said that St. James has no full-time, professional economic developer; the Rolla Regional Economic Commission occasionally assists St. James with grant writing and other services.

### **Content Analysis of Tourist Information Center Literature**

I collected all of the free brochures and other literature available in the Tourist Information Center (TIC) and classified them by area: general information and areas distant from St. James and the Ozark Highlands region; areas outside St. James in the

Ozark Highlands region; and literature about St. James. The count of pieces of literature for areas distant from St. James is listed in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Count of Literature from TIC for Areas Distant from St. James**

| <b>Subject</b>                         | <b>Count</b> | <b>Subject</b>                     | <b>Count</b> |
|--|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| State park maps                        | 41           | Wineries                           | 5            |
| Tourist Attractions                    | 7            | Directories / guidebooks           | 4            |
| Department of Conservation information | 7            | General state information and maps | 3            |
| Towns                                  | 5            | Missouri vacation planners         | 2            |

The count of pieces of literature for areas outside St. James in the Ozark Highlands region is listed in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Count of Literature from TIC for Areas Outside St. James in the Ozark Highlands Region**

| <b>Subject</b>           | <b>Count</b> | <b>Subject</b>  | <b>Count</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------|---|--------------|
| Tourist attractions      | 10           | Health and community services                           | 2            |
| Trails and natural areas | 4            | Missouri University of Science & Technology information | 2            |
| Towns                    | 3            | Restaurants   | 2            |
| Directories / guidebooks | 2            | Ozarks fishing information                              | 1            |
| Facility maps            | 2            |   |              |

The detailed count of pieces of literature for areas in St. James is listed in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Count of Literature from TIC for Sites in St. James**

| <b>Subject</b>                            | <b>Count</b> | <b>Subject</b>                                     | <b>Count</b> |
|---|--------------|--|--------------|
| Boys & Girls Town of Missouri             | 5            | Maramec Spring Park                                | 1            |
| Phelps County Bank                        | 4            | Methodist church                                   | 1            |
| Camping, RV, and cabin lodging facilities | 3            | Missouri Veterans Home                             | 1            |
| St. James Winery                          | 3            | Ozark Highlands Viticultural Area map              | 1            |
| Sybill's restaurant                       | 3            | The Rock House                                     | 1            |
| Bed and breakfasts                        | 2            | St. James restaurant guide                         | 1            |
| Assembly of God church                    | 1            | Simply Irresistible                                | 1            |
| The Book Addict & Stained Glass           | 1            | Tourist Information Center 2008 Calendar of Events | 1            |
| Camp Brimshire                            | 1            | Tourist Information Center Maramec Trail Guide     | 1            |
| Episcopal church                          | 1            | Town & Country Bank                                | 1            |
| Ferrigno Winery                           | 1            | US Bank  | 1            |
| Golden Living Center                      | 1            |  |              |

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews I conducted with 27 St. James residents yielded a wealth of information about their sense of place, a topic to be explored at length in the discussion chapter. To analyze the interviews, I coded themes and topics using NVivo qualitative analysis software. I created four parent tree nodes: Structured Questions, Places, Ideas or Qualities, and Community Capital. I created numerous derivative nodes within each of those four parent headings. Parent tree nodes are broad root or base topics, while derivative nodes are narrower, further-defined sub-topics under the parent tree nodes, like multiple branches of a tree originating from just a few large branches.

The Structured Questions node refers to the standard questions I asked interview respondents. I created a set of derivative nodes for each question, and coded each

resident’s answers to the questions accordingly. In some cases, I coded answers to part of an earlier question that were not direct responses, but that did express a sentiment best coded under the earlier question. A good example of this would be childhood memories, which residents tended to provide not in one statement, but rather at different times throughout the interviews. The derivative nodes for the Structured Questions parent node are listed in Table 4, including the number of residents who provided an answer to each question and the number of separate statements I coded for each question.

**Table 4 - Number of Respondents and Separate Coded Statements for each Structured Question Parent Node**

| <b>Node</b>                                    | <b># Response</b> | <b># Coded</b> |
|--|-------------------|----------------|
| Bad parts of town                              | 23                | 26             |
| Childhood memories                             | 19                | 109            |
| First impressions                              | 13                | 22             |
| Gas stations                                   | 19                | 19             |
| How do city leaders envision the town          | 25                | 38             |
| How involved are you in community affairs      | 25                | 49             |
| Nice parts of town                             | 22                | 31             |
| Places associated with town pride              | 26                | 36             |
| Places important for history                   | 17                | 30             |
| Places that no longer exist                    | 27                | 57             |
| Places that represent town to visitors         | 27                | 48             |
| Places where time spent on a regular basis     | 23                | 29             |
| Residence history                              | 27                | 40             |
| What brought you to St. James                  | 10                | 10             |
| What do you like best about St. James          | 27                | 60             |
| What don’t you like about St. James            | 26                | 72             |
| What places do you like best                   | 27                | 57             |
| What would have to happen for you to move away | 26                | 28             |
| Where do you shop                              | 14                | 18             |

Under the Places parent node, I created derivative nodes with the names of relevant places in St. James and beyond, as well as environmental features like trees. One node, Places Mentioned, has codes of all the different places simply mentioned by

residents at least once in their interviews, so that a count could be made of how many residents mentioned a particular place in some context during the interviews. The derivative nodes for the Places parent node are listed in Table 5, in the same format as the first table.

**Table 5 - Number of Respondents and Separate Coded Statements for each Places Parent Node**

| <b>Nodes</b>     | <b># Response</b> | <b># Coded</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Back roads       | 6                 | 9              |
| Caring Center    | 2                 | 3              |
| Country Mart     | 14                | 16             |
| Cuba             | 8                 | 17             |
| Fall Festival    | 10                | 15             |
| Golf course      | 3                 | 3              |
| Interstate 44    | 4                 | 5              |
| James Foundation | 12                | 16             |
| Library          | 3                 | 4              |
| Maramec Springs  | 21                | 42             |
| Movie theater    | 7                 | 9              |
| Nelson Hart Park | 6                 | 6              |
| Park             | 6                 | 10             |
| Places mentioned | 27                | 680            |
| Pool today       | 9                 | 11             |
| Railroad tracks  | 11                | 16             |
| Rolla            | 19                | 35             |
| Ruby's Ice Cream | 4                 | 4              |
| Trees            | 14                | 19             |
| Wal-Mart         | 10                | 12             |
| Wineries         | 15                | 17             |

Under the Ideas or Qualities parent node, I created derivative nodes with various ideas or qualities that people talked about in depth in their interviews. These are themes that emerged in more than one interview and that people talked about at least briefly. The derivative nodes are listed in Table 6, with the counts in the same format as above.

**Table 6 - Number of Respondents and Separate Coded Statements for each Ideas or Qualities Parent Node**

| <b>Nodes</b>                   | <b># Response</b> | <b># Coded</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Antiques                       | 8                 | 10             |
| Attitude changes about town    | 5                 | 5              |
| City and country               | 5                 | 17             |
| Community involvement          | 5                 | 14             |
| Downtown impressions           | 16                | 23             |
| Drugs and safety               | 5                 | 7              |
| Education valued               | 11                | 15             |
| Good place to raise kids       | 10                | 14             |
| Lack of things to do           | 11                | 14             |
| Left and returned              | 6                 | 8              |
| Negative impressions of places | 7                 | 9              |
| Other comments                 | 14                | 18             |
| People part of town identity   | 13                | 24             |
| Poverty                        | 7                 | 14             |
| Small town qualities           | 20                | 51             |
| St. James as home              | 9                 | 15             |
| St. James shopping             | 11                | 18             |
| Time moves on                  | 4                 | 4              |
| Town growing                   | 12                | 20             |

The fourth parent node, Community Capitals, was based on a framework created by Flora and Flora (2008) that measures the strengths and weaknesses of communities based on seven forms of capital. The derivative nodes for this parent, the seven forms of capital, are listed in Table 7, with the counts in the same format as above. I did not use the community capitals results for any further analysis within the thesis.

**Table 7 - Number of Respondents and Separate Coded Statements for each Community Capitals Parent Node**

| <b>Nodes</b>      | <b># Response</b> | <b># Coded</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Built capital     | 3                 | 3              |
| Cultural capital  | 7                 | 10             |
| Financial capital | 2                 | 2              |
| Human capital     | 5                 | 7              |
| Natural capital   | 5                 | 12             |
| Political capital | 3                 | 4              |
| Social capital    | 10                | 21             |

## Chapter 4

### Discussion I – The Official Vision

#### Introduction

Before I look at St. James through the lived experience of residents, I will examine the town as it is portrayed through the official vision. The official vision is the public discourse about St. James – the landscape, images, stories, values, and history that are created and supported by the institutions of power. The official vision suggests how people, both community members and outsiders, “should” perceive St. James. It is how the town exists in the realm of law, commerce, and formal history. This is the ‘official’ version of St. James, while the perceptions of the residents, as expressed in my interviews with them, comprise the ‘unofficial’ version of St. James. Although the official vision holds truth, I will argue that the everyday lived experience of residents offers the more authentic vision of what St. James truly is.

In this chapter, I will first explore the history of St. James as presented in local texts, offering ideas of its official identity over time. The three eras that most strongly shaped St. James’ identity – the iron works, the life of Lucy Wortham James, and the history and modern resurgence of the viticulture industry – are the focus of this section. Next, I will examine some planning documents that have been used to arrange and improve St. James’ structures and community. Then I will describe and explore issues housed in some of the places in St. James that create the official vision. Finally, I will critique the interviews I conducted with four representatives of the official vision – the mayor, Chamber of Commerce director, tourism director, and economic development director.

In order to present my findings about sense of place in St. James, I created a dichotomy between the official vision of leaders and the lived experience of residents. This dichotomy is not necessarily present in reality, and it is definitely not as stark and polarizing as I depict it here. I use it as a convenient narrative presentation device in order to clearly illustrate the various conceptions of St. James that different people and groups have. The official vision can be a part of the lived reality of St. James, and the people of power who I am including as part of the official vision have their own individual lived experiences in St. James that I did not investigate. The dichotomy between official vision and lived reality is simply magnified in this thesis to create a convenient framework for analyzing sense of place.

## **Iron, Wine, & Lucy: Eras of St. James**

### ***Maramec Iron Works<sup>6</sup> & the Founding of St. James***

The formal history of St. James begins in 1825, when a delegation of Shawnee stopped over in Chillicothe, Ohio, en route to Washington, D.C. They stayed with businessman Thomas James, who inquired about the bright red substance used to paint their faces. The substance was hematite powder from iron ore deposits in Missouri. James traveled to Missouri with the Shawnee on their return trip and discovered the source of the iron at a place the Shawnee called “Miamigoua,” their word for catfish. The spring was nestled in steeply rolling, forested Ozark foothills (Genet 1971, 14). The iron ore deposits were located near what would be called Maramec Spring (a corruption

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<sup>6</sup> In St. James, there are two accepted spellings for the name “Meramec.” “Meramec” is used when referring to the Meramec River, its valley and floodplain, and the greater region surrounding it; it is also used by the Meramec Regional Planning Commission and Meramec Vineyards Winery. “Maramec” is used to identify the Maramec Iron Works; Maramec Spring Park; and Maramec Street.

of the native name), a tributary of the Meramec River and the fifth largest spring in Missouri, with an average daily flow of one hundred million gallons of water (*The James Foundation Homepage*).

James bought the land from the United States government in 1826 and sent a crew of workers under the management of forge superintendent Samuel Massey to the site to establish the Massey & James Iron Works (Genet 1971, 15). The area around the spring came to be known colloquially as “Maramec.” The iron works produced its first output in 1829, and soon it was supplying iron products for the growing populations in westward expansion to the Midwest and beyond, as well as being sold to faraway cities like Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. People came to Maramec to purchase iron products, and iron was also shipped out from the Maramec forges overland 115 miles to St. Louis or, when the water was high enough, it was loaded on barges and floated down the Gasconade to the Missouri River for shipment across the Midwest (ibid., 17).

In 1843, Thomas James’ son William replaced Massey as the manager of the iron works, now called the Maramec Iron Works. At this time roads were being constructed that would link Maramec with St. Louis and Springfield; in fact, wagon trails established for bringing Maramec iron to St. Louis became the route of U.S. Highway 66 (ibid.).

Settlement on the site of what would become St. James began with a trading post operated by a man named Collins in the early 1800s on Big Prairie (Smallwood & Strebeck 1976, 8), the name given to the flat, treeless plain, six miles square and six miles north of Maramec, that would become St. James. Thomas James bought 600 acres of Big Prairie in 1838 to be used as a source of grain and cattle for Maramec, and a small informal settlement called Scioto began to grow. In 1858 William James and his brother-

in-law, James Dun, acquired the land from an uncle and laid out plans to officially develop the community, which they wanted to call Jamestown. That name already existed in Missouri, however, so James and Dun decided to call the town “St. James” (ibid., 9). Shortly after St. James was officially established on October 21, 1859 (ibid., 10), the railroad line from St. Louis was laid through the town, and the first train arrived on July 4, 1860 (ibid., 12).

The railroad connection, along with the need for cannonballs and other iron military implements for the Union army in the Civil War, greatly increased iron production at Maramec (ibid., 18). The production boom increased the wealth of the James family. In 1868, William and his family moved from Maramec to his newly-constructed Victorian mansion in St. James, which he named Dunmoor, after his wife, Lucy Ann Dun (Genet 1971, 20). For a period in the mid to late nineteenth century, the presence of William James’ family in St. James brought a touch of upper-class Eastern establishment to an otherwise common frontier town. Smallwood and Strebeck (1976) discuss the situation of Dunmoor and the presence of the James family during this time:

...there is little doubt that proximity to the railroad to accommodate the arrival of personal and business friends was a factor in the choice of a site. The appearance of the James imported carriage drawn by a span of spirited horses drew crowds to the depot to gape at visiting personages and observe the latest fashions. The lavish furnishings of Dunmoor, the extensive library, the marble floors and fireplaces, the curving walnut staircase, the formal gardens gave glimpses of a luxury far removed from the simplicity of life among townspeople. (11)

The good times did not last for the James family and the Maramec Iron Works. A combination of business practices, falling pig-iron prices, and the Panic of 1873 caused a deterioration of the iron works’ profits and the James family fortune. William opened a second operation, the Ozark Iron Works west of present-day Newburg, borrowing heavily

to invest in it while market forces worked against him, and which was destroyed by a fire months after opening. William was dealt a blow by a court decision against his company, fining him for issuing and failing to pay taxes on scrip issued to his employees, which was used in lieu of currency at the company store. William had to declare bankruptcy, and the Maramec Iron Works finally closed in 1876 (ibid., 22). The iron works produced about 300,000 tons of iron between 1829 and 1875 (ibid., 5). William sold much of his property in St. James to satisfy creditors, but managed to keep the property at Maramec. He sold Dunmoor in 1879 and moved into a house called the “Seminary,” on the site now occupied by the James Memorial Library (ibid., 22).

St. James had become an established community in its own right by the time of the closing of the Maramec Iron Works. It grew outward from its original buildings along the railroad tracks, and it was re-incorporated under Missouri statutes in 1892 as a fourth class city (ibid., 11), the same year the first mayor, Alexander Rauch, was appointed (ibid., 38). St. James’ location on the railroad, and later on the routes of U.S. Highway 66 and Interstate 44, kept the town vibrant and growing, so that its origins as a service town for the iron works became part of history. But the iron works and the James family are forever linked to St. James’ existence, and residents have a strong connection to the iron works and the James family, making it perhaps *the* most distinguished source of identity for St. James. This connection of St. James with the iron works and the James family would be strengthened in a later generation with the life of Lucy Wortham James.

### *Lucy Wortham James*

Lucy Wortham Angus James was born in St. James in 1880 to Thomas James, the son of William, and Octavia Bowles James. She spent her first three years in South Dakota where her father worked, then returned with her mother to live in St. James between the ages of three and six, where “she was to remember her early childhood days in St. James as happy ones spent in a small cottage on the grounds of the Seminary” (Genet 1971, 28). But she then continued moving, first to Kansas City, then to El Paso, Texas with her ill mother (who died of tuberculosis when Lucy was fourteen), then to New York City to live with her great-uncle, Robert Dun. Dun was the wealthy owner of R. G. Dun & Co., the predecessor of present-day Dun & Bradstreet Inc., and he raised Lucy to adulthood in a world of formal European culture and high society. While the fortune of William James diminished in the late nineteenth century, the Dun fortune was waxing, and Lucy James was placed in a position as beneficiary of this wealth.

According to Genet (1971), “Of all R. G. Dun’s young relatives, Lucy seems to have been his favorite. He had no children of his own and was drawn to this pretty, wistful teenager. She had charm, a grand sense of humor, and an extremely keen mind” (32).

Lucy continued the life of a person of prominence. She studied and traveled in Europe, then in 1903 traveled to Japan where she met Huntington Wilson, the United States Charge d’Affaires, whom she married in 1904. Huntington wrote of his first encounter with Lucy: “There goes the most beautiful girl I ever saw. I discovered at once that, besides beauty, she had a high order of intelligence, a sense of humor, as well as excellent and wide reading. She was very tall and slender, with a fine figure, big dark eyes, well-cut features, and a complexion of matte white” (ibid., 36). Lucy lived in Japan

until 1906, then traveled in East Asia before returning to Washington, D.C., where she had secured a promotion for her husband within the State Department through social meetings (ibid., 43). As her husband advanced in his career, Lucy played the role of hostess, supporting her husband's career as well as cultivating her own intellectual pursuits through her interest in geopolitics. "Lucy's dinners became famous; everyone wanted to be invited. Her Japanese cook was considered the best in Washington. With her wit, gaiety, and charm, Lucy was for several years one of the outstanding hostesses in the capital" (ibid., 45).

Lucy had worked to support Wilson's career and seemed to be living an exciting life, but the private relationship with her husband was not a happy one and they grew apart (ibid., 43). She was "extremely self-disciplined and deeply religious" and "she did not believe in divorce" (ibid.), so she stayed out of marital obligation, but the couple ended up divorcing in 1915. Lucy moved to New York City and inherited a share of the fortune of her grandfather, who had died two years earlier. She built a home in Newport, Rhode Island – Cherry Neck – and explored pursuits in the arts. But after her divorce, Lucy also reconnected with a place from her happy days as a child – St. James.

Lucy made nearly annual pilgrimages from New York or Newport to St. James, where she would stay for several months at a time. She would stay on the grounds of the old Maramec Iron Works in a house where her grandparents had first lived (ibid., 61).

Lucy's return to St. James is summarized well by Genet (1971):

It might seem puzzling that a worldly woman like Mrs. James, accustomed to mixing in the most sophisticated circles, would want to stay in tiny, Midwestern St. James, with its population of only 1,500. Surely it was not always filial piety. "But it's not surprising at all," one of her closest friends explained. "At heart, Mrs. James was a very shy, modest person. She had no social ambitions whatever. She was forced into a worldly life,

and rose to the occasion superbly. But often at such times she was trying to be something she wasn't. Deep inside, she had the longings of 'a little girl at home.' She craved the surroundings, the warmth of family. She was basically a simple person. But with such beauty and intellect, you can't be simple" (ibid., 60). She was beloved by the residents of St. James as a friendly and considerate neighbor who, despite her upper class lifestyle, could converse with and befriend people from all walks of life. (ibid., 61)

After becoming an owner of R. G. Dun & Co. through her inheritance and learning the art of money management by making improvements to the sometimes endangered firm, Lucy began practicing philanthropy, the hallmark of her legacy. She lived modestly for a woman of her means and often used her own money to finance charitable projects when the firm had dips in profits (ibid., 67). Her charitable causes were varied and some seemed ahead of their time in the 1920s and '30s: African-American education; merit scholarships; social service organizations; genetics research; psychosomatic medicine; women's mental health; gynecology; and cancer research (ibid., 71).

Lucy extended her philanthropic activities to St. James. She bought the Maramec property in the 1920s from relatives, stating, "My reason for purchasing the tract was that it is a spot of great natural beauty" and with the hope that it could be maintained "in private, considerate control, and ever open to the enjoyment of the people" (ibid., 72). Lucy contributed to many improvement projects in St. James while she lived there, often providing matching funds or giving the remainder of the amount needed for projects that citizens had worked hard to collect donations for (ibid., 75). Lucy also supposedly put many St. James students through college through anonymous donation (ibid., 76). But Lucy also wanted to leave a large portion of her estate for the community of St. James after her death, so she established the Lucy Wortham James Fund in the New York

Community Trust. As part of that fund, she suggested that the James Foundation be established after her death to manage her properties and the work of her trust locally in St. James (ibid., 74).

Lucy died in 1938 in New York. The Lucy Wortham James Fund did establish the James Foundation after her death, and it has provided much for the St. James community. Maramec Spring Park was established at the Maramec property. The James Memorial Library, the city park, and a new city hall were built. The site of Lucy Wortham James Elementary School was donated, the Forest City Tree Program replaced trees killed by disease in St. James, and many other benefits resulted (Genet 1971, 75; Smallwood & Strebeck 1976, 128). Lucy's influence in St. James has made her integral to the sense of place felt by many residents. Many residents appear to hold her in high regard as the tremendous benefactor of St. James even if many of them do not know the extent of the details of her life. Lucy Wortham James is tied up in the identity of St. James that is promoted with a sense of pride and honor, but she is also referred to by residents with genuine love and affection, perhaps mythologized, but a woman who truly embodies the place that is St. James in the minds of residents.

### *St. James Viticulture*

The average Missourian who does not know St. James intimately would probably say she knows the town because of the wineries there. St. James has four wineries in its ZIP code (three verified to be actively producing) and a few more in the greater region known as the Ozark Highlands Viticultural Area. St. James is known to outsiders by its wineries, and the wineries are a prominent element in the sense of place residents have of

St. James. The relationship St. James residents have with the wineries, however, is different from other communities with strong viticulture traditions in Missouri today, especially the German region along the lower Missouri River. I will discuss this further in a later section. Here I will simply provide a brief history of the viticulture industry in St. James to set the background for its prominence in residents' sense of place and the image presented to the wider world.

St. James owes its viticulture heritage to Italian immigrants rather than the German immigrants that Missouri wine is generally noted for. In the late 1890s, a group of Italian immigrants settled in an area known as Knobview, four miles east of St. James along the Frisco railroad tracks. The site was carefully chosen by the group because it had a similar climate and soil to their areas of origin in Italy, primarily Bologna, Venice, and Piemonte. The settlers tried to grow grape varieties brought from Italy, but these did not survive, so they grew a New England Concord variety that flourished. In 1934, the community petitioned to change the name from Knobview to Rosati in honor of Bishop Rosati, the first Bishop of St. Louis and west of the Mississippi River. St. James served as the closest trading center for Rosati residents, so Rosati has been linked throughout its history as part of the greater St. James community (Smallwood & Strebeck 1976, 33).

The viticulture industry in the St. James area began with local consumption and limited market sales of grapes and wine. The Knobview Fruit Growers Association was formed in 1922 to gain strength in the markets. A chief grape buyer in the early years was the Kroger Company, a grocery company that bought table grapes from the Association. The first winery was built in Knobview around this time, and it had several incarnations with different owners using the Rosati Winery label until it closed recently

(ibid., 35). In 1947, the Rosati grape growers found a major buyer in the Welch Grape Juice Company, known for its name-brand Welch's grape juice, and that relationship continued for many decades (ibid., 36).

The commercial wine industry in Missouri was reborn in the 1960s, after being dormant for decades following Prohibition. By 1967, the viticulture industry and experimentation with different grape varieties had expanded towards St. James and saw the opening of a winery by William Stoltz, who produced six types of wine. The St. James Winery began in 1970 under the ownership of James Hofherr, and Ashby Vineyards was incorporated in 1972 to join other wine makers to meet the growing demand for wine (ibid., 35). Today, four wineries in the St. James area – St. James Winery, Meramec Vineyards, Heinrichshaus Winery, and Ferrigno Winery – produce and sell wine as part of the Ozark Highlands Viticultural Area, a federally-recognized, geographically-delimited grape growing region (*Missouri Wines*). Vineyards for the various wineries and grape producers are scattered across the countryside around St. James and Rosati.

The impact of the viticulture industry on the identity of the greater St. James community is strong. References to grapes, wine, and the Italian heritage of Rosati are expressed in community celebrations, tourism marketing, and in daily life. Viticulture is displayed on the landscape through the winery buildings, vineyards, signs, billboards, and small shacks along Interstate 44 that sell grapes and grape juice to travelers. A formal picture of St. James, then, has the viticulture industry, the Meramec Iron Works and Meramec Spring, and the legacy of Lucy Wortham James as the supporting elements. The exploration of residents' personal perceptions in the next chapter, however, will

show that sense of place in St. James is much more complex than the foundation of iron, wine, and Lucy. That foundation is simply the support for a large and colorful painting that is the everyday sense of place in St. James.

### **Community Planning Documents**

City planning and community assessment are powerful methods of defining the official vision of a town. A community's strengths, weaknesses, and resources are assessed, and plans are made based on that information to determine how the town should ideally exist in the future. I have presented the key points from history that St. James uses to define its official image. To further define the official vision, I will now examine community planning and assessment documents from two different time periods to see how people in power perceive St. James in its ideal, planned state.

#### ***1967 Comprehensive Plan***

In 1967, the City Planning Commission contracted a St. Louis firm, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, to prepare a comprehensive twenty-year plan (CP) for the city of St. James. The CP was funded through a federal grant from the Urban Renewal Administration of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. As the CP suggests, it is primarily concerned with planning physical facilities in St. James, but it also includes analyses and recommendations regarding population and land-use patterns, as well as suggestions for regulatory measures to guide and control private development (Harland Bartholomew and Associates 1967, 1).

The CP first assessed St. James' situation in 1966, looking at its regional location, topographic characteristics, land use, distribution of dwelling units, economic activity, and population (Harland Bartholomew and Associates 1967). The CP estimated the 1966 population at 2,700 people; it projected a 1985 population of 4,000 individuals. In the realm of economy, the CP predicted two trends. Manufacturing would see the greatest increase in employment and would be the leading source of employment in the twenty-year range of the CP. Also, St. James would need to attract more tourism to grow the economy, saying it could happen "if a whole-hearted effort is made to offer something convenient, interesting and reasonable to the tourist" (ibid., 2).

The rest of the CP focused on five areas: a land-use plan; a major street plan; a community facilities plan; a central business district (CBD) plan; and suggestions for regulatory measures. The objective of the land use plan was to provide adequate land of the proper type in appropriate locations to meet anticipated future needs. There were six specific objectives of the land use plan (ibid., 3):

- To encourage as balanced and compact distribution of population around the city center as is feasibly possible with existing topographic conditions.
- To serve open space in and around future residential neighborhoods.
- To strengthen the CBD as a regional shopping center by limiting the expansion of outlying commercial uses.
- To preserve the character of the residential areas by encouraging grouping of commercial and industrial uses at planned locations and preventing random scattering and stripping of commercial and industrial uses.
- To preserve prime sites for anticipated light industrial and research use.

- To preserve heavy industrial sites suited for this purpose and to discourage their development in any other locations.

These objectives show that planners in 1967 were already concerned with preventing sprawl, even in a small town like St. James. The CP foresaw denser residential development south of James Boulevard, with plenty of flat land north to allow future expansion. The CP's commercial pattern emphasized a strong CBD and a highway traffic-oriented business district along the newly-built Interstate 44 (ibid.). The land-use plan also laid out sites for industrial areas and areas for new and expanded schools and parks (ibid., 4). The CP also used measures of traffic flow along major St. James streets and highways to design an expansion of the road system that would best suit the plans for future development (ibid., 5).

The community facilities plan created a detailed blueprint for the future of schools, parks, public buildings and public utilities. The CP said that these community facilities provide community services and a variety of focal points for social activities, and their adequacy and availability determine the quality and desirability of the community. The plan for park space contained some interesting long-range, preservation-minded foresight. For one, "the wooded valleys around St. James should be preserved to assure the city, county, and State of Missouri of future open space when the need arises." The CP also envisioned green spaces: it proposed transforming the roads from St. James to Maramec Spring Park and Boys' Town of Missouri into scenic parkways with tree maintenance "in a park atmosphere," scenic view pull offs, and billboard prohibition. The CP also suggested marking historic spots in St. James and making a booklet explaining the points of interest in the area (ibid., 7).

The CP defines St. James' CBD as a six-block area bordered by Maramec, Hardy, Seymour, and Bowman Streets and Park Avenue. The CP envisions the CBD as the single vigorous center of St. James, attractive and providing for a wide range of activities. It seeks to limit commercial development to the CBD and the area along I-44, not strung along Jefferson Street north of James Boulevard (ibid., 9). The proposals presented in the general development plan "contemplate a gradual rebuilding of the area into a compact shopping and business center with improved appearance and adequate parking" (ibid., 10).

The CP concludes by suggesting several specific regulatory measures that would enforce the proposals that are outlined in the CP. They suggest zoning regulations, using the newly-adopted zoning ordinance in St. James to establish controls on development (ibid., 11). They also suggest subdivision regulations (ibid., 12) and housing and building codes (ibid., 13) to manage development for the good of the community.

When Mayor Dennis Wilson first told me about the CP, he said that it was the last of its kind produced for St. James. There have been other assessment studies of the community, such as the Meramec Regional Planning Commission studies, but no long-range planning documents exist for the spatial and substantial growth of the town. Mayor Wilson said that the CP is essentially still the basic framework used for planning the city's growth. There are many deviations from the plan, which I will discuss in a moment, but development has occurred under the rubric of the core ideas of the 1967 CP.

The comparison of the St. James layout today with the vision the CP had for the town yields remarkable similarities. To compare the two, I used a 2005 street map of St. James showing zoning and the city limits (City of St. James, Mo. 2005), and I compared

that to the data and maps from the CP. The scope of population and area growth remained true to the CP's projections, although slightly smaller than predicted. What follows are some of the most notable similarities and differences between the present layout and the plans of the CP:

- Residential growth has occurred in new neighborhoods east of the Veterans' Home and in areas north of I-44, like the CP predicted. Residential did not develop in other areas where the CP predicted; the area west of Evergreen is field, not subdivisions, as are the planned neighborhoods east of North Charles Avenue.
- Commercial development did occur in areas outside of the CBD, such as along Jefferson Street between I-44 and the CBD, which the CP advised against.
- Residential development has expanded into southern areas of the city, which the CP did not suggest due to the steep topography.
- The proposed city park on Parker Lane in north St. James simply remained a field until the early 2000s, when a new middle school was constructed there, instead of at a proposed expanded complex next to the high school and elementary school.
- The St. James Industrial Park developed in an area that was not considered at all in the CP. Lands planned to be zoned industrial became Nelson Hart Park in the west and single family residential in the north.
- Land west of North Louise Street was planned to be residential in the CP, but it became a massive commercially-zoned area where the Wal-Mart Distribution Center was built.
- The new city hall was going to be built next to the high school in the CP, with other city offices remaining scattered in the CBD. The James Foundation,

however, built a new city hall, police, and fire department complex for all offices together on land that was zoned park in the central plaza.

- The CBD and the commercial area around the I-44 interchange did develop reasonably close to the stipulations of the CP.

### ***Meramec Regional Planning Commission Documents***

In the early 2000s, the Meramec Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) facilitated two projects that assessed the goals, strengths, and weaknesses of St. James, with the intention of initiating action to address topics where change was deemed necessary. These projects created several documents that I will critique to examine another source of the official vision of St. James. The first project occurred in 2001 and resulted in a document called the *St. James Strategic Plan*. Activity with that project seemed to have tapered off, but the intention was renewed in 2006 with another community assessment project that resulted in a primary document called the *Community Focus 2006: A Blue-Ribbon, Red-Flag Report for the City of St. James, MO* and a subsequent plan of “action reports” that attempted to address these issues.

The MRPC is a regional planning commission (RPC) that serves eight contiguous counties in east-central Missouri. The RPC works for its member counties and their municipalities to provide assistance with conducting growth and planning studies, applying for state and federal development grants, and promoting regional cooperation to maximize the development potential of a region. The MRPC states that its mission is “to enhance the quality of life for residents of the Meramec Region.” In pursuit of this goal, MRPC pursues results in these areas:

- Cleaner, healthier and safer communities.
- Greater socio-economic and cultural wealth through community and economic development, and
- A stronger, unified voice in the legislative process.” (*Meramec Regional Planning Commission Homepage*)

The MRPC office is located in the St. James industrial park, at approximately the central point of its eight-county service region.

The *St. James Strategic Plan* was created in April 2001 to present the work done in three focus-group meetings earlier that year. The meetings were open to the public; fewer people participated in each subsequent meeting (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2001). The participants in the meetings produced three components: a vision statement for St. James, a list of qualities reflecting the town’s strengths, and a list of the town’s weaknesses, which they then broke down into seven categories: infrastructure; cultural/recreational; community and economic development; education; beautification; housing; and government. For each category, the participants identified particular issues that needed improvement, created a situation statement about and objective for the category, and then listed action items that could be performed to solve the problems with the category (ibid.).

The significance of the community focus group meetings and the subsequent report on the outcome is that this was a small group of community members creating a collective vision for St. James. They composed a town vision statement in committee by brainstorming values that they felt represented what St. James is or should be (ibid.). The focus groups thought of the town’s strengths and weaknesses in a similar manner,

expressing a view of how they collectively perceive the place as it is and how it could ideally be. The process of identifying strengths and exploring ways to improve the weaknesses implies the acknowledgement of the definition of a perfect, ideal town. What is strong should be maintained and emphasized; what is weak must be fixed. The focus-group participants undoubtedly had individual perceptions of what makes a perfect town. A committee's definition of a perfect town results from the participants making individual compromises to create a single vision. The identification of specific actions to effect the desired changes and designation of which parties should do them show that the path towards the implementation of the collectively-defined perfect town is still reliant upon individual parties to achieve the group's vision.

The process of community assessment and improvement under the guidance of the MRPC was revived again in 2006 with the *Community Focus* reports (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2006a, 2006b). Instead of open community meetings, an eighteen-member St. James Community Focus Steering Committee identified strengths and weaknesses - termed "blue ribbons" and "red flags" for this study. The 2006 report is a continuation of the 2001 report: a collective and professional assessment of how St. James appears in 2006, and what needs to be done to change it into an ideal vision. It is an evaluation of both structural and intangible qualities and conditions. The steering committee used statistical data and information from previous studies to create mission and value statements for St. James and to identify blue ribbon and red flag issues for the community as a whole and for six categories (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2006b, 2):

- Business, economic development, and housing

- Early childhood and education
- Public order and safety
- Community facilities and transportation
- Community service and citizen participation
- Recreation, sports, and leisure

The mission and vision statements composed in this report are excellent examples of the official collective vision of St. James. The mission statement reads:

In a safe, family-oriented environment, St. James strives to provide a faith-based, education-driven community with a progressive attitude that focuses on building toward the future through its diverse business base and citizens in order to ensure an outstanding quality of life. (ibid., 6)

The vision statement actually lays out the ideal collective vision of St. James as perceived by the steering committee:

St. James will be known as an active, vibrant small town that is progressive but remains quaint and unique. The business community will be thriving with a diverse mix of industry, manufacturing, retail and service merchants that demonstrate the exceptional customer service and personal attention offered by small retailers. The downtown will be the focal point for business activities, building on the distinct and historical features of this area of the community. New construction will blend with the historical buildings present throughout the residential and commercial neighborhoods. The community will have a clean, neat and inviting image. Downtown St. James will be a thriving center of activity providing facilities, goods, services, and recreation to residents and visitors. Public facilities and services will be available to meet the needs of the downtown area's shoppers and visitors. (ibid.)

These statements present the ideal version of St. James as defined by planning-group participants, city leaders, and professional community developers.

For a look at the content of the *2006 Community Focus* report, I will describe the information under two of the categories. The blue ribbon issues (strengths) identified for the public order and safety category are: low violent crime; resource officer at school;

active volunteer fire department; and quality ambulance service. The red flags (weaknesses) for this category are: need for combined ambulance and fire district; drug traffic problems; need fire facilities north and south of St. James; and need for additional emergency preparedness. Like all the categories in this report, the issues are supported by detailed explanation, statistics and information. In this category, for example, information is presented about crime statistics by type over five years, a list of the fire department's equipment, and the training experience of firefighters and police officers (ibid., 19). For the category of community service and citizen participation, the blue ribbon issues are: St. James Public School Scholarship Fund; The James Foundation; and community spirit and outreach. Its red flags are younger citizen participation; government communication; and health/mental health services (ibid., 25).

Like the 2001 *St. James Strategic Plan*, the *Community Focus 2006* report was used to identify specific actions that could be taken to correct the red flag issues. Subsequent meetings held at the MRPC office, all of which were open to the public, used a document called *Community Focus 2007: A Plan of Action in response to the Blue-Ribbon, Red-Flag Report for the city of St. James, MO* (Meramec Regional Planning Commission 2007) to explore action items that could be undertaken to fix the red flags, along with their responsible parties, proposed time frames, and funding sources.

Even though they were created by citizens, these community assessment documents are an example of the official vision of St. James because the ultimate goal of the assessments is to define the community as it should be, not simply as it is to the individual. The reports display a spectrum of qualities and conditions that a particular group of people, representing the town as a whole, identify. This spectrum is a vision of

the town. In the official vision, the good qualities and conditions are to be celebrated and maintained, while the bad ones need to be fixed to create a perfect vision of St. James that exists in the minds of citizens as planners, but not necessarily in the minds of citizens as inhabitants of their lived environment.

### **Places that Form the Official Vision in St. James**

The official vision of St. James is also formed by the celebration of symbolic eras, activities, and people in the town's history. The official vision, in other words, is formed in places on the landscape. The four most prominent places are: James Memorial Library; the James Foundation and the New York Community Trust; City Hall; and the Tourist Information Center. These centers of power and information are a part of individual residents' perceptions of the St. James landscape, as discussed in the next chapter, but they also serve to form and reinforce the official vision that is presented to residents and the wider world. In this section, these four repositories of the official vision will be examined for their place on the landscape and their role in creating the official vision.

#### ***James Memorial Library***

James Memorial Library is a one-story, red brick Georgian building that occupies the northeastern corner of the St. James city park. It is operated by the James Foundation. Along the two edges of the property runs a distinctive wrought-iron fence with spear-point tips along the top connected to red brick pillars by the sidewalks to the library. Until recently, a tree over 200 years old stood next to the library, until it was struck by

lightning in the 1990s and cut down. The massive stump still remains with a dedication marker. The James Foundation website describes the library as “a reading room with a fireplace, soft carpets, draperies, comfortable couches and easy chairs.” This “living room for books” houses over 25,000 volumes, internet access, a microfilm reader, and back copies of the St. James newspaper and census reports (*The James Foundation Homepage*).

The library supports the official vision of St. James largely through its information about local history. It houses records and authored accounts of the regional and local past. It maintains an extensive collection of photographs that provide a visual history of the St. James area. Anyone may submit photographs for the album collection, but it is an example of the official vision since people and the library decide which photographs qualify as acceptable for St. James history. Since choices are made about which images are suitable for the mission of the photo collection, as well as the thematic or place categories that organize the photo albums, the albums control how St. James is presented and the visual culture available for perception.

James Memorial Library also reinforces the official vision by presenting the life of its namesake, Lucy Wortham James. A large sketched portrait of Lucy adorns the wall above the fireplace, and the library has more than one copy of the Lucy Wortham James biography (Genet 1971). Most significantly, the library displays many family photographs and artifacts that belonged to Lucy and other members of the James family. Some of the pieces include:

- Books owned by Lucy: Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass”; Twain’s “The Prince and the Pauper”; a thirteenth century French illuminated manuscript; Bibles; and an Episcopal prayer book and an Episcopal hymnal from Lucy’s childhood.
- One of Lucy’s school report cards
- A collection of domestic and oriental fans
- Vases, crystal ware, and blue and white canton ware
- A small notepad showing examples of a language Lucy made up as a child, called “Sibber”
- A music box

The display of these items, both in a case by the front door and in the back room of the library, maintains the strong presence of Lucy James among library visitors today.

### ***The James Foundation and the New York Community Trust***

The issues concerning the James Foundation’s role in St. James are discussed in detail in the next chapter. Here, the role of the James Foundation in contributing to the official vision of St. James is explored.

The influence of the James Foundation can be seen most readily in the recreational facilities it manages: the St. James Park, including the pool, and Maramec Spring Park. The Foundation’s management of other properties like the cemetery and their legacy of planting trees are also displays of the Foundation’s impact on town culture. To residents and visitors alike, the idea of St. James as a source of nature and recreation is promoted by the James Foundation. Visitors to the parks see the old camp-style

wooden signs at the entrances to the parks declaring that they are operated by the James Foundation.

In St. James, the Foundation is headquartered in a small white wooden building between James Memorial Library and the swimming pool. That the foundation, which has much input into the official portrayal of St. James, houses its local power in a small building is representative of the true nature of the James Foundation. The Foundation is actually managed by the New York Community Trust (NYCT), based in New York City. The NYCT manages almost 1,800 individual charitable funds along with the Lucy Wortham James Fund (*New York Community Trust Homepage*). The Foundation has a local director, but ultimately financial decisions are made by the NYCT board of directors, a distant control over local affairs that does not sit well with many residents.

The James Foundation is also a caretaker of the legacy of Lucy Wortham James, its founder, and of the James family and the Maramec Iron Works. With this consideration, the change in the presentation and purpose of Maramec Spring Park over the years provides an interesting backdrop to the argument about how Lucy's legacy should be presented. Since the James Foundation was established after Lucy's death, the different directors over time have had different visions about what Maramec Spring Park should be. One believed that it should be a natural park with minimal human interaction, and some historical sites from the iron works days were abandoned since the focus was not on historical cultural preservation. Another director focused efforts on the trout hatchery, operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation, seeing that feature as the primary trademark of the park. The design and offerings of the park reflect the interpretation the contemporary director of the Foundation has for Lucy's wish for the

Maramec Iron Works site to be maintained “in private, considerate control, and ever open to the enjoyment of the people” (Genet 1971, 72).

### ***City Hall***

City Hall was built by the James Foundation in 1969 on a triangle of land that was previously part of the designated park land along the railroad tracks called the Plaza. It is a one-story red brick building that houses the mayor’s office and the utilities and street departments, with the police department located in a separate room at the end of the building. The mayor’s office hosts the city council table, and is graced by a large portrait of Lucy Wortham James. Residents in St. James are probably familiar with city hall mostly by paying utility bills, going to city council meetings, or having to visit the police station.

St. James is led by a volunteer mayor elected to a four-year term. The mayor heads the city council, comprised of eight elected members who are also volunteers. St. James does not have a professional city manager; discussion of the need for this position accompanies the growth of the town. St. James is divided into four administrative wards, the corners of which converge at the James Boulevard and Jefferson Street intersection. Two city council members are elected from each ward. The council members can serve on nine committees, including: Budget and Finance; Police and Emergency Services; and Tourism Development and Community Relations. Beyond the mayor and city council members, numerous residents serve in various elected and appointed positions and on boards such as the Industrial Development Authority; the Utility Board; the Planning and Zoning Commission; the Board of Forestry; and the Tourism Tax Commission (*City of St.*

*James, Missouri Homepage*). City council meetings are held monthly, presided over by the mayor. They are open to public comments and requests, but are mostly procedures of the city council members and the committees they serve.

A map of St. James produced by the municipal utilities office (City of St. James, Mo. 2005) presents an official vision from the perspective of the city government. The map shows every highway and street, and clearly defines the city limits. Its colors represent zoning in three residential classes, two commercial classes, and two industrial classes. The map also marks the administrative ward lines, the trash pickup sectors, the lot numbers of the industrial park, streams, and the section and range lines for accurate location. This overhead, administrative view of the town layout of course differs from the view of the lived experience of town residents, the focus of the next chapter.

### ***Tourist Information Center***

The St. James Tourist Information Center is a large solitary building on a patch of land north of the I-44 exit ramp. It was built to promote tourism in the town and region and was sited next to I-44 to draw traffic from the Interstate and Highway 68 intersection. A short trail winds its way around the grounds to offer travelers a place to stretch their legs and walk dogs. The TIC was intended to be self-supporting, charging for advertising and supported publicly only by a tourism tax on lodging. The TIC presents an official vision of St. James primarily to non-residents, “selling” the attractions the town and region have to offer, and thereby presenting a selective image to visitors.

The TIC provides information in the form of brochures, magazines, and wall displays about local, regional, and statewide tourist attractions and traveler facilities. A

content analysis of this information shows a blend of advertisements for local, regional, and statewide sites and general information. The brochures and literature about places in and around St. James were grouped into nine categories:

- Residential facilities
- Restaurants
- Wineries
- Lodging
- St. James directories or guides
- Churches
- Maramec Spring Park
- Businesses
- Banks

These categories cater mostly to visitors coming to or passing through St. James, or to people considering moving to the town. The directories about attractions and services provide an overview of every place a tourist may wish to visit. Brochures about restaurants, lodging, and businesses appeal to the visitor by identifying travel and shopping needs. Information about the wineries and Maramec Spring Park reinforce the dominant places that represent St. James to the visitor. Information about local banks, churches, and residential facilities (Boys and Girls Town of Missouri, Missouri Veterans' Home, and the Golden Living Center) appeal both to travelers needing bank or church services or coming to visit relatives staying in the facilities, or people who might be considering a move to St. James, either privately or to one of the facilities.

## **Free Elicitation Interviews with Community Leaders**

### ***Mayor***

I spoke with newly-elected mayor Dennis Wilson about his view of St. James. His discussion topics fell into three areas: growth, quaint uniqueness, and attractiveness. When asked to describe St. James, Mayor Wilson described it as vibrant, slowly growing, strategically located, and a good place to live with a high quality of life. He raised the issue of growth by discussing several examples: industrial park use, employment and revenue brought by the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, incentives used to attract industry, and partial adherence to the 1967 Comprehensive Plan to limit commercial development to the CBD and along I-44. The mayor said that to improve growth, St. James needs to have more retail businesses in the CBD rather than service businesses. The growth of commerce along I-44 had not progressed to his liking; a primary goal of St. James should be to convince landowners along the corridor to foster commercial growth that takes advantage of the increasing highway traffic. Growth in housing faces a challenge because of limited space in the city limits for new residential development, but the new houses outside the city limits are still a boon for growth since the people still conduct their business in St. James.

While pursuing continued growth, Mayor Wilson also felt that St. James needs to maintain its quaint uniqueness and attractiveness. St. James offers a charm that needs to be enhanced, and the mayor cited the downtown revitalization project and the addition of upscale Sybill's restaurant and the bicycle trail as steps towards this goal. The mayor mentioned the old city hall, the train depot on the Plaza, St. James Park, and Maramec Spring Park as vital sites to maintain the unique history and charm of St. James.

Attractiveness is part of the appeal as well, and one of the mayor's goals was to vigorously enforce the cleanup of untidy property. Quaintness has led the town to be a "bedroom community" for Rolla, which the mayor gladly claimed, since the people who move to St. James in that situation bring lifestyle qualities and growth. While maintaining attractiveness and character, growth was the official mandate and vision the mayor held for St. James.

### ***Chamber of Commerce President***

Verna Brand was nearing the end of her term as president of the Chamber of Commerce (COC) when I interviewed her. When asked to describe St. James, her description was glowing, citing the outstanding school district, the parks and outdoor recreation options, wineries, friendly businesses, and simply a great place to raise a family. The main topic of the conversation was the idea of community involvement. Verna believed that volunteering and other forms of community involvement are the key to a community's success. Getting involved in the community means that a person will become acquainted with neighbors, which results in a greater sense of belonging and a desire to invest in the community. St. James is blessed with quality of life, a rich history, and benefits provided by the James Foundation. Verna felt that the community should come together through involvement to capitalize on these benefits to make the community the best it can be. She was concerned, however, about waning community involvement, especially among younger people. Expressing strong interest in the goals of my research, Verna posed her own questions to me for the residents of St. James: What motivates them to do things as a community, to take part in community events? What

would bring them out and get them involved? What would they like to see as far as businesses, organizations, or events?

In the interview, Verna stressed the importance of economic growth for St. James, a view expected of the COC president. She said that St. James needs to look to neighboring Cuba as a model for its economic development. But more notably, Verna's vision of St. James was that of a community of people who need to volunteer their energy in order for the town to work at all.

### ***Tourism Director***

I talked to Myra Orbals, St. James Tourism Director, while she worked in the TIC, providing information for visitors stopping by. We discussed the nature of her position – working with the Missouri Division of Tourism, the COC, and local businesses, especially the wineries – to promote tourism in St. James and the surrounding region. Myra described St. James as small, safe, friendly, religious, and proud of its natural setting and availability of outdoor activities. The view of St. James held by Myra appears in her answers to the questions about what places in town are most important for tourism, identity, and history. The wineries and Maramec Spring Park are by far the most important attractors for tourism in St. James, but they also include river floating, the bed and breakfasts, and the St. James Park. Myra felt that the places that are most important for town identity are the wineries, Maramec Spring Park, the downtown area, the Missouri Veterans Home, Boys and Girls Town of Missouri, and Camp Brimshire, a private activities camp. She considered historic Route 66 (James Boulevard) and Maramec Spring Park as the sites important for town history.

From Myra's perspective, St. James needs to increase its lodging facilities, add more upscale restaurants like Sybill's that complement the wineries, and add more retail and antiques businesses downtown to attract foot traffic there. Through the eyes of tourism, St. James is a collection of attractions and qualities, combining to create an atmosphere that brings people in. In that vision, the tourism attractions and other qualities that entice people are most prominent on the landscape.

***Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Coordinator***

Bob Wilson volunteered his services as the COC Director of Economic Development. In our discussion, Bob talked about the two sides of economic development – retail and industry – and his plans for them. On the retail side, St. James has reached “critical mass” in terms of getting major stores; it is just too close to Rolla to attract any major retail stores. Instead, St. James needs to develop more retail businesses, both in the CBD and along I-44, to generate sales tax that will fuel the city's services. The city and the COC had been working on a plan to encourage commercial development along I-44, creating sections called development districts that had to be approved by the city council.

On the industrial side, Bob said that the city is constantly seeking more industrial development. In lieu of a full-time, professional economic developer, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), a citizen's board under the auspices of the city, exists to attract and develop industry in St. James. Some reasons Bob cited as attractive for commercial and industrial enterprises in St. James include that the city owns its own utilities, making them very inexpensive; its central location between cities and regions in

Missouri; and its recreational opportunities, quality of life, and family-friendly qualities for workers.

From the viewpoint of economic development, St. James is again viewed with issues of growth and commerce translated into prominence on the landscape. Areas with potential for economic development stand out in the view of the town. This theme was present in the official vision of St. James by the other three community leaders as well, showing that growth is the most pressing issue defining St. James in the official vision.

## **Conclusion**

What St. James is, and how it presents itself, is a subjective construction of the viewer. This chapter has shown how St. James exists from the perspective of the writers of history, who fashion the past as the setting for their identification of notable people, places, and events. It exists from the perspective of the creators of development and improvement plans, who see St. James through the lens of economy, services, systems, and goals to achieve in the pursuit of the perfect town. It exists from the perspective of places on the landscape that play a major role in shaping the presentation of the town to residents and visitors. And St. James exists from the perspective of its individual leaders, whose views are influenced by their professional roles.

These perceptions of St. James, which together form an official view, may be partially similar to views held by individual residents. Residents' perceptions are informed by knowledge of the common history and interaction with the places on the landscape that form the official view. Many residents agree with the strengths, weaknesses, and goals of the planning documents, and they share many of the

professional views held by their representative and appointed city leaders. However, individual residents' sense of place in St. James, as uncovered through my semi-structured interviews with them, proves to be much richer and more complex than the official view. St. James is not just infrastructure and economic potential. It is not just tourist attractions, and it is not just a "community." It is not just a legacy of iron, wine, and Lucy. It is a home for people and the environment with which they interact in the course of their everyday lives, and it can take on as many forms and variations as there are individual people who live there.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion II – The Lived Experience

#### Introduction

The core of my research is the set of semi-structured interviews I conducted with twenty-seven residents in the summer and autumn of 2007. These interviews gave me access to the perceptions residents have about their town, so that I could look past the official version that leaders, media, and historical documents present. The primary purpose of the interview quotes in this chapter is to allow individual people to speak in their own words. In this way, those who ordinarily have little opportunity to express their views can be heard by a wider audience. This approach of letting people speak for themselves, with a minimum of interpretation, has been termed “giving voice” (McDowell 1992; Miles & Crush 1993). The thoughts of ordinary people, who have less access to outlets of public address, are lost, muffled, subdued, even squelched. Yet these “ordinary” voices are important and deserve to be heard. They address the issues of daily life directly, producing intriguing tales that add texture to the polished picture put forth by the dominant vision of a place. Presenting individual voices, rather than a single collective narrative mediated by the author, also takes some of the control over the resulting representation away from the researcher and places it instead with the people being studied. While “giving voice” is not entirely unproblematic, it is an effort towards deconstructing the power relations present in a community that may be overlooked by the author.

In this chapter, I will discuss and interpret the results of the interviews. The information I received from residents was incredibly rich, illustrating a complexity far

greater than I could have imagined when I began this study. To tell the tale of St. James from within, I have constructed themes that characterize three age groups of residents, and I will explore individual landscape elements of St. James as well as selected residents' profiles throughout the three sections. This chapter begins with a prologue to discuss the special significance Maramec Spring Park holds for residents. The chapter continues with an exploration of themes commonly expressed in interviews with the oldest residents. This age group consists solely of St. James natives and long-term residents, with no recent newcomers. Against the backdrop of this group, I will discuss the landscape of memory among the elderly as well as their feelings about changes in town character, St. James' legacy, and public pride. The third section examines quality of life, place attachment, and civic obligation as discussed predominantly by middle-aged residents. This group contains many relative newcomers and medium-term non-native residents, which makes it ideal for looking at St. James from an outsider's perspective. In the fourth section, I will look at the youngest group of residents, which includes mostly natives and long-term residents. I will explore the landscape of cruising and the childhood landscape in modern St. James as well as the town's natural amenities and residents' visions of the future. The three age groups also embody sub-themes of past, present, and future, respectively. Finally, I will examine some of the critical, negative views that residents revealed about St. James.

The age groups serve as a narrative presentation device, and are not meant to constrain particular residents to a particular group with a label. Consequently, the groups and the material discussed within them are not to be taken as rigid or exclusive. The

complex worldviews the residents of St. James offered me are testament to the fact that they cannot be assigned to tidy categories.

### **Prologue – Maramec Spring Park**

Before I begin looking at themes within the age groups, it is important to recognize the singular importance of Maramec Spring Park in residents' sense of place. Every resident interviewed expressed fondness for Maramec Spring Park, so it would not fit well into the discussion of any particular group. In addition, the park is located outside of St. James, so it is most appropriate to cover it separately from the rest of the discussion, again speaking to the reverence that residents bestow on it.

Six miles south of St. James, Maramec Spring Park is composed of the length of Maramec Spring (from its source to its confluence with the Meramec River) and the associated trout hatchery operated by the Missouri Department of Conservation, as well as the sites of the old James family iron works, museums, recreation facilities, and much of the surrounding undeveloped land (a mixture of open floodplain, forests, meadows, and bluffs). The park is operated by the James Foundation. The combination of old structures, the ruins of the old iron works, the natural spring and the heavy shade offered by dense forest give the park a mystical quality. Visitors welcome the feelings of stillness and seclusion the park offers. Seasons are prescient: a walk along the frigid spring water tempers summer's humidity, while the plant life emits verdure unknown in the everyday world. Autumn sees fiery leaves falling in diluted sunlight, forming a layer of color on top of the blue spring water.

An early description of the Maramec area in the early 1800s, when the iron works were fully operational, came from English naturalist George Engleman: “I looked down a grassy valley rimmed with wooded heights...A brook, shaded by willows and elders, murmured through the valley. Into this valley I rode...In a short while I heard the clanking of mills and forges...Then I came to the Maramec Iron Works, lying before me...The situation is really romantic. There is something imposing in this union of the solitude of nature in the wilderness and the busy striving of man” (quoted in Genet 1971, 17).

All of the residents interviewed spoke either of the joys of visiting the park for walking, social gatherings, or rainbow trout fishing, or simply knowing that the park is beautiful and part of the historical and modern identity of St. James. One resident I interviewed, Shane Tasus, works at the park for the Missouri Department of Conservation, so he has access that gives him a much richer perspective than that of the average resident. His responses to my questions reflected the priority that nature holds for him. Tasus lives in a house a few miles outside St. James surrounded by mature forest. When I arrived to interview him in the afternoon, he asked if I would like to go on a ride with him – he had caught a raccoon in a live trap in his shed, and he wanted to travel a few miles away to release it, since he thought this same raccoon had been coming back and eating his dog food repeatedly. On the drive back from releasing the raccoon, we discussed fisheries and the work of Aldo Leopold and John Muir (Shane has a degree in fish and wildlife management from the University of Missouri), and I conducted the interview in his naturally cooled earthen house while the sounds of a summer forest played on outside.

When asked for his favorite place in the park, Tasus talked about an old cemetery on a hill:

But I also find it very peaceful at once too, up there on the hill. And just that whole, actually, the back loop of the park there that goes through where they dug the iron ore and all that. It's a really beautiful area because where they dug, the earth is still red from the iron ore, the way it oxidizes with the air. And you got pines. There's a lot of pines back there, which we don't have a lot of native pines here, but back there they grow really well. I'm sure the settlers planted a lot of them. And it's real rocky terrain, and when it rains a lot, little creeks pop up everywhere, and it's just, it's a real beautiful area, and the red soil with the green, you know, complementary colors. It's very peaceful, a lot of wildlife, you know. Just herds of deer. (Tasus 2007b)

Another resident, Jennifer Tasus, spoke similarly about Maramec Spring Park:

I like to go down there and, I just think that's the coolest place. I think that probably my favorite place that I associate with St. James, by far, is Maramec Spring Park, just because it's, the spring that's there is just, I think it's awesome. I never cease to be amazed by it, every time I go and look at it." and "...you just drive up a really steep hill, and there's a few picnic tables and you can just look out over that whole valley. The river's way down below, and you can see the tops of the trees and the rolling hills, all the, almost razorback mountains... (Tasus 2007a)

### **The Older Generation: St. James as Palimpsest**

One late June day, I went to Alice Luebbecke's house, the back of which faces the road that goes to Boys' and Girls' Town, one of the state's innovative centers for juvenile offenders on a sprawling campus outside town. Luebbecke, a widow, had taken me out to lunch a few weeks earlier to Sybill's, a relatively new upscale restaurant north of town, a place she was proud to have in St. James. This time I had come to interview her, and for more than three hours we talked about her history in St. James (she came in her late teens to marry her husband, and has been there since), places gone and still standing, the things that made and continue to make St. James great, and the changes that time

inevitably brings to a place. We discussed this in the lived-in comfort of her old home, which she said now demanded constant maintenance. The topics she shared with me were typical of those I received from others in her age group: places gone but remembered, St. James' legacy, sources of modern pride, and comments on observed changes to the character and structure of the town.

### *Memory*

Two of the most telling questions I asked in the interviews concerned memories residents had of St. James, and places that no longer exist but that residents miss or feel are important. Naturally, older residents had more examples of places that no longer exist than did younger residents, and a landscape slowly emerged consisting of sites that are no longer on the physical landscape, but linger in the memory. In this palimpsest landscape, residents see not only the current structure of St. James, but also the marks of places that once existed. Existing structures provide a link to memories of what stood there before. Residents may still see the ghost landscape of what came before when they observe the current physical and cultural landscape, and places from the past still form the identity people ascribe to St. James.

Several older residents mentioned Dunmoor mansion as a place they miss or felt was important for town identity. From 1868 to 1879, Dunmoor was the home of William James, Lucy James' grandfather and iron works owner. The mansion and its sixty acres became the Federal Soldiers Home in 1895, and the mansion was razed in 1966 to make way for a new laundry and power plant for the Missouri Veterans' Home (Smallwood & Strebeck 1976, 99). According to residents, the mansion was demolished quickly,

without much public notification, and in a time when progress was valued more than preservation. This loss of a building that was important for both the town's heritage (built by the founding father) and its architectural style (a symbol of wealth and opulence) pained several of the longtime residents as well as people who moved in later and learned about the house from photographs and stories. When I look at the site, I see only the grounds of the Veterans' Home, but many residents visualize Dunmoor on the landscape and ponder how it would contribute to modern St. James identity if it were still standing.

As Pamela Lewis explained:

Well, one of the things that I hate, really hate that we let get away from us in St. James is the Dunmoor mansion. The James family had built that and it was quite a spectacular architectural kind of wonderful home, and I just think if I would have been an adult at that time I hope I would have just helped to organize something to keep that from happening. Basically, they just tore it down. Now, there are bits and pieces of it throughout the community, like the stairwell and our staircase and mantles and different homes have those, which is...that's kind of neat... (Lewis 2007)

Similarly, Alice Luebbecke put it this way:

That was one of the saddest days of my life to know it was going to be torn down. It was done so quickly. All of a sudden there it was gone. There wasn't much news about it torn down. I wish there had been more, because I believe people would have really fought to keep that...An old mansion like that could have, would have been nice. If there were any James living at that time, we would have been able to keep it. (Luebbecke 2007)

Most of the places on this landscape of memory were businesses. Restaurants were particularly prominent. Residents cited establishments like John's Café (also called John's Countryside Café and the Northside Restaurant), Douglas Company, the Barn Barbeque, Nickerson Farms, and others that existed decades ago as places they remember on the landscape and now are gone. Some residents also said they miss the "bakery," the

colloquial name for an eating establishment that still exists today in the same building but with a different owner and name, Diana's Diner. When people refer to the bakery, they mean the "true" bakery that existed in the location in the 1980s and 1990s. People, in short, identify with the dining establishments as integral parts of town identity. Perhaps they leave a strong mark because they are places with which many people have an active relationship. They are not just inert landmarks or personal sites, but rather a place that provides a vital function: people go there to eat, and just as home and the dinner table are considered essential for family bonding, restaurants provide sustenance to the community and therefore are integral to collective sense of place. People identify with these places because they actively engage them. When they close, a tangible void is created such that they do not disappear off the landscape never to be seen again; instead, their absence changes the daily interactions with the community. In addition, the loss of restaurants is also a reminder of personal change and growing older. As Brandy Cooper describes it:

Just, it's kind of from growing up and seeing all the restaurants that were here and that you associated St. James with that aren't here anymore, too. Just, not that I miss going there, but just knowing that times have changed and time moves on. It's kind of sad to see those places gone. (Cooper 2007a)

Similarly, several older residents indicated that they missed having more than one grocery store, either in the recent past or farther back, and a few said they specifically missed the Town & Country grocery store, which closed in the 1990s. This was a central issue for most residents I spoke with – they do not like the only grocery store in town, Country Mart, and they lament the loss of competition for cost and quality that came with the closing of other grocery stores. The older, longtime residents recall having several

small grocery stores in the 1950s and 1960s, and there were two modern supermarkets (Stanley's IGA and Town & Country) by the 1980s. Gladys Aldridge said it this way:

At one time, there were probably three or four small grocery stores that were downtown, and then Town & Country were there, and then they moved. I think probably if you had a poll of what people wanted, I'd say another grocery store would be the one thing, and then a nice motel would probably be too. And more restaurants. (Aldridge 2007)

Most residents I interviewed had negative opinions of Country Mart. Here are some examples, first of which comes from Ruth Forest:

We need another grocery store desperately. Anytime you have the whole ball of wax, folks, you don't have to work as hard, and we need another grocery store, and I can remember when we had five at one time. (Forest 2007)

Ron Franciosi:

We need another grocery store, 'cause we only got one. How do we know it's competitive? I don't say that we aren't, but you hear that all the time from people that's in the area. (Franciosi 2007)

Angela Kleiber:

I try to avoid Country Mart at all costs. Every time you go there, there's like one register running, and fifty people in the line, and people just standing around doing nothing, and it's just really annoying. And you know it's 5:30, so everyone's in there doing their stuff, and you've got one register and like five that could be used. (Kleiber 2007)

Older residents in general missed clothing and general merchandise stores, such as Dillon's or Bishop's, with the complaint being that St. James no longer offers men's clothing, and only one source for women's clothes. Several older people also said they missed the drug stores and soda fountains that once were typical in small towns of the 1950s and 1960s; Strobach's was mentioned most commonly. Other sites, such as the bowling alley, the trolley car restaurant, the Atlasta dance hall, and the Lyric Theater similarly served as key place in this landscape of memory.

Gladys Aldridge, a retired elementary school teacher, lives with her husband in a century-old farmhouse in the country south of St. James. She comes from a family that has lived in the town for several generations, and that has been prominent in town affairs over generations. While I interviewed her in her historic home on an exceptionally hot day in August, as she told me about the successes and challenges faced by community betterment organizations, her husband worked outside with a truckload of watermelons and cantaloupe. After the interview, Gladys showed me around her house and proudly displayed her collection of items that had once belonged to Lucy Wortham James, including a dining table and silverware. In this way, the legacy of St. James history lives on in the personal lives of residents.

### *Legacy*

History's important to St. James. I mean, history's important to any town, but I think the smaller you get, the more personalized it is to people, and so the more they want to preserve it and hold on to it. I think when you get into a bigger city, it's just not as personalized. It's not localized in your heart as much, you know? (Solaro 2007)

St. James residents have a strong awareness of local history. One interviewee felt that some people see the town as more historic than it really is. The truth of that is debatable, but in any case, most people know the basic highlights of local history. St. James history is part of the fourth-grade curriculum in public school, and a local teacher's Masters thesis serves as the textbook. The history of St. James is on display during the annual Grape and Fall Festival at Nelson Hart Park and the Old Iron Works Days at Maramec Spring Park. Several books describe St. James history (Genet 1971; Smallwood & Strebeck 1976; Van Nostrand 1941), and other information is displayed at

the Tourist Information Center. Perhaps the most common reminder of history are the places on the landscape that residents interact with even as they merely pass by or through them. These physical reminders, coupled with the knowledge of the town's history picked up in school or through routine community interaction, keep the historical situation of St. James present as the town presses forward to the future.

I have examined at the sites and qualities that are integral to the vision of St. James put forth by town leaders, decision makers, and representations for tourism. But what do residents say about their town's legacy? What places on the landscape link residents to the past? In this section, I will explore the places that participants considered important for their perception of town history, and the personalities that they linked with town legacy. The sites I discussed elsewhere, such as Maramec Spring Park, the downtown, wineries, and high school, were also important for residents' sense of legacy but will not be discussed here.

The James Foundation built the James Memorial Library on the site of the Seminary, a home owned by the James family and that was a brief childhood home for Lucy James. The single-story, red brick colonial is well-known to schoolchildren who walk there as part of weekly class outings in elementary school. It shares its grounds with the city park. The library features a living room, with easy chairs and a fireplace; a portrait of Lucy James gazes across the long room. As discussed in the previous chapter, the library houses James family memorabilia and an extensive photograph collection.

Bill Hutton echoed a common sentiment when he said:

I mean, to me, when I first came here, the library was the, the big attraction, because it held not only the reading material I wanted and enjoyed reading, but it also had this wonderful photograph collection of the history of the town and the surrounding areas, and so you were able to

just immerse yourself in what the town was like at one time by just going to the library. So it was a really great place to see the contemporary St. James, plus get a feeling of what the old St. James was like too. 'Cause it was a very, it's a very well-equipped library for a lot of things. It's one of the better libraries I've ever seen, really, for a small town. (Hutton 2007)

The Missouri Veterans' Home is a large complex of red brick buildings set back from Jefferson Street and St. Francis Avenue on impressive yards lined by trees and sidewalks. Originally established in Dunmoor mansion in 1895 as a home for Union veterans of the Civil War, today it is a nursing home operated by the Missouri Veterans Commission. Its most striking feature is the cemetery on the northwest corner of the grounds along the I-44 on-ramp; rows of white gravestones look like a piece of Arlington. Average residents are aware of the home and are proud to have its residents in St. James, yet it seems not to stand out in everyday life. People can drive by it every day, but rarely interact with it directly or pay it any attention.

The old public school, also called the old grade school, is a three-story red brick building that was the original public school in St. James. It sits in a somnolent and manicured neighborhood between the park, the railroad tracks, and Jefferson Street. The school was used for kindergarten classes until the early 1980s, then as an exhibition space for school art shows, and now it functions as a private home. My own childhood memories of the place as my kindergarten classroom and high school art exhibition space recall large, hard-wood floors and pieces of art hung on the school's walls amid its museum-like echoes. Laura Read summarized the sentiment about the old school:

It seems like for many people that are from here like a place that they should try to preserve. It just seems to hold a lot of history for a lot of families that live here that were a part of the growth and development of St. James. (Read 2007)

The old city hall topped the list of places cited by residents as being important for local history. The old city hall is a small yellow building on Jefferson Street that served as the original city hall and jail until the James Foundation built a new hall in 1967. The old city hall served as an informal tourist information center until the present center was built along I-44 in the 1990s. The hall then sat empty, complete with the original jail and office accessories, as well as photographs of all St. James mayors inside. During my summer field research, the Chamber of Commerce city liaison began to use the facility. When St. James was hit by a wave of spray paint graffiti in June, residents most often expressed dismay that the old city hall had been defaced.

Several residents cited the Methodist Church (the first church in St. James) and the Episcopal Church (the church attended by Lucy James) as particularly important for the history of St. James. Assorted old houses throughout town made the list, although the old residential neighborhood bounded by the railroad tracks, Jefferson Street, and the city park was particularly significant.

St. James' position on major transit routes also is part of the town's legacy in the resident mind. Historic Route 66, which ran from Chicago to Los Angeles, passes through St. James on James Boulevard, the only such boulevard found along the entire route and a common reference point for residents. The railroad tracks, though, are even more prominent in the town's popular culture. People describe the tracks and the regular passage of Burlington Northern trains through the town as integral components of town identity. The tracks may be seen as a spine that anchors the downtown, and the rhythmic, familiar noise of passing trains marks the resident lifeworld, a commonplace yet awe-

inspiring event when brought to conscious attention. The railroad tracks also point to St. James' earliest days and are a tangible connection to that past. Residents put it best:

Something else I really like too is the train. Like I sit out here a lot by a campfire or whatever...and I like hearing the train. It's just something I've always heard, and it just reminds me of St. James, and to hear the train echoing. You can hear it, you know, I'm five miles from town, you can hear it clear as day out here. It's kind of neat when you come to the crossing too. I'm a big train fan, so whenever I get stopped by the train, I really don't mind, I think it's just kind of neat. (Tasus 2007b)

I just say thank you Lord for that train even yet. There's just something about it. It's kind of like an old memory that I hope doesn't go away too quickly. (Luebbecke 2007)

I love baseball games whenever the train goes by over there. I don't know what it is, but at high school baseball games when that train goes by. And it's funny when you hear other people from other towns, you'd think that would be annoying to them, 'cause you can't hear nothing when it goes by, but they all think that's pretty cool too, whenever that goes by. It's something that's small but it's something that we don't really take for granted around here because it's kind of neat and we get to see it and I think a lot of people enjoy it. (Payne 2007)

Any discussion of the St. James legacy must include mention of the notable personalities who helped form basic elements of the town's cultural landscape. Lucy Wortham James continues to have a special place in the hearts of St. James residents. She is most often cast as a benevolent town matriarch who provided the community with the means to improve itself both during her lifetime and (the ultimate legacy) after her death in the form of the James Foundation. Some of the oldest residents I interviewed remember seeing Ms. James and conversing with her. Another female leader who left a mark on the town's legacy was Mayme Ousley (also called Granny Ousley). She was the first woman elected as mayor in all of Missouri in 1921, and she served two additional nonconsecutive times later on when St. James called on her to do so. Two other names vital to popular perceptions are Nelson Hart, the mayor from the 1970s through 1999

whose name was synonymous with St. James and whose presence and reach were universal; and Ford Hughes, longtime director of the James Foundation whom many residents credit with overseeing the period of the foundation's greatest development.

### *Change*

Save for brief mid-life stints away, Ruth Forest and Ron Franciosi are two lifelong residents of St. James. Forest grew up in town, attended John F. Hodge High School, and is a lifelong member of the community, even having served as the inaugural tourism director. My interview time with her was pressed because she was expecting company at her house to play cards, an indication of her intimate involvement in the community. She did, however, provide a wealth of information, digging into her personal history to relate perspective on people and places.

Franciosi is a native of Rosati, the nearby village founded by Italians. He runs a store downtown, and I had heard that he would be a good interview. When I went into the store, I had only a vague recollection of who he was from my childhood and from what others had said. Franciosi was standing up, appearing to be taking inventory on shelves. After we talked for awhile, he invited me to his back storage room, where he told me to have a seat on a box while he leaned against a stack of cardboard containers. The room, in fact, was full of boxes containing the products that he sells. Franciosi's parents were merchants in Rosati, and his is one of the esteemed Rosati families who contributed to the St. James area's culture and economy. After asking who my father was, Franciosi regaled me with his take on St. James, a commentary resonant with a lifetime of challenges and experiences in the place.

The older residents I interviewed provided details not only on places no longer here, but also more generally of their lives growing up. They talked about St. James from a different place in time, inaccessible to me but vivid in their own minds. These descriptions often brought into sharp contrast the structure, values, and character of a past St. James with the same space today. Observing change in the town was a common theme for older residents.

Most of the older residents who lived in St. James during their youth lived in town, not the country, so they focused their descriptions on small town life of several decades ago. Pamela Lewis and Ruth Forest painted a picture of childhood life that fits the nostalgic stereotype of the idyllic small-town community of the 1940s and 1950s. It was a place where neighbors knew each other, everybody knew each other's business, and children spent all their free time outside, with free reign under the collective watchful eye of neighbors. According to Forest:

I was all over town. In those days, you left in the morning, you came home for lunch, and you left again, and you never had your shoes on, you never had to worry, you were all over the place, because everybody knew whose kid you were.

The Farmers' Exchange, that big old building, that was wonderful, and that was my route to school. I'd come up, walk past the chicken killing house and up the ramp and go through that part, and then go through where all the feed sacks were, climb to the top, climb back down, head across the thing, jump down, head to school. And you never got in trouble for that. But you know, it was always pleasant. It was a great childhood. (Forest 2007)

Alice Luebbecke arrived in St. James as a teenager by train. The commercial activity she described from the post-World War II era reflected the town's rural location prior to Interstate 44:

The MFA (also called the Farmers' Exchange) used to be very popular. It was probably one of the busiest places in St. James as far as farmers coming in. I was almost an all-day thing. You'd come in and your older car or pickup would be loaded down. That was kind of the weekly thing for the farmers. Then they'd spend a lot of time out there talking to each other on the streets, and maybe they had to go buy a pair of shoes somewhere. (Luebbecke 2007)

Through memories, some residents also commented on the changes in the town landscape. In response to my question concerning the house she grew up in, Forest lamented:

Oh yeah. When I lived there, it was beautiful with rose beds. You know, it's one of those things, after we sold it, done with it, because after Mother moved out, it would never, it would just... You know how that does, neighborhoods kind of change sometimes. That's not my...that's not where I grew up anymore. (Forest 2007)

Ron Franciosi provided an excellent description of changes in activity:

When you see this place is deserted on a Saturday, whereas back when I can remember you couldn't walk down the streets. That's because there were so many businesses and people didn't have everywhere in the world to go, and big mass merchandisers like they got today. Now, nobody goes anywhere unless they go to Wal-Mart for sure... But back in that era, you were specialized (dry goods, clothing, groceries, etc.)... Four or five trains stopped here every day. Whenever one would stop, the platform up there would be crowded, you couldn't even get around. Now there's not even a station. So it's a deterioration of a life that's gone, but maybe it's for the better. Who knows. (Franciosi 2007)

Identifying the changes in a place can sharpen one's identification with that place: awareness breeds familiarity. But when the traits of a place change, its identity may be called into question and a subject of conflict.

One example of this phenomenon can be found in the different perceptions of the James Foundation, which tend to vary by one's length of residence. As discussed in the previous chapter, the James Foundation is the local arm of the charitable trust established by Lucy James for the management of her estate. In addition to maintaining and

operating Maramec Spring Park, the city park, and the James Memorial Library, the Foundation has provided many structural improvements since its inception in the 1940s. The Foundation funded lighting and landscaping improvements, built a new city hall and police station, purchased and planted sweet gum trees to replace those killed by disease (giving rise to the “Forest City of the Ozarks” moniker), and donated land for the building of the Lucy Wortham James Elementary School. In fulfilling the desires of Lucy James, the Foundation contributed amenities and services that in other rural towns would have required substantial tax dollars and community action.

The resident interviews revealed disagreement about the role and responsibility of the James Foundation. In general, long-term residents who were present during the “glory days” of the Foundation feel that it has declined in the quality and significance of its services. They remember the 1960s, when the Foundation built the new city hall and swimming pools in the park, planted sweet gum trees, and could boast a new James Memorial Library. In the eyes of these residents, the Foundation no longer does what it used to do – it has let the quality of the city park and Maramec Spring Park decline. This view was made manifest when two of the three swimming pools in the park were closed during the summer of 2007. The closure was caused by required maintenance that the James Foundation said it could not afford. The long-term residents feel that the foundation is not fulfilling the final wishes of Lucy James to enhance the quality of life in St. James, the town she loved so much, and they place much of the blame on the New York Community Trust (NYCT) in New York City. Residents perceive the NYCT as a distant, uncaring board of directors that has no attachment to St. James yet controls the money that is so central to the town’s identity. In addition, many residents feel that the

local leadership no longer effectively negotiates with the NYCT for funds, a trend they have noticed since Ford Hughes left the helm about two decades ago.

Ruth Forest had this to say about the decline:

Well, we're really proud of our Maramec Springs, and we should be, because Lucy gave it to us. Ever since Ford's gone, though, it's gone to hell in a hand basket, I'm sorry. Danny and I get along fine, but...the monies that were there are not being used as they should have been, but like many of those trusts, they have these huge boards, and if those people aren't made aware, they just collect their big board dividends and they don't, you know...I think that's sad. (Under Ford) they did take care of stuff. This place was pristine. Everything they touched when Ford was here that had to do with it was pristine and well-done. (Forest 2007)

Gladys Aldridge said:

The James Foundation has changed. The things that they gave back to the community, and I'm not sure that the community ever really appreciated what they were receiving. Ford Hughes was a definite asset in that he had a way of working with New York to get more funding. And it's kind of scary, just like with this situation with the swimming pool...But the community's depended on them so much, like with the library, but there's nothing written in stone that says that it's going to be there forever...The park at Maramec Springs and the park in town, and you see things that are not what they were at one time, and what they have given, and we have to realize that it's not always going to be there at the way it's going now. (Aldridge 2007)

Ron Franciosi had strong feelings about the James Foundation:

Well, it used to be a very positive thing, but it was depended upon too much, and the thing has gotten to the point today which is it shouldn't be that way, but it has, and that's because of the people that's running the thing, and I don't mean by that just locally. It's in New York where the trust comes from. They have abandoned us. That's not what Miss James figured when she made that trust, but they run it as a group of other trusts. They don't give a damn, in my opinion, about St. James too much... They did a lot of work that wasn't any cost to the city, the park, and the one down at the Springs. I've got everything that Miss James ever filed in this county in the courthouse, and there's nothing in there that even begins to think that we shouldn't be receiving more money every year because that's the way she left it. But it ain't happening. That's because of several different things. And they're trying to get out of everything they can do without sending more monies. But at the beginning, they did the Plaza,

they did the painting, they did all this stuff, which they do not do no more. They're even letting that park over there go to hell. They shouldn't do that. Now, if somebody wanted to take the ball and run with it, a lawyer that was interested enough, he could go to New York, and if he could argue with them big boys up there, he could break that, but it ain't going to happen, because nobody's got that much interest in it... So it's a thing that was good, it still is, but it's not happening much. We don't have no contact with them. They have a local board that's just a figurehead. Ain't got power to piss up a rope. Locally they'll have...and I never been on it, and I can understand why, 'cause I have my opinions. And so they always select somebody that won't give them any trouble. And they have a voice, but it don't go nowhere. It all comes from New York. (Franciosi 2007)

The other faction in this debate generally consists of younger residents who moved to St. James later in life and have not lived there for more than a few decades. These residents appreciate the generous gift Lucy James gave to St. James, but argue that the town has grown dependent on the trust whenever a need arises. They argue that this sort of trust is rare for a rural town, and that other towns manage to have the same services and amenities without “free” money. St. James, the argument goes, must take a lesson from their peer communities and accept that citizens have to work for benefits instead of waiting for handouts. Lucy James' gift is diminishing and will not be replaced, so the community has to work to accomplish goals and accept sacrifices like higher taxes.

Molly Griffin, a community development expert, summarized this side of the argument:

I think although we come together as a community to solve problems...there are ways that we don't, and I think partly because of the giving that the James Foundation gave to the community at an early, formative stage of the community's development, that they don't necessarily take ownership for solving their own community development issues, like a new swimming pool would be an example. I know there are other, well, two in particular, close to St. James that have solved a community pool issue by coming together and finding a way to get it done using public money. But St. James always has a tendency to say, “Ok, let's go to the James Foundation and have them figure this out for us.” And I think that that would be maybe not a positive thing for St. James,

that I think we're going to have to get past, we're going to have to move past, because the James Foundation's role in this community has changed, and I don't believe it will ever change back to the way that it was, where they built the library, and they built the city hall, and they planted all the trees. That's not ever going to happen again, and so we have to figure out a way to start solving our own problems. (Griffin 2007)

Dianne Pierce was also a vocal opponent of the dependency mentality:

I think all that money that the James Foundation put into the town was a wonderful thing, and I'm probably the only person in town, but I think it's a mistake, because I feel like there's an entitlement mentality to a lot of people here in town that feel like the James Foundation are to blame, because there's, they're not giving enough money for this, that and the other, and people here, especially the people who've never lived anywhere else, don't even realize what they would be paying to have a pool, or what they'd be paying to have a library or a park, that they're not having to pay for out of their tax dollars, but the problem is, you know, times change and money changes and I think that people here don't think they should have to pay for things that they probably need to pay for, and then they would have a better system in the long run. It's nice that the James Foundation is here, because it's a unique situation, but I think it's crippled them somewhat. (Pierce 2007)

Dianne added:

I definitely have a problem with the attitude about the James Foundation. I think they get so shortchanged. I think they do so much for this town, and they get a lot of grief that they shouldn't be getting. I think there ought to be a lot more collaborative things between the James Foundation and whoever, whether it's the city, the school, or organizations. I think instead of them being this entity, like with the library here, it's all James Foundation. If they could have a Friends of the Library and get more people involved, and do things that would raise money outside of the James Foundation to have ownership in it, I think would be a good thing. (Pierce 2007)

The Maramec Iron Works and Lucy Wortham James are instrumental in forging the identity of modern St. James, and the official story has cemented this legacy into the town's mythos. As the town moves forward into the twenty-first century, however, the lived reality and everyday perception of residents reveals a tension about the role of this legacy. The significance of the ages and experience of residents who have a history with

the James Foundation as provider may mean that St. James will progress to a point when they have moved beyond the current state, but will the collective mind of St. James relegate the Foundation to the past and accept what needs to be done to survive, or will it hold on and seek to strengthen the Foundation as they have known it in the past?

### *Pride*

Tom Sutherland moved to St. James in 1969 after accepting a job in neighboring Rolla. With only a day to find a place to live for his wife and three children, he was discouraged with the housing available in Rolla. A serendipitous conversation with a man in a restaurant led him down the nine miles to St. James to look for places to rent, since the man had said it was “a nice little town.” After finding a place and learning more about St. James, three things impressed him enough to make it his home ever since: he liked everything the James Foundation provided – the park, library, swimming pool, and trout fishing at Maramec Spring Park; he liked the good things he heard about the public school system; and he was impressed with the Missouri Veterans’ Home, which he said was an attractive structure. Sutherland’s sense of pride for the town, much like his sense of duty and honor that fueled his career in the armed services, led to service as city councilman and member of numerous boards. For Sutherland, St. James was a town he liked, so he identified the reasons for that sentiment, and worked actively to maintain and foster the town that made such a strong impression on him.

Identifying the places, activities, or ideas that instill pride in a person is a key element in deciphering a community’s sense of place. A person’s positive feeling for a place contributes to a sense of belonging and identification (Tuan 1974). My interviews

revealed some of the most commonly perceived items that instill place-based pride in residents.

The annual Grape & Fall Festival was the most-mentioned element that residents associated with feelings of civic pride. The Fall Festival, as most locals call it, is comprised of a carnival, parade, craft fair, and other events organized by the Chamber of Commerce. It is held every September, and as its name suggests, the “Wintage” or “feste d’Vendemmix” was initiated in 1953 to celebrate St. James’ wine harvest and viticulture tradition, as well as the fall harvest in general (Gerlach 1976). It is a celebration of tradition and identity, but also an exhibition of St. James talent, with a queen pageant for high school girls, arts and crafts displays, livestock judging, and competitions for children and adults. The parade draws a tremendous turnout and involvement, and the Festival has participation from many groups and organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus (bingo pavilion), the area wineries (grape stomp), and the Phelps County Young Farmers (livestock auction). This spectacle brings “official” and “everyday” senses of place together as people identify and celebrate sources of town pride.

High school sports and other school activities also feature prominently in residents’ identification of town pride. Residents referred to high-school football games, school activities and “the St. James Tigers” in general when talking about town pride. Kyle McDowell describes the importance of each year’s five home high school football games for St. James:

I was told by a principal years ago that the school year actually starts with the football games. I think St. James football has never, never been successful, as far as I know, to the success level that you’d like it to be, but St. James football is super important for the community. That is the place, those five home games, where the community gets together, at least a big chunk of the community. The people that are going to volunteer, the

people that are going to be someplace...If you need help, go to the football game, because those are the people that help operate this town, and it's always been that way. (McDowell 2007)

Other common sources of pride for St. James residents include: the work of the Beautify St. James organization to improve the aesthetics of the downtown area; the Sports Club and its summer youth sports program; the Missouri Veterans' Home; the wineries; and the James Foundation and the Old Iron Works Days, a festival held every October at Maramec Spring Park. The festival brings together exhibitions and demonstrations of traditional arts and handicrafts of the nineteenth century from the heyday of the Maramec Iron Works. Like the Grape and Fall Festival, this event brings together the "official" and "everyday" senses of place. On three days each fall, throngs of people visit Maramec Spring Park to listen to bluegrass music, feed the trout, and watch experts dressed in period clothing spin wool, make molasses, and make iron implements, as well as to buy the crafts and treats. Visitors wander around the ruins of the iron furnaces during a celebration of the past, the St. James origin brought forward into the present.

### **The Middle Generation: St. James as Mayberry**

I was fortunate to have the assistance of Kim Whitney, editor of the local weekly newspaper, the *St. James Leader-Journal*, in spreading the word about my research. Whitney was also an interview participant – she was a resident who has spent years covering the news of St. James. She moved to St. James in 1986 with her husband's job and worked as editor for seven years, moved away for two years, then returned as editor again for about ten years before moving away again a few months after the interview. I

spoke with Whitney in the newspaper office in an old storefront building near the original center of town on Springfield Street, facing the railroad tracks. She spoke of the qualities of St. James from both a personal and journalistic perspective. As I was beginning the interview with her, she pointed out that the train was approaching, and that it would be pretty loud since it passes right by her office. As the train roared by, vibrations shook the office. Whitney joked: “The flavor of St. James.” Much was discussed in the interview, but she made one statement that reflects the views of many of her generation by remembering her first impression: “I thought it was a neat little town, and I told my husband it’s kind of like living in a post card. Sort of like Mayberry or something.”

Many of the residents I interviewed who are in the middle stage of life also happen to not be natives or long-term residents of St. James. They often moved to St. James as adults, pursuing jobs in the area or accompanying spouses. Bear in mind that the ages I am using for this group are not rigid; the group is formed more around residents’ situation as non-natives and general middle age status than with strict age delineation. Because of their life stage, many of these residents have raised families in St. James, and their experiences in that context resulted in much discussion about the quality of life St. James affords. As working adults who center their busy lives in this town, these residents also explored feelings of place attachment and civic obligation. Since many in this group moved to St. James later in life, their first impressions and enduring outsider perspectives were also prominent themes. In this section, I explore St. James through the eyes of middle aged residents, focusing on quality of life, place attachment, civic obligation, and the lingering outsider status.

## *Quality of Life*

Molly Griffin was a unique research participant. She moved to St. James from Iowa to join her future husband in 1990, and is a professional community developer who has worked as St. James' economic and community developer, community development specialist for MRPC, private consultant, and as a member of town organizations.

Because of this experience, Griffin could speak of the St. James community not only from her lived experience but also through the eyes of a trained expert. This interplay of personal and professional views provided a rich perspective. Perhaps the most eloquent and thorough of all the residents in this group, Griffin described the qualities that make St. James a good place to live, work, and raise a family.

St. James residents in this age group often praise the public school. People regard it as having outstanding academics and activities for a small town school. This perception of the school district has persisted throughout the town's modern history, even during its recent struggles with funding and drugs. Regardless of how well the school actually compares to others in the region and state, its reputation persisted and was a major attraction for parents deciding on a town when moving to the area. People often choose to live in St. James and work in Rolla, citing the schools as the main reason. The decision to support the school district seems to be a source of pride that is shared throughout the community and then disseminated to newcomers. Bill Hutton had this to say about the school district:

As a teacher and kind of amateur historian, everything I've ever read and seen about the school system of St. James indicated that the people themselves were willing to go as far as they needed to go to have the best school that they could have. So that said a lot about the educational system, but it also says a lot about the people. (Hutton 2007)

Dwight Payne added to the idea that residents value their schools as a hallmark of town identity:

I found very quickly that I thought St. James, the people of St. James, when it comes to dealing with kids, they're willing to do just about anything. It's very unique in that fact, of the different schools that I've been around and seen is that the people in this town will almost bend over backwards to do anything for kids. That was one of the first impressions I ever got of this school.

I think it's a huge part of the identity of the town. Especially in small towns, I think your school has to be the center of your town, and I think it really is here. And I think it's evident by the amount of community support that we get. And I think that's real evident in the school. I think definitely the school is the hub of this community. (Payne 2007)

Since St. James is a small town, it has a relatively small school district. But residents of all ages said that this size is beneficial. Molly Griffin:

I like a smaller school district because I think that as a parent, you can get more involved in a smaller school district. You have more involvement, you have more knowledge of the teachers, you have the opportunity for them to get to know you. I think that it's just a better, more nurturing environment. I think that's probably as important, at least it is to me, as a larger district where you might have more academic choices. I think it's more important that the children are in an environment that's nurturing, and you can always figure out how to create those other choices for your kids. (Griffin 2007)

The perspective of the school towards the community is reciprocated, as suggested by a recent student, Hailey Espelkamp:

The school is very involved in the community, and we try to make sure the community is involved in the school, both through the sports programs and the band and the choir and drama programs and making sure that the community is invited to everything that we do, and the choir puts on an annual dinner that we sell tickets to and invite the community. (Espelkamp 2007)

Another common topic related to the perception of the school is the idea that St. James is a good place to raise children. While some residents spoke of qualities they do

not like or that they perceive as negative for raising families, the overall feeling is that of St. James as a family town. Primary qualities behind this feeling are perceptions of safety, the rural setting away from urban congestion and social ills, and the quality of the schools. As Laura Read put it, “Because it’s a small town, it seems like families have family values and things of that nature, and it makes it good for raising children” (Read 2007). Residents often commented that one could feel safe letting children ride bicycles on the streets. In the words of the residents:

I advise every kid when they graduate from school to go to college somewhere else, but then when they get done, come back here and raise their family. This is a great place to raise a family. It’s probably not a great place to be if you’re single between the ages of 20 and 27. But being married it really is. Then your life is full. Your kids start the sports and the activities and all sorts of stuff. It’s very easy once your kids get in the school age group to keep busy and to give your kids some excellent things. (McDowell 2007)

I think it’s a great place to raise a kid. You don’t have a lot of problems that you have with your bigger towns and your bigger cities here. We’ve got our problems just like everybody else, but we got a lot of people that’s willing to work together to solve them, too. (Payne 2007)

It’s a good place for the kids to be raised. Small enough that I like being able to walk downtown or drive and you always see somebody you know, you walk in the grocery store and you know somebody and say hello to them, and it seems like people watch out for your kids more, kind of more of that close small town thing. And just knowing people. And that was probably the thing I hated worst in high school was that everybody knew everybody’s business and, you know, but, now that I’m a parent, I see that that’s a good thing. That somebody’s, you know, watching out for my kid if I’m not there, that somebody else will know what’s going on. (Picard 2007)

The idea of St. James as an extraordinary place for families is not universal.

Some people see flaws or have had negative experiences that contest the rosier image.

Brandy Cooper put it this way:

I know a lot of people say it's a real good place to raise kids, but you got to watch it, though. Yeah, it's good, but I think any place could be a good place to raise kids, but you got to watch it. There's bad even in St. James. Kids are...Firsthand, I know, good kids can get into the drug scene. (Cooper 2007a)

I will explore these negative perceptions more fully later in this chapter.

As Picard mentioned above, small-town qualities often are seen as both beneficial and annoying, depending on the resident's age and relationship with the town. Residents of the middle generation discussed these qualities more often than others, perhaps because most are not natives and so can offer an outsider's critique. Some of the small town qualities that people introduced in the interviews were:

*Friendly and welcoming:* ...they seem to be good about reaching out to the stranger and welcoming that person in. And it's a town that seems to me to care about the town. (Hutton 2007)

*Involvement and closeness to people:* Being able to know people, to, to be involved with people, and their trust and, and concern and care of you." (Wallace 2007)

*Emphasis on local business:* I think they encourage the small business owner more, and that's why you don't see a lot of the corporate stuff here in St. James. But that's becoming less and less so. (Tasus 2007b)

*Small and rural:* I guess I just like the size. I like that it takes two seconds and you're out in the country, you know, everything's pretty packed tightly together. It's not spread out. I think just the size, really, and...just being a little inhabited civilization out in the middle of nowhere. (Tasus 2007a)

*Pleasant and laid-back:* Strangers that comes in, they will have various, different things they think of the area, and mostly it's the area is so pleasant and laid-back. (Franciosi 2007)

The most prevalent small-town quality, however, was the idea behind the ubiquitous phrase, "Everybody knows everybody." Most people considered this to be a good quality. If neighbors know each other, they care about each other's well-being and

there are no strangers with unknown motives. It is a great help in parenting, since a person can feel safe letting children play outside. Conversely, children cannot get away with mischief because word of their actions gets back to their parents. The idea that “everyone knows everyone” is also seen as annoying and obtrusive, however, often to the same people who expressed appreciation for it. Living in a small town lessens one’s privacy, increases the need to maintain good standing among neighbors, and intensifies gossip. Josie Cooper said of small town living:

Everybody does know everybody, and if you don’t know them, then someone you know knows them. You know most of them have about the same values and the same morals that you do. You feel safe leaving, which you shouldn’t, but you feel safe leaving the keys in your car, because you know nobody’s going to mess with it. And if you were ever in any trouble, people do know you, so they’re more likely to help you. (Cooper 2007b)

Lesley Wallace said:

It’s good that everyone knows everyone, and it’s bad that everyone knows everyone. A lot of times they know what you’re doing before you do it. And we would tell the kids, don’t even think about doing it, because you’re going to get caught. People are going to see you... (Wallace 2007)

Dwight Payne added:

It’s not the hustle and bustle that you get in the cities. Sometimes it’s nice knowing everybody, sometimes it’s not very nice knowing everybody. But if you have trouble or you have something that you need help with, St. James is the town that you can call somebody and you can get that help. I like that. You just surround yourself with a lot of good people in this town, and that’s probably what I like about it best. (Payne 2007)

Finally, Molly Griffin, the Iowa transplant and community development specialist, said:

I know this is the nature of small towns, everybody knows everybody’s business, that’s what I don’t like about St. James. And we have a couple of spots in town that I think are breeding ground for rumors. So that’s the downside of living in a small town. I don’t think St. James is alone in that. I think that’s everywhere you live. Everyone knows everyone, and they

want to know everyone's business, and rumors kind of fly around.  
(Griffin 2007)

One indicator of residents' perceptions of quality of life in St. James is in their indications of "nice parts of town." Generally speaking, these places were residential neighborhoods, with the exception of the downtown commercial district, the city park, the Missouri Veterans' Home, and Maramec Spring Park. Half of the interview participants said that the residential neighborhood bounded roughly by the railroad tracks, the city park, Jefferson Street and the cemetery (commonly referred to as "the neighborhood by the library") was a particularly nice part of town. It is an old neighborhood with many venerable, well-kept homes that have belonged to notables of St. James history. The reasons residents chose this neighborhood can be explored through their descriptions. Molly Griffin said:

There are some small houses nestled in with larger houses, but it has a real historic feel to me, and the real mature trees, and history. It's quiet. I don't know, whenever I walk back in there, it's just a very peaceful feeling. I think it's because the park is there, and the library is there, which is always very well-maintained, and then some people that have lived in the same houses, or families that have lived in the same house for years, and so it's a real sense of pride. (Griffin 2007)

Shane Tasus:

That's a nice neighborhood over there by the park. It's almost like the park extends out into the neighborhoods there, you know. It's like it's kind of hard to tell when you're in the park and when you're not, because it's so green and nice. That's a nice part of town. (Tasus 2007b)

Linda Solaro talked about the neighborhood, describing walking out of the library:

It's just so sweet...you could just walk out and it's just nice. It's peaceful, and kids riding their bikes and not the rush of traffic, and slower pace.  
(Solaro 2007)

And Laura Read, a real estate agent, told of her impressions of the library neighborhood:

There's a lot of homes in there that...Some may be newer, some may be older. A lot of the older ones hold a lot of, it seems like, character and are reminiscent of the past, and it's really neat to me over in that area. I like new things as well as the old things, especially old things, old homes that have been restored or kept up and have their original hardware, their door handles, their woodwork, the gingerbread etching and stuff around the gables. (Read 2007)

Based on their responses, it appears that residents have two categories for designating "nice" areas. One is based on a combination of qualities such as feelings of peace and safety, well-kept homes, landscaping, large or historic homes, a long period of occupancy in the area, and the subsequent value that life and culture infuse into the area. The descriptions of the "neighborhood by the library" fall into this category. Other neighborhoods that presumably fall into this category: the area behind the Missouri Veterans' Home; the Valley View subdivision; the Meramec Woods subdivision; the houses between the elementary school and Boys' Town Road; and the neighborhood along North Charles Avenue and North Louise Street. Tom Sutherland, who lives on North Charles, had this to say:

Actually, you know what, we're not upscale over in our neighborhood here, but up until maybe five years ago or something, I always thought this was one of the better neighborhoods in town. For the simple reason, there wasn't that many rentals, most everybody owned their own homes, and they took care of them. (Sutherland 2007)

The other category is based on the size, price, and newness of homes built in new residential subdivisions. Residents discussed some subdivisions that are still in the process of construction or that they consider to be "nice" parts of town simply because they exhibit large new homes and perfect streets. Such neighborhoods include the subdivision at the intersection of Highway B and County Road 1000; Hidden Hills

Estates; Deer Park Estates; and newer houses built past Nelson Hart Park. Laura Read said this about the Highway B subdivision:

I think that it is neat because I don't know that we really had something like that before. It will take some time to get that all developed, but once it is, it'll be a nice subdivision area. And I think it's kind of cool that we have that, because I don't think we had something like that before. (Read 2007)

But Angela Kleiber questioned the real estate market:

No one in St. James can really afford to live like that, you know? That's why I think that they're marketing other people. People in St. James can't buy a \$40,000 plot of land and a \$250,000 house. That's just not in the cards for most people. (Kleiber 2007)

So it appears that new, upscale neighborhoods are presumed to be nice areas before houses are built, with cost as a guide. Proportionally more people, though, chose the established neighborhoods as nice parts of town.

To some residents, there are no exceptionally nice areas; rather, attractive buildings and homes are scattered throughout the town and countryside outside St. James.

To Alice Luebbecke:

The town itself, it's pretty uniform. I mean, you'll find nice houses and nice buildings, and you'll find one older one, and it's kind of varied. You don't usually find just a lot of old houses together; you'll usually find a couple of new ones in between there, and it's pretty uniform, in my opinion. (Luebbecke 2007)

To another resident, Dianne Pierce, particularly nice parts of St. James are very scarce:

I don't think it's got a lot architecturally going for it. I mean, there's nice, neat houses, and that kind of thing, but it's not like you drive into an area and you go, oh, that's really upscale. I mean, that kind of thing you don't see...But I don't think of this town...I think of this town as being poor. When I drive through it, I think that the majority of the people here are pretty poor. Which doesn't make it not nice, just makes it not opulent, you know? (Pierce 2007)

### *Place Attachment*

“There’s not a whole lot to St. James, but I like that” (Espelkamp 2007).

I interviewed Linda Solaro in the Betty Lou Hughes room of the James Memorial Library, a space that houses memorabilia of Lucy Wortham James and the James family. Solaro is an elementary school teacher, and one of the components of the social studies curriculum is a section on the history of St. James, for which she wrote the book about Lucy James to earn her Master’s degree. Because of this, Solaro expressed a deep connection to the James Memorial Library. She and her husband both grew up in south St. Louis County and moved to St. James after college in the mid-1970s to accept employment in Rolla. I could detect that she was a native St. Louisan by picking up verbal traits that comes from personal experience living in the St. Louis media market. She and her husband intended to live in the area a few years to gain work experience before returning to St. Louis. But after 32 years and two children, Solaro is still here, and she now considers St. James her home. Her outsider background gave her critical perspective on her change from a “citified” girl marooned in a small rural town to a St. James “townie.” Her attachment to St. James is built on positive experiences, establishing roots, and the simple accretion of everyday lived experience over time.

Every resident expressed an attachment to St. James differently. For some, family roots and lifelong familiarity with one’s true home provide strong ties. Others hold the perception of St. James as a nice town to live in at the moment, but would feel no strong loss if circumstances forced them to move away. To gauge place attachment, I asked residents what would have to happen to force them to move away from St. James. My feeling was that a person’s willingness to leave would have a negative correlation to

place attachment. Twelve residents stated that nothing could get them to leave St. James; they wanted to live there for the rest of their lives. The most common causes for moving away were an employment change by the resident or spouse; pursuit of a romantic relationship; to live with or be close to family members; health and safety issues; to attain higher education; a change in the quality of the school district; economic reasons; and retirement. Molly Griffin, for instance, used this question to describe the merits of a small school district like St. James: parental involvement, knowledge of the teachers, a nurturing environment, and more opportunities for involvement in activities. Griffin said that if the nature of the school district changed – if it merged with the Rolla district, for example – and if she still had school-age children, then that would be a possible reason for her to move away.

Linda Solaro expressed the view of a non-native who now unexpectedly wants to remain in St. James:

Oh, I guess if my husband accepted a position somewhere else. So my husband's employment, that would cause us to move. Other than that, that would be probably about it. We're pretty content...Came with the idea that we would stay for a couple years, my husband would get experience at the university, and then we would go back to St. Louis. That was our intent. And here we are, thirty two years later, still here. (Solaro 2007)

Laura Read described the concern for her children's welfare in considering what would cause her to leave:

If it was necessary for the health and welfare of my children, or if I met a really, really awesome guy. It would have to be something pretty significant for me to move. My family's all here, and I've been all over the United States, and at this point I don't have any desire to do anything different. It's kind of different, too, when you have children and they're kind of set and have friends and so forth, you hate to disrupt that, but before that happened, I didn't have a desire to move away anyway. (Read 2007)

Alice Luebbecke expressed a view common to older residents:

Health change, I would say, probably, would be the main thing to make me want to move away. And even then, I may not want to move away. I may want to find someplace like an assisted living or something like that. But it would have to be something pretty drastic to make me move away. Been home too long. (Luebbecke 2007)

Evan Fortune displayed the response of a person with fewer attachments:

You know, if the opportunity was good enough, I probably would, because I have no other family living here or anything. I have a lot of friends here, a lot of people that I've known now for several years, but other than that, I don't have anything really holding me at this point. (Fortune 2007)

The expression of St. James as simply being “home” came out in many of the interviews, mostly from lifelong residents and people who grew up here, moved away, and returned. As described by these residents, home is marked by familiarity, comfort, and roots. Gladys Aldridge, a lifelong resident, said:

Well, it's always been home. Having grown up here and really lived here almost all of my life, with the exception of leaving to go to school. When we came back, I could have lived anywhere. John was the one that was really wanting to come back here, 'cause this was his home, too. (Aldridge 2007)

Shane Tasus, who grew up in St. James, left for ten years and returned:

This property that I have here, I always consider it my home and we've both decided, I mean my mother's going to leave this place to me when she dies, so we're never going to sell it, we're always going to keep it as like a summer home or whatever. Just a retreat here in the woods. (Tasus 2007b)

Brandy Cooper grew up in St. James, moved around for many years with a military spouse, then returned to St. James eight years ago. She had this to say about St. James as home:

I think just because it was home, and it was just a nice place to come back to. I just feel comfortable there. I don't know what it is that makes me feel comfortable about it. It just makes me feel comfortable being there.

And you just feel like you can go back there, and people accept you. And I'm not saying that's always the case, though. You might not have anybody left there to accept you. You're familiar with it, too. (Cooper 2007a)

Similarly, Josie Cooper spent periods of her childhood in St. James, but moved around with the military until returning to finish high school:

It was wonderful coming home, I mean, even though we didn't live here, 'cause we always lived in bigger cities, and it was always so busy with the military, and coming here it was just so quiet and calm, and I guess all my family was here, so that made it feel like home. And it was all familiar, I mean, it stayed the same. Whenever we would come back, it would be the same, you know? I guess that continuity, just...was good. (Cooper 2007b)

Linda Solaro discussed the idea of St. James becoming her home over time:

When we moved here, we said, "Will we ever be hometown people?" We wondered that. And St. James, I'll share this with you, I felt when we first came, although they were very, very warm and welcoming, that was your initial impression. But then it stopped. And it was very, very hard for us to feel like we were part of it. It took us about six years and we always thought, "I hope our kids feel like they really belong, or that this is their home." And they did. They, they think of this as home, you know. But here Mike and I came from the big city, came down here, made this our home, committed to it, and we raised our children here. (Solaro 2007)

And Pamela Lewis, a lifelong resident, perhaps expressed it best:

It's home, that's it. I can't put a, I don't know, a word about it. It's just home. (Lewis 2007)

In order to ascertain residents' place attachment in everyday life, I asked them to name the places where they spend time on a regular basis, outside of home. Although this interview technique does not capture feelings about these places, it does help to identify the St. James landscape as perceived by residents in everyday life.

The residents' answers focused on places that are conducive to social interaction: schools, stores, banks, clinics, churches, and parks. It is no surprise that the most

residents said they frequent the one grocery store in town, Country Mart. What was surprising, however, was that many people said they spent time at one or more of the three parks (the city park, Maramec Spring Park, and Nelson Hart Park) and the James Memorial Library on a regular basis. I suppose if one walks at the park for exercise or fishes at Maramec Spring Park, or has children to take to the park or to Maramec Spring Park to feed the fish, and to Nelson Hart Park to play ball games, then it would probably be common to visit the parks on a regular basis.

A number of the interviewed residents work for the school district or have children who attend, so several of them said that they spend time at one of the public schools on a regular basis. The schools are proving to be prominent sites in the St. James sense of place for students, school employees, and others. Students and parents spend time there outside of regular classes for involvement in (and watching) abundant activities. Other places frequented by residents are retail and service stores in general in town, banks, restaurants (Diana's Diner most specifically), the post office, pharmacies, and churches.

I asked the question "Which gas stations do you frequent?" to satisfy my own curiosity about whether residents are creatures of habit when it comes to buying gas. Their responses, however, also display place attachment. Public transportation does not exist in St. James, so it is safe to assume that most adult residents drive their own vehicles or ride with someone who does. I received an even mixture of answers saying that they usually go to the same station (usually for a reason) or that they go to whichever station is the most convenient at the time. Understanding their relationships with this particular service common on the landscape contributes to knowledge of individual sense

of place. What follows is a list of reasons residents give for going to their particular same gas station in St. James:

- Location - it's the most convenient one on their normal route.
- "I usually use Spurgeon's because my former employer, they support it, and so I try to support the people that supported us." (Wallace 2007)
- The gas station's owner is a band booster, and the resident was very active in the high school band.
- "I don't know why, I think it's the only one I've ever been to." (Tasus 2007a)
- "You get used to one, you learn how to use it." The newer stations have the "complicated machines, and I'll have to learn how to use that." (Luebbecke 2007)
- "Wherever it's cheapest. I used to go pretty well to the same place when it was under a dollar a gallon or something like that, but anymore, I look for the bargains." (Sutherland 2007)
- "Their service is good, it's clean, and I like the coffee there." (Jackson 2007)
- One resident goes to three stations in three parts of town, depending on where he is, but has a reason for going to each one. "I hit Ed's because I like to support Ed's, and if I have my truck and trailer, it's just a lot easier to swoop into Ed's with my long trailers. I hit Spurgeon's because they do my oil changing and they've always been great to me. Pump Handle has a car wash, and it's closer to my school." (McDowell 2007)

- Kim Whitney goes to Spurgeon's for nostalgia; she remembers the old white building they had that she liked, which was torn down to build a modern convenience store and gas station.
- Melissa Picard goes to a station that often has lower prices and very fast pumps. "When you're spending \$70 on a tank of gas, you don't want to sit there forever." (Picard 2007)

### *Civic Obligation*

I interviewed Kyle McDowell and Dwight Payne in the same morning at John F. Hodge High School. Both are professionals employed by the school district. Neither is a native of St. James: McDowell grew up in suburban St. Louis, and Payne grew up in a small town thirty miles away from St. James. They were working that day because summer school was in session, and they were overseeing the hectic activities. In fact, my interview with McDowell was interrupted by a middle school student requiring medical attention, and Payne offered to talk to me since he said he had strong feelings about St. James. So I interviewed Payne, who spoke in glowing terms of the importance of the school to the community and of the commitment of the school staff and citizens in general to improving the lives of students and all community members. After the interview, I wandered the halls of the school looking for McDowell. Strange feelings came as these familiar halls brought back memories of my high school years. I had not stepped foot in the building since before leaving for college and the "real world." I thought of all the values, perspectives, and ideas instilled in me in this building so long ago, and I considered how all of the people in town are similarly formed and influenced

in this school and schools like it, and how it influences our perceptions of the environments of our everyday lived experience. I finally found McDowell, and he finished the interview with me in the AV room so that people could not find him in the office to interrupt us again. McDowell spoke of the volunteer community spirit that he thinks is extraordinarily strong in St. James. These feelings of civic obligation, of community volunteering and involvement, along with support of the local economy, were echoed by many residents, but most prominently among those of the middle generation.

Before I begin this subsection's discussion, I want to note that I asked all residents the question, "How involved are you in community affairs?" to gauge their involvement in the community. I wanted to ensure that I did not only interview people who were actively involved in community organizations and government, but also those who do not have much formal involvement beyond simply living and working in the town. This question satisfied that concern. I interviewed people whose only involvement beyond work and home was occasional attendance at church and sporting events or eating in restaurants. I also interviewed current and former city council and Chamber of Commerce members, officers and members of multiple community organizations and boards, and a public safety officer and newspaper editor who intimately know activities in St. James.

As McDowell suggested, many residents see the importance of being involved in the community and volunteering one's time for the betterment of the community. When asked what he liked best about St. James, McDowell said:

I would say the level of volunteerism. Kiwanis, all the other organizations, they have a Beautify St. James. They have the Caring Center. They have just different organizations people can join. I think if you have a problem, and you're willing to work to solve that problem, there will be other

people there standing right next to you helping solve the problem. We had a meth night, a community drug awareness night, and 600, 700 people showed up. We were expecting 100. But that's it, because St. James is concerned. (McDowell 2007)

Church attendance and involvement are high in St. James. There are about twenty-five churches in St. James, and unlike other small towns, there is a variety of Christian denominations (*St. James Leader-Journal* 2007), with no one church having dominance in the town's culture. McDowell commented on the involvement of people in their church as a form of involvement in the community:

And then you go to each church, and St. James is loaded with churches. You look at each church and they have their own volunteer base, and that's just typical of their clientele at that church, their membership. But yeah, there's a lot of volunteering being done. (McDowell 2007)

The St. James residents I interviewed expressed their involvement in or support of numerous volunteer projects or organizations, and they are involved in different degrees of participation. Community involvement in St. James can best be analyzed by looking at a few specific cases: the Caring Center, the downtown revitalization effort, and the support the community gives to the police.

The Caring Center is a thrift store that sells donated items, but it also performs other social services like operating a community food pantry and connecting people with free job training and GED classes. It is located in an old grocery store, the Town & Country, on Meramec Street. From the outside, I would have assumed that it was simply a thrift store, but after talking to residents who volunteer for the Caring Center, I learned about its multifaceted purpose. Apparently, the Caring Center is very well-operated, and it has succeeded in St. James where similar organizations have failed in other small Missouri towns. Gladys Aldridge spoke of the Caring Center:

The Caring Center was started and it was through the partnership community in Rolla. St. James was generating more funding, and so Rolla cut them off. That has been a local organization that has been amazing, the support they've given. The ministerial alliance has turned over all the commodities service to the Caring Center. It's been amazing what they have really done for people in the community. It's like 300 people or 400 families that they supply, and for the beginning of school, they have school supplies that they give away, but that's all through the Caring Center. That's one thing I've never been involved in, but it's really has been an asset to the community and I'm not sure that people really realize what support they give. (Aldridge 2007)

Kyle McDowell, who is on the board of directors for the Caring Center, said:

I think our town's just like any other small town of its size, except we have a bigger volunteer base. I think we have more people that deeply, deeply care about this town than other towns do. The Caring Center, for example, was supposed to be statewide. Every community was supposed to get a Caring Center. It happened here and it worked out here. They opened a bunch in a bunch of different communities, and they failed. I believe that our Caring Center survived, number one, because we have a very large elderly volunteer base, about fifty to sixty volunteers come in and work all the time. And people, they just care. They support the schools and they support the community. (McDowell 2007)

“Downtown” is a subjective term: the boundaries of a downtown area vary according to the person asked. I would define St. James' downtown as the blocks along Jefferson Street from the blocks north of James Boulevard to the blocks south of the railroad tracks, and one further row of blocks to the east and west. In many ways, St. James' downtown could be described as a 'typical' small, rural downtown taken from the pages of Lewis's (1920) *Main Street*. There are rows of storefronts connected in the same long buildings interspersed with a few standalone structures. A variety of service and retail businesses occupy them; some have thrived for decades, while others are in the rotation of businesses that are here one year and gone the next. The buildings have different architectural styles, reflecting their age differences from formal eras of St.

James history. Free street parking is available – no meters here. The area along the railroad tracks, called the “Plaza,” is maintained as a green space with public benches.

At times in the past, the downtown has had many vacant storefronts and was believed to be dying, like so many other small Midwestern downtowns. Currently, however, most buildings have active businesses, and there is life downtown. Maintaining a beautiful downtown appearance is seen as vital for supporting St. James’ tourism efforts, but also as a way to maintain civic pride. In the early 2000s, an organization called Beautify St. James was created to refurbish the downtown area and encourage aesthetics in other parts of the city. Beautify St. James garnered monetary support from businesses, grants, and fundraisers. They installed decorative streetlamps, flowerboxes, signs, and benches in the downtown, and they assisted in cleaning and refurbishing the sides of buildings. Their efforts are appreciated by residents, who comment on the downtown’s refurbished appearance.

Residents had this to say about the downtown area and the work of the Beautify St. James organization:

I think the downtown is just wonderful, with the new lighting and the trees and the flags, even though we have problems with kids trying to chin themselves on the poles. I think overall, the downtown is just really looking good, and I think the majority of places are keeping it up. Our group’s the ones that planted the planters downtown, and we have some people that water every day, and others that don’t water, so that’s just part of it. I think the Plaza area, where the flowers are, I think that’s been a real asset to the community, something a lot of communities don’t have. (Aldridge 2007)

The streetscape of the main street, of Springfield, has improved considerably in the last, let’s say five years, with the hardscaping that’s been put in, the trees and the planters. (Hutton 2007)

Just the fact that over the course of the last couple of years we’ve tried to just make it more presentable. We’ve gotten new street lights, real nice

ones with nice, you know, St. James signs, and people have redone the front of their buildings, and that type of thing. I think that just the overall presence of the town is just much prettier than what it used to be. (Kleiber 2007)

Well, I'm very proud of this downtown, our downtown area, with our planters and our...what we've done with those benches and the trees and the grassy spaces. Generally, I think most of the community takes pretty good pride of that, and the businesses have been helping with watering, that kind of thing. (Lewis 2007)

It shows places that years ago were here, the original buildings, and you can kind of compare it to what's here now. I think it's awesome to look at. It's neat, because you're like, holy cow, it's grown this much or this building has changed, and I think it's neat that they've taken a lot of these old buildings that were starting to look a little aged, and they've sandblasted them or they've redone the fronts, and I think have dressed our town up and made it look a lot nicer. (Read 2007)

One final comment about community involvement came from Evan Fortune, a public safety officer. He reflected on the support the community gives to the law enforcement services in everyday life:

There's just enough of the smaller town atmosphere and viewpoints and attitudes that we do get a lot of support from the community and we get a lot of help from the community. When people know things, they don't have a problem talking to us. They'll tell us. They don't feel like we're people that they can't talk to or can't approach. We've had a lot of support shown to us from just the citizens here, 'cause they want to have as safe a community as possible also. They're very good about getting a hold of us, they're good about supporting us, and you don't always have that in some towns, but that's one thing they do. For the most part, the average citizen out here is very supportive of us, so even though we've got the unique challenges of any town along the interstate, we also have the benefit of having the support of the community, so that helps us a lot too. (Fortune 2007)

Residents' discussions about their retail shopping habits add an interesting element to the theme of civic obligation. Many residents say they buy some items at stores in town to different degrees, but most say, begrudgingly and with an indication of guilt, that they also go shopping in Rolla, mostly at Wal-Mart, and in St. Louis. Many

cite the variety of stores that can be found in St. James, and they seem proud that the town has active commerce, but when asked where they shop, most say they go to Wal-Mart in Rolla. So based on their interviews, residents share a feeling that civic obligation includes patronizing local businesses, but the reality of the prices and convenience of Wal-Mart trump that obligation. Residents are aware of the choice they have, but describe an irresistible urge to continue shopping at Wal-Mart. As Shane Tasus eloquently puts it:

We always try to look for the better deal, so we go to Rolla a lot. Wal-Mart's a sucking black hole. You cannot escape. 'Cause you can get everything at one stop. Those bastards, I hate Wal-Mart. But you can't resist. It sucks us in. (Tasus 2007b)

And Brandy Cooper adds:

I do most of my big shopping at Wal-Mart. There's really...Country Mart. They're just so...And every time I pull into Wal-Mart parking lot I think, "Ugh, I don't want to be here." (Cooper 2007a)

### *The Outsider's View*

Like Linda Solaro, Bill Hutton moved to St. James in the mid-1970s, when he came to accept a job as a teacher. Also like Solaro, Hutton came from the St. Louis metropolitan area, specifically the north side in Illinois. As such, coming to St. James required adjustment to a different pace of life and lifestyle opportunities that comes from being far from major markets, entertainment, and culture of the city. Hutton is an amateur historian and has a special interest in the architecture that decorates and gives character to the St. James landscape. He has studied photographs of St. James' past, and he can describe the buildings and relate the owners or occupants that once populated the landscape but are now gone. An extension of his artistic sensibility is expressed in the

volunteer work he performs to decorate Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. That is where I first found Hutton when I was conducting my initial interviews, and I conducted the formal interview with him while sitting in a pew in the empty church midday, our voices resounding in the reverent space. Through his house, job, historical interests, and volunteer work, Hutton has made St. James his home. But his move in mid-life, and his critical comparisons to his native town near St. Louis shows that the outsider's perspective on St. James allows fresh views and a critique needed to properly construct a robust sense-of-place study.

First impressions last a lifetime. You only get one chance, as they say, and a first impression often influences one's subsequent impression of a person or place, even if the first impression would not have been standard under normal circumstances. No one moves to St. James with a completely blank slate or forms a first impression with no bias. No doubt one carries preconceived notions, similar experiences, and information from others that influence the formation of a first impression of a town. Since many of the residents of this middle generation are not natives to St. James (they moved here at some later point in life), they have personal experience in other locations against which they can draw comparisons. This group provides an opportunity to garner the perspectives on St. James that outsiders have. One way to do this was to ask the residents who moved later in life for their first impressions of the town. It is a fascinating study of how a single place can make a diverse impression upon newcomers. Since each person's first impression of St. James is truly unique, I feel it is most appropriate to briefly summarize each person's response singly to portray the actual process of creating sense of place firsthand.

- Molly Griffin came from a small town in Iowa and felt that the small town of St. James and the surrounding area were beautiful. She enjoyed the diversity of people and religious denominations for a small town, being accustomed to small towns with a single cultural heritage or one dominant church.
- Jennifer Tasmus, coming from Columbia, a small city and college town, “just remembered thinking that it was really country. In all honesty, I just was kind of taken aback. I felt like I was stepping back into time. Not the town itself, really, but I guess I had never really been around so many country people. People just act different in the country than they do in the city. So, it took me awhile to get used to it.” (Tasmus 2007a)
- Alice Luebbecke, moving from a smaller, more rural town, described her impression as welcoming. “I’ve never stepped off a train and everybody on the street would speak to you and, you know, smile. It seemed like that was the kind of reception. People were just pretty outgoing. They invited you to, if they belonged to an organization or a church or whatever, you would be invited. Very welcoming.” (Luebbecke 2007)
- Kyle McDowell said that St. James reminded him of a “Norman Rockwell town, a very nice small town.” (McDowell 2007)
- Dale Winters simply said his first impression was that it was a nice town. He “liked the way it looked, all the trees and stuff.” (Winters 2007)
- Evan Fortune said, “I think the first time I came through here I was looking at the main street, and they had some of the buildings there looked like they’d been there for many years and very well-preserved, looked like they took good care of

them, and I remember thinking that it looked like a well-established, older small town that people put a lot of thought into keeping it up and everything.” (Fortune 2007)

- Kim Whitney said “it was a neat little town, kind of like living in a postcard. Sort of like Mayberry or something.” (Whitney 2007)
- Bill Hutton described his first drive through town, saying it obviously had the feeling of a small town compared to places he had lived before. “And when you came in, the first block of businesses, there was a large emptiness on one side of the street, just empty buildings with no businesses, so your feeling was that the town is kind of dying.” Bill also described the familiar feeling of crossing the railroad tracks, since train tracks ran behind his parents’ farm. (Hutton 2007)
- Linda Solaro told the story of her first visit to St. James, looking for a residence to rent with her husband. She described the warm welcome and personal assistance provided by a kind, mothering realtor who showed her a small farmhouse that was “as cute as could be.” Regarding impressions of the town itself, “When we drove through town, it was so cute. So unlike what we were from. And I think that probably caught our eye. It was so different than where, where we grew up, you know, and what we were accustomed to. It’s a very pretty town, you know, and it’s always been well-maintained.” (Solaro 2007)
- Dwight Payne said his first impression was that the citizens are “willing to do just about anything” when it comes to supporting the school system and the children. (Payne 2007)

- Dianne Pierce's first impression of St. James was negative. She said her first visual impression was positive; they decided to settle in St. James as opposed to neighboring towns because of the abundant mature trees in St. James. However, on her first day getting situated she had a negative experience at the school (the principal was late in meeting her and she was told that the school doesn't like parental involvement because the teachers don't like scrutiny), and she had a negative experience getting friendly service when wanting to open a bank account.

One interesting observation made by non-native residents who first moved to St. James mid-life is that the residents tend to be "cliquish" or "clannish." They say that people tend to socialize only with other people who attend the same church, with members of the same organization, or simply with people they have known a long time. A few native, longtime residents brought up the idea of cliquishness as well, but only when recounting that people who moved to St. James later in life told them of this feeling. Non-native residents have been accepted into community circles to different degrees. But a few residents told me that they feel St. James is less integrative than other similarly-sized towns they have experienced. Dianne Pierce, a non-native transplant, summarized it well:

I think the town tends to be cliquish. I mean, I have a lot of friendly acquaintances, but I don't really have any friends here. I don't have anybody that calls me and asks me to lunch. And out of all the places I've lived, all the states I've lived, I've never had this happen, and here I have been here almost seven years, and I'm not that horrible. Normally, I have a lot of friends, and it's like, I'm sure people think that they're friendly to me, but they tend to more sticking either with their own families, or maybe their church, but it's like their circle of friends was made when they were ten, and it doesn't really expand. And they may be friendly to people, and they may say, oh, we should do this or that, but then it never

happens. I wonder if you're new here, and you're just an average person, how do those people feel? (Pierce 2007)

### **The Younger Generation: St. James as Cruisescape**

I mean, you can get involved in all the drama, all the small town talk, all the crazy stuff that goes on in little communities. Or you can start a life of your own and kind of separate yourself and grow as a person, and enjoy your family and enjoy the river and enjoy the outdoors and, you know, there are a lot of things to do. And sometimes even I live there and I forget that there are a lot of things to do, and I'm so bored. But whenever you think about it, there's so much to do, you know? It's a great little community. (Kleiber 2007)

Melissa Picard and Brandy Cooper are two sisters who grew up in St. James.

Melissa is a teacher with the St. James school district; Brandy is a health care professional in Rolla. It was while interviewing them that I realized how much memories of a place factor in one's sense of place. I interviewed Melissa in our parents' living room on a June morning. She was on summer break and was out walking and running errands. Melissa had moved away for college for four years, married her high school boyfriend, and obtained her first and only job in the St. James school district. Interviewing Melissa in the familiar setting of our parents' house, talking about her childhood and mine, allowed memories and perceptions of St. James to flow.

Brandy graduated high school in St. James, married a man from Rolla, and soon joined him as he moved around in the military. After living for twelve years out of state and out of country, Brandy returned to St. James in 2000 with her three daughters. My initial interview with Brandy was on her front porch, from where we could see and hear baseball games being played at Nelson Hart Park. In fact, my initial interview with Melissa was actually held at Nelson Hart Park in the bleachers watching a game. Such a

setting reinforced the topic of conversation, bringing back memories of time spent at Nelson Hart Park as a child, playing baseball and going to the carnival.

Residents like Melissa and Brandy represent the perspectives, memories, and desires of the third and final group of St. James residents – the younger generation. This group is similar in composition to the group of older residents in that it is composed of mostly natives who lived in St. James during their childhood and most of their adult lives. One resident in this group lived in St. James sporadically during childhood, staying for a few weeks or a summer at a time before moving back permanently in high school, and another resident moved to St. James in her mid-twenties and had only lived there for two years at the time of the interview. As a group, these residents had rich experiences during their formative years. Because of the residents' younger age, the memories are fresh and contemporary with the St. James landscape today. Not only do the activities and perceptions of this age group allow for an exploration of the natural and social settings of St. James, but they also represent a look at what the future may hold for the town. Whether they are parents halfway into their careers or college students just out of high school, these residents have a long future in the town. The views of these and the other residents about the state and future of St. James will round out the exploration of the sense of place of the actual and metaphorical future generation of St. James.

### ***Where the Teenagers Are – The Landscape of Hanging Out***

Residents like Brandy and Melissa, who went to high school in St. James in the last twenty five years, were able to draw upon their wealth of experiences to create a vivid picture of the place as seen through the eyes of young people. For the teenage years,

much of the discussion centered on the high school and the places where teenagers would cruise in their cars and hang out with friends. John F. Hodge High School is a red brick building composed of two connected structures of different ages, but with numerous additions built over the years. The original two-story structure, which served as the junior high in my adolescence but has changed since the building of the middle school, faces Jefferson Street, where a war memorial and announcement marquee face the public driving by. Behind the original school is the more sprawling one-story high school with a parking lot behind it. The Episcopal Church and other school buildings, like the vocational agriculture building, are across from the school to the south. To the north lie the old firehouse and an old, unused church where kids would hang out on the wall of the entrance during lunch and smoke. There used to be an arcade and pool hall called Uncle Donnie's on that side where those kids would go for lunch, to smoke, and sometimes not return. During teenage years, the high school was the focal point of life. Hailey Espelkamp, who was a very active and exemplary student in high school, gave a response that I identified with from my own experiences fifteen years ago:

The high school itself holds a lot of memories. I was in band and choir, speech and drama. I spent a lot of after-school hours at school in the band room, and on the stage. Some in the choir. And a lot of early morning hours out on the band practice field marching, directing. I was drum major for three years. So I spent a lot of time there. And the football stadium. I mean, Friday night football games, halftime shows, some of the best times ever. (Espelkamp 2007)

Not surprisingly, memories of time spent outside of school, cruising and hanging out with friends, were even more prominent. The pattern has remained static in the past twenty five years: residents who were teenagers in the mid 1980s and residents who were fresh out of high school in the previous year gave similar depictions of what teenagers in

St. James do in their free time. Cruising the town and parking in public gathering spots is one of those timeless activities. Melissa Picard describes the typical cruising route for teenagers in her time, in the late 1980s:

We would gather there (the Stanley's IGA parking lot). You'd park and we would cruise the town, you'd go to the IGA parking lot, go through the parking lot, go back to the high school, and go around the high school, and then you'd go back to IGA, you'd just make that loop and honk at your friends. (Picard 2007)

Brandy Cooper agreed:

Just cruising town, going around the high school, going through the IGA parking lot, and then when they started putting convenience stores in, and then we just thought that was it. You could go buy food and cruise and eat. That's it, I tell you. We were cruising, and if we had alcohol, that was just it. (Cooper 2007a)

The parking lot of Stanley's IGA grocery store was the cruising headquarters for several generations. The lot is on the north side of town, surrounded by the Mobil gas station, the building containing the grocery store (later a Carson's Furniture store) and a laundry mat and an O'Reilly Automotive store, and the Ruby's Ice Cream structure. The loitering was either tolerated by the property owners, or the kids simply dealt with occasionally being run off by the police and eventually return to the lot. I learned from younger residents that the meeting place for teenagers has shifted from the old IGA parking lot to the Plaza (a public parking area along the railroad tracks) and to the McDonald's parking lot; apparently the police cracked down and ended the lot's role as a meeting place. Carson's had been closed for many years, and the building was damaged by a tornado in 2006. During the late summer of my research, the building was finally razed, though the other businesses and the parking lot remain.

The teenage experience in St. James also plays out in rural areas outside the city limits. Cruising and parking on the gravel back roads and gathering at popular bridges and riverbanks – with the purpose of socializing with friends, drinking, and pursuing romance – is prominent in the memories of teenage years. Popular rural destinations have been the pink bridge (a bridge that has had a pink color at different times in its history), Spook Hollow Road, Jump Ford, Cedar Ford, the old one-lane bridge, Woodson K. Woods, and many small low-water bridges and otherwise inconspicuous locations in the countryside around St. James. As Shane Tatus put it:

We hung out at a lot of low water bridges, creeks, I don't know why. Skip rocks. Seriously, there's really nothing to do. I mean, we'd pull up and just talk, socialize with friends, maybe drink beer or something, just fool around. A lot of little low water bridges on county roads around here. I mean, a lot of them just don't really have names, you know, they're just kind of local hangouts and stuff. (Tatus 2007b)

He added reasoning for hanging out in the country:

I think a lot of it's 'cause you're out of town, you don't have to worry about cops running you off. What are the chances that a county sheriff's deputy is going to roll up on you anyway, you know? It was just a way to be out of town, I guess, but really we were only a couple miles from town, so you could always come back into town and do whatever. (Tatus 2007b)

### ***Where the Kids Are – The Landscape of Childhood***

I met with Angela Kleiber in a Panera coffee shop/restaurant in Rolla after she got off work, even though she lives and works in St. James. We decided to meet at Panera because we could not think of a suitable public place to conduct an interview in St. James at that hour. Besides, she said she could do some shopping when she was in Rolla, anyway. I explored the latter phenomenon earlier in this paper, and the common

expression of a lack of things to do in St. James will be touched on in this section.

Angela is in her mid twenties; she moved to St. James when she was seven years old. As a teenager, Angela said she often uttered the lament common to rural high schoolers everywhere: “When I graduate, I’m getting out of this town.” And she did, going to college in Springfield for four years. A job offer in St. James brought her back upon graduation, but she again told herself that she would only stay and get trained in St. James, and would accept a transfer to another facility out of state when it was built. After living in St. James for a few months, however, she had a change of heart. She realized she liked getting together with her family, she liked the quiet charm, and she liked all the little things that there are to do, if one is open to them. So Angela stayed. Her reasons for liking St. James now seem to relate to the impression she gave of St. James from her childhood: a carefree life of simple pleasures, opportunities for fun in nature, and a sense of strong community and family love. Understanding the experiences residents had in St. James in their younger years contributes to understanding their sense of place. One’s environment during formative years is explored through interaction and impressions, and the mental maps that residents create as children carry over and influence their perception of the town as adults. Through childhood memories of residents like Angela, I will explore some more places that residents see as integral to the identity of St. James.

The St. James city park, along with the swimming pool and Lucy Wortham James Memorial Library on its grounds, were often mentioned in discussions of childhood memories. The park, owned and operated by the James Foundation, is 56 acres of playgrounds, forest, grass, ball fields, pavilions, and grills (*The James Foundation Homepage*). Fish-stocked Lake Scioto lies in the center of the park, and a trail leads

down a steep hillside into a wooded gully, in the land where the plateau housing St. James falls away into the karst topography of the Ozarks. The trail winds along a streambed through dense forest, almost jungle-like in the stifling summer humidity, first to a stepped rock formation called the “Giant’s Chair,” then to pools of water in pockets of a large flat rock on the ground, called alternately “Mitchell’s Hole” or “Indian Bathtub” by residents. Lesley Wallace described the park:

It’s a very beautiful place with the lake and the trails. I don’t think a lot of people anymore know about those trails that go back in behind to Mitchell’s Hole and the Giant’s Chair. Those are beautiful places to go to. I just love being able to be outdoors, and enjoying nature. (Wallace 2007)

Angela Kleiber discussed the Giant’s Chair and Mitchell’s Hole:

Oh, and we used to go down to the Giant’s Chair. There are those paths down there, and you can go to the Giant’s Chair or Mitchell’s Hole. We didn’t go down there as much, ‘cause that was super far and kind of scary, but we would go down to the Giant’s Chair, you know, get bored at the pool and take a walk. (Kleiber 2007)

Melissa Picard, when talking about time spent at the park as a child, displayed the idea that memories that create sense of place do not necessarily get passed on to others:

Yeah, just playing on the playground at the park. And, you know, I don’t think I’ve ever taken my kids to the Giant’s Chair or Mitchell’s Hole. Isn’t that horrible? I’ve got to do that. You forget about those things. (Picard 2007)

The swimming pool has played an important role in the summertime memories of many younger residents, serving as a center of summer social life for many children and teenagers. The pool facility, built in the early 1960s, has an Olympic pool, a diving pool, and a toddler pool. It would traditionally open when school let out in May, and would close when school resumed. During the summer of my research, however, two of the three pools were closed due to necessary maintenance that the James Foundation did not

have the funds to fix. The closure prompted a discussion in St. James that forced residents to assess the value of the pool to the community. The discussion also led to the formation of a citizen's committee to explore the options of raising funds to repair the pools or build a new facility. Melissa Picard expressed the importance of the pool, as well as the importance of imagination, in her younger years:

Going to the swimming pool. We used to go every day in the summer, and swimming lessons. But I don't really think we did a whole lot when we were little, you know? We stayed home most of the time, and just stayed around here. Riding bikes and playing at the pool, that's all I can remember really ever doing. We didn't have video games and we didn't have cartoons, so you just played all the time. (Picard 2007)

Brandy Cooper continued the thought:

We went to the pool a lot. Little kid all the way through my teenage years, we did. And we were stupid and put on baby oil, too, to get more. Then we'd really be walking around at night burnt. Before we drove, either we rode our bikes or Mom would drop us off at 1:00 and pick us up at 3:00 or 4:00 and come get us, and then we'd just be so tired that night. (Cooper 2007a)

And Angela Kleiber:

I used to go to the pool like every single day. My best friend would pretty much come over to my house every day and we would walk to the pool. We'd just walk right there across the tracks by the Delano office place there, and go straight down and go to the pool. We never went to the library, but we always went to the pool. (Kleiber 2007)

When I asked residents to tell me the places that they missed that they felt were particularly important for St. James, one place that seemed prominent in many people's minds was the movie theater. For perhaps twenty or thirty years, until the early 2000s, a movie theater stood downtown on Jefferson Street, the main north-south road through St. James. It closed and shortly after was demolished to make room for the parking lot of the newly built Phelps County Bank. Lesley Wallace said of the theater:

It was a very sad day when they tore the theater down. I know it needed repair, but it was a place for the kids to go. Meet their friends or just go and watch movies. (Wallace 2007)

Hailey Espelkamp said:

Maybe it wasn't the greatest movie theater in the world, but it gave especially kids something to go and do. And it was always fun. They showed one movie at a time, and maybe it had been out other places for awhile, but it was something to go do and it wasn't all that expensive and it was a lot of fun to have something like that here in town. (Espelkamp 2007)

Shane Tasmus also discussed the role of the theater as a socializing place for children, and especially young teenagers:

It was something I went to probably every Friday night, almost sometimes Saturday too. I'd even see the same movie twice, you know, just 'cause it was more of a social thing for a young teenager or a preteen, like eight to fourteen or whatever, 'til you discovered girls. Maybe even discovered them in the movie theater, but yeah, that is probably the biggest one, actually, now that I think about it. See, now it's been gone for so long that I almost forgot that it was there, you know? (Tasmus 2007b)

Many of the same people who lamented the loss of the movie theater expressed a feeling that there is not enough for people, especially children, to do in St. James. Residents expressed this out of concern for not only the children's entertainment, but as a concern that kids need more to do locally to keep them out of trouble. As with the explanations about people's shopping habits, the common concern is that children and teenagers usually have to go to Rolla to do activities that are not available in St. James.

As Dwight Payne explained:

I wish there was more for kids to do here. A lot of our kids have to, you know, if they want to go to the movies, or they want to do things like that or go out to eat besides some place like McDonald's and Burger King or Pizza Hut, they've got to go to Rolla and things like that. Rolla being so close makes it convenient, but on the other hand it would be nice if we had more of that stuff here that they could do where they wouldn't have to leave. (Payne 2007)

Lesley Wallace reiterated that sentiment:

Lack of things for the kids was always a big issue, especially when ours were growing up. You know, there's just not that much. I mean, there's the pool during the summer, and there's the rec center now, but I would love to see more things to keep the kids here, instead of going to Rolla or wherever. (Wallace 2007)

Nelson Hart Park is an activities park on the west end of town, between the railroad tracks and James Boulevard. It contains several baseball and soccer fields, outdoor basketball courts, a recreation center, a community hall, pavilions, a horseshoe pitching area, livestock barns, and a small outdoor dirt arena for demolition derbies and horse shows. Unlike the forested city park, Nelson Hart Park is open and mostly lacking trees; the dominant textures underfoot here are white gravel, fine baseball diamond dirt, mowed grass fields, straw in the livestock barn, and the concrete and tiled floors of the structures and buildings. Named after the recent longtime mayor, Nelson Hart Park is invariably a place known to children. They come to the recreation center to play basketball and foosball, to the Grape and Fall Festival carnival every September, and to the ball fields most every night during summer to take part in extensive ball games for all ages. These ball games on hot summer evenings are also a gathering place for adults, who come to not only watch their children play, but also to help coach and play in leagues themselves. St. James residents express pride for the James Foundation-operated city park and pool, but Nelson Hart Park seems to be a much stronger focal point of the community, expressed in the endless summer ball games, wedding receptions and other celebrations and events at the community hall, and the Grape and Fall Festival, the ultimate expression of St. James community.

One final place that stands out in the childhood memory of the St. James landscape is Ruby's ice cream parlor. Ruby's is a small, white, solitary building at the north edge of the old Stanley's parking lot, along Highway 68 at the north end of town. Its unremarkable presence on the landscape is eclipsed by its reputation to locals and travelers alike. Ruby's makes its own ice cream. It is only open during the summer season, but during that time, it is not uncommon for lines to form, and people sit on the few cement benches outside or line up sitting on the curb, licking ice cream cones. Walking into Ruby's on a hot summer afternoon, one is struck by the air conditioned coolness, the distinctive smell of ice cream, the sharp dinging sound the door makes when opened, and the colorful metal-framed chairs inside, reminiscent of a soda fountain style of the early twentieth century. Shane Tasus gave an example of the popularity of Ruby's locally and beyond:

Ruby's Ice Cream? I've been surprised. People that I've told I'm from St. James, they're like, "Ah, Ruby's Ice Cream." I've had many people say that, and I'm like, really, I didn't know it was such a hit, but I guess people stopped off the interstate to get gas and are like, hey, there's an ice cream place, and they've had it, and it is really, really good ice cream, you know? I was surprised, a few people I met in college in Columbia that were from St. Louis, Kansas City and stuff, and I said I'm from St. James, and they're like, oh, Ruby's Ice Cream. I'm like, really? You know that place? I mean, that's the last place I would think that someone would remember, or, you know, think of. I love Ruby's Ice Cream, being from here, I know it's good. (Tasus 2007b)

Brandy Cooper discussed a memory of Ruby's from her childhood. Here, Brandy mentions the owners of the Stanley's IGA grocery store, who were her neighbors as a child:

They owned a fireworks stand, and they put it on that property, and me and Melissa would go help them work in the fireworks stand. I remember Ruby's being there, and we would take whatever money we'd earned and usually go to Ruby's and buy ice cream with that. (Cooper 2007a)

Angela Kleiber and Brandy Cooper had good statements to close out this discussion of St. James through the eyes of children, reflecting how their experiences may now be changing in the twenty-first century:

We used to go down to Maramec Springs every so often and feed the fish and stuff. I still love to go down there. But as a kid, there's not a whole lot more that I really remember. We kind of entertained ourselves, you know. Roller skated up and down our street, and that type of thing. Stuff that you never see kids do anymore, really. (Kleiber 2007)

Oh, and just being able to ride your bike to the pool. Or there was a Benjamin Franklin, like a five and dime store where that discount store is there, across the railroad tracks, by the elevator. We would ride our bikes over there and they'd have all this penny and nickel candy. We'd ride there and buy candy. Just ride all over town, even when I was in high school, before I started driving, riding your bike all over the place was no big deal. Now you hardly ever see anybody. (Cooper 2007a)

### *The Natural Setting*

Jennifer Tasmus is an exception to the general trend of this age group; she grew up in Columbia, Missouri, and had only lived in St. James for less than two years when I interviewed her. Jennifer moved to St. James to join her boyfriend and eventual husband Shane in his childhood home outside St. James. Jennifer experienced culture shock, moving from a progressive small city to a rural town with different cultural attitudes. One thing that Jennifer has adored about living in St. James, however, is the presence of nature and the ability to have land and live away from others in the countryside. She expressed fondness for the privacy the country offers, to let family dogs free to roam, and the ability to have a garden to help supply her vegetarian diet. During the interview, Jennifer had to go outside to get laundry off the clothesline since rain was predicted to move in. As part of the back-to-nature turn in her life, Jennifer shared a love of attending

regional bluegrass concerts and the simple pleasure of tuning in to “A Prairie Home Companion” on the radio every Saturday night, comparing her life in the country to that of historic isolated homesteaders.

St. James’ natural setting – both its rural Missouri location and the presence of natural landscapes and flora in and around the town – was a notable theme in many residents’ interviews. People spoke of experiences on farms and in fields and forests in the country. Going to the many rivers in the region, like the Meramec, Gasconade, Bourbeuse, and many smaller branch streams, is a favorite pastime of many people. They go to the rivers to fish, go on canoe float trips, or just hang out on the sand or gravel banks and swim. Mary Higgins, an older resident, confirmed that this practice spans generations:

We’d go and swim in the Meramec River where they built that new bridge, I mean, what used to be a little bridge, and you could get to it and all and we’d go out and swim there. We also used to go to Stony Dell and Cool Brook, which was up on the other side of Rolla. We went up to those swimming pools a lot. A lot, I spent a lot of time at those two places. (Higgins 2007)

When asked what places she would take a visitor to St. James, Angela Kleiber had this to say about going to the rivers:

(Meramec Springs) or the river, you know, just taking them down to the river. You know, a lot of them have never experienced being able to set your chair up on the side of water, and just hang out and have a barbeque, and all that stuff. So that’s another... We still go on float trips all the time. That’s my favorite thing to do. (Kleiber 2007)

The group of younger residents I interviewed, unlike the older residents, included more people who lived in the countryside outside St. James for all or a part of their lives, rather than in town. Several memories described distinctions between life in the country and memories formed in town. Shane Tasus, especially, described country activities like

hunting, fishing, and playing in the woods, as well as memories of places he would go to in town, especially riding his bicycle into town in the summer to go to the pool or hang out with friends. Others described horseback riding along back roads, hauling hay, and chopping wood at their homes or the homes of their grandparents. Overall, several of these residents recounted memories of a slow and boring small-town life, by today's standards, but a lifestyle from which they were able to create fun. The idea of freedom and no demands was prevalent in discussions of childhood memories, and this idea often played out against a backdrop of some sort of natural setting.

The motto "Forest City of the Ozarks" is emblazoned upon the St. James flag. This primarily reflects the work done in the 1960s by the James Foundation to plant trees, mostly American sweet gums, all over town. The prominence of the now mature trees on the St. James landscape is another reflection of the natural setting, this time within the city limits. The large trees and the shade they offer are most striking in the vicinity of the city park and the old neighborhood by it, but many of the older, established parts of town have the trees. The trees in the park neighborhood have grown their roots to such an extent that many sidewalk segments in the area are thrust up at undulating angles, just waiting to be jumped on for a see-saw effect by a child walking to the library. Dianne Pierce said that she and her husband decided to settle in St. James over other neighboring towns because of the abundant trees. Bill Hutton best described the effect the trees create for St. James:

...actually, on the Boulevard, the trees were a part of the original landscape plan. It says in the documents that those trees that are there should always be replanted if they happen to be gone. But it always seemed like St. James was a town that had tree-lined streets. And that always helps to make a place look better. Even when you've got lower income people surviving in places, they've still got the green that makes

everything look a little less shabby than it could look anyway. But St. James does seem to have an advantage over a lot of towns in that they consciously planted trees lining the streets, and that always makes the town look a cut above other places. So I think that would probably be the most attractive part of the town, besides just the physicality of the town now, is with the trees. The green space of the town is a very pleasing look as you drive in. (Hutton 2007)

Angela Kleiber said of the trees:

There's just so many trees, and I think any community is just kind of pretty with trees, because there's so much shade and it just...looks friendly, I guess. There are trees on both sides of the street, and it's just shady and it's beautiful in the summertime when everything's green, and it's beautiful in the fall when everything's all different colors, and then it's beautiful in the wintertime with snow. (Kleiber 2007)

One commonly panned side effect of the sweet gum trees is their production of “gumballs,” the spike-covered hard fruit that turns brown and falls from the trees every autumn. Streets and yards become littered with gumballs, posing a risk to walking. People rake the gumballs along curbs, where the city picks them up, and tire-flattened gumballs are ever-present in the streets. Lesley Wallace spoke about the gumballs:

Probably one of the biggest complaints are the gumball trees. I mean, they're beautiful trees, but the gumballs are such a nuisance, and I'm amazed that more people...I think your mother broke her arm during the tornado? But it just amazes me that we haven't had more people injure ankles or fall and break arms on those things, because they're treacherous. When I was doing the door to door campaign, I didn't realize how horrible they are in certain areas. Trying to walk on those things. I just can't imagine an older person navigating them. (Wallace 2007)

Laura Read described the special meaning the trees in St. James hold for her, exemplifying the effect the natural setting has on St. James residents:

It's an oak tree right in the middle of the cemetery, and it's so big around you couldn't get your arms all the way around it. It's probably...it may be 200 years old, I don't know. But it's a picture of strength and many branches and shelter...some of the trees in St. James are beautiful and magnificent. But that's one of my favorite things is that big tree. I love to run through there. And it's so pretty because of the different trees and like

in the fall, those gumball trees are a pain in the butt, but their leaves are so pretty. They're beautiful when they start changing colors. I like the smell of them, too. The gumball trees, they have a certain smell. (Read 2007)

### *Vision of the Future*

I met Hailey Espelkamp to interview her at the McDonald's restaurant in St. James, which is near the I-44 interchange, on a late Friday afternoon. Hailey was nineteen years old, and was in St. James for the summer after completing her first year at Missouri State University. I had never met Hailey, had only called her after being referred to her, so I had to describe myself so we could find each other in the busy restaurant. Hailey was an exceptional student in high school, excelling in academics and extracurricular activities like band and choir. She was very confident and idealistic; I was impressed by her self-assuredness and her deep, insightful answers. I decided to go to a table outside the restaurant to interview Hailey, since I thought it would be quieter than the voices and beeping kitchen alarms inside. I was wrong, since the sounds of traffic, especially tractor-trailers entering and exiting the interstate to go to the Wal-Mart Distribution Center, and points beyond the St. James crossroads, were very jarring. Listening to Hailey speak, and watching and hearing the flurry of traffic, was symbolic of the theme of this final section of the discussion of residents' perceptions – a look at the future of St. James. Hailey wants to come back to St. James after graduation and live her life there. Young people like Hailey are the future of St. James, who will play a role in framing the town's identity in years to come. The traffic is also indicative of the future – passenger traffic carrying travelers, customers, and newcomers, and truck traffic carrying

commerce to and from St. James and points beyond. Will that traffic grow or decline, and what will Hailey's St. James look like? Only time will tell.

Various questions were posed that had residents contemplate how St. James may develop in the future. One of the more fruitful asked, "How do you think town planners or city leaders envision St. James?" The overall theme concerning how residents think city leaders envision St. James is the idea that the town wants to grow in population and commerce, but it also wants to preserve its small town qualities, a theme that is undoubtedly prevalent in small towns across the United States. Molly Griffin says this about St. James' goals from a planning perspective:

I think maintaining its quaintness and character, quality of life, small town feel, but would like additional retail and a focus on its controlled residential growth and improvements made to beautification and cleanliness of the town. (Griffin 2007)

Evan Fortune said this about growth and preservation:

I've noticed here more than anywhere else I've been, that they try to give it the older, small town look. They try to keep the appearance of how it started, and I think they'll continue to try to keep that. I don't think that they're so focused on growth that they'll lose their perspective on where they were from and how this all got started. I think they want to grow, but I think they'll grow with that in mind, instead of leaving it behind. (Fortune 2007)

Ron Franciosi had a realistic evaluation of the town's growth aspirations:

There's a certain element, and there always has been, and that's mainly the elderly, me and on older, they just as soon it be laid back. They don't need all this progress. That's why they're here, and they want to stay here until they die. But generally speaking, I don't think anybody in the younger age bracket does not want to see the town grow. There's reasons why it doesn't, where the only thing we got that would make it grow is I-44...And I think all subjects really do think that we want to grow. But so does this town, that town, and the other town. (Franciosi 2007)

Most residents said that they think city leaders and planners want St. James to grow, with the mindset that if a town's not growing, it's dying – there is no stasis. Residents think leaders appreciate the significance of St. James' location at a major highway intersection and between cities, but they also realize the hindrances that St. James' location so close to neighbors Rolla and Cuba create. They think leaders realize the need to keep up with neighboring towns in terms of economic development, although realization was late arriving. Leaders know that more industry and commerce (large-scale and small retail) are needed to maintain growth in the region. Residents cite gains (the building of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center and the expansion of other companies) and losses (the closing of the Briggs & Stratton plant between St. James and Rolla). Residents say they know that leaders want more commercial development on land adjacent to I-44, visualizing strips of businesses along outer roads on both sides of the interstate, but blame landowners for not selling their land to interested developers. Some residents think a city manager would be a boon for town growth, streamlining operations between the mayor, city council, and Chamber of Commerce. The admittedly “visionary” views of Hailey Espelkamp summarize attitudes about growth:

I'd love to see more come in here. I think that most people would, too, like to see businesses come in...I think we need more business, because we're growing residentially, but our job opportunities aren't growing, and so people are having to go find work other places and drive, and I'd love to see St. James be able to stand by itself a little bit more than it is now. (Espelkamp 2007)

Equally important to most residents is the belief that their leaders see preservation of small town qualities and historic identity as important as growth. Safety, cleanliness, and beauty should not be forsaken at the expense of growth. Most residents praise the efforts of the city, the Chamber of Commerce, and private groups like Beautify St. James

in maintaining and improving the aesthetics of, mainly, the downtown area, but also the town at large. Angela Kleiber sees a link between beautification and growth:

I think they're trying to make it just more attractive for people, maybe to bring in some people from other towns, or from St. Louis, who are tired of the city. You come here and buy this beautiful plot of land and this beautiful house. I do believe that they're trying to make it more attractive to bring people in, but I don't know what they're expecting the finished product to be. (Kleiber 2007)

Residents also believe that leaders recognize the importance of maintaining historic sites and qualities to attract tourism, seen as a vital element in the St. James economy. The wineries in the St. James area are the primary component of the St. James tourism industry, according to the Tourist Information Center. As discussed in the last chapter, there are four working wineries in the St. James area and a few more in the greater surrounding region closer to other towns. Two of them have their stores and tasting rooms along I-44, visible to the passing traffic. St. James is known to the greater world most often for its vineyards and wineries. Regarding St. James' notoriety because of its wineries, Hailey Espelkamp expressed a common occurrence for St. James residents:

We have several wineries, and really well-known. I'll go places on vacation, go to Branson, I go to school in Springfield, you know, they ask me there, every time, you know, "Where are you from?" "St. James." "Oh, that's the place with all those wineries." "Yes, yes we are." (Espelkamp 2007)

Ruth Forest, who used to work as the St. James tourism director, emphasized the importance of the wineries to the economic health of the town:

If it wasn't for our wineries...the wineries, when I was at the Tourist Center, the wineries were the draw. That's what got people stopped. And my contention was, you get them stopped for something, and you dang well better help your wineries out as much as you can, because St. James

Winery has brought us tax income like you wouldn't believe. (Forest 2007)

Although the wineries draw traffic to St. James to buy their wine, and although St. James has a historical connection with the viticulture industry as part of its identity, the wineries are not as intricately linked with the community as other places. The lower Missouri River town of Hermann is also known for its wineries. Their wineries, however, are more conducive to lingering visits, with drinking areas next to the vineyards and Oktoberfest activities linking the wineries with the community. Though St. James has a viticulture heritage, its wineries are relatively new, and geared towards wine sales to travelers, rather than enjoying wine in the local setting. Molly Griffin described it nicely:

I think that('s) a connection that we don't have, when I look at Hermann, for example. I work a lot with Hermann and have in the past, and I would say if I lived there, that the wineries were part of the story of Hermann, part of the character of Hermann or whatever, because, again, they've got the German culture, but that's all integrated in the wineries and there's a strong connection with the community. I don't get that same sense in St. James, and I think we've been trying to develop that, work towards that, but it's really like two...an industry that just happens to be located in St. James. (Griffin 2007)

One final topic in this reflection on the future of St. James is the question of whether St. James can grow into a larger town because of its site and situation. As mentioned before, St. James has location advantages: at the crossroads of I-44 and Highway 68; equidistant between St. Louis, Springfield, Jefferson City and Columbia; and an entry point for travelers to the Ozarks and Lake of the Ozarks regions. However, St. James is located along I-44 halfway between the much-larger town of Rolla (population approximately 16,300) and the slightly smaller town of Cuba (population approximately 3,200). While some residents are confident that St. James can grow on its own regardless of the presence of these other towns, many feel that St. James lives in the

shadow of Rolla and will always be held back in its development because of it. These residents also feel that Cuba is picking at the other end – attracting industries and retail businesses ahead of St. James, leaving little demand for more development in the region. Some residents feel that St. James was slow to progress and actively pursue industry attraction, that satisfaction with the status quo prevailed for a long time, and so St. James is left with too little, too late. Evan Fortune put it this way:

I think a lot of people in the county still look at Rolla or that area as being a first choice to go to because of their size and availability of different products and stuff they have versus what we have available. I think, if there's anything I don't like, it's the fact that we're just not yet big enough to draw enough to be a little bit more competitive with Rolla. Even though I don't think we hurt each other so much, they are still close enough that if you don't live right here in St. James, and you're driving anyway, well why don't you drive to Rolla where everything is versus coming here and getting part of it and then going to Rolla anyway. (Fortune 2007)

Other people don't see St. James' lack of growth potential as a bad thing. Laura Read proposed that St. James and Rolla are just where they should be in relation to each other, that there is nothing wrong with St. James being the size it is:

St. James is, unless we were to get the same things they have, we would never grow to do the same things that they do as far as having job opportunities. I think it could be both, because there's some people that they want all the conveniences and all those opportunities there, but they don't want to live there, so they live here. Lots of people from St. James drive to Rolla. But then on the flip side of that, maybe it does hinder us a little bit in some ways, because people from St. James end up maybe going to Wal-Mart because it's a little more affordable. If you compare prices with Country Mart to Wal-Mart, sometimes there's no comparison. It makes sense to go to Wal-Mart. In that way, maybe, it's a shadow over us. But again, we're a small town, and I think it just becomes a matter of people do what suits them and fits them. I never really saw them as a threat or anything like that. It's just we kind of coexist. (Read 2007)

I, like several St. James residents I talked to, always perceived Cuba, east of St. James on I-44, as a smaller, poorer, less developed town. But in the past decade, Cuba

has attracted a lot of industrial and commercial jobs, and they have improved the look of their town. This seemed to happen while St. James stood still. When residents talk about Cuba now, they remark on its turnaround and comment on how if St. James is not careful, it will be passed by not only by Cuba, but other small towns in the region that work to develop. Linda Solaro expressed dual viewpoints on this topic of Cuba's resurgence:

Well, I think we were a little behind than Cuba because, for some reason years ago, they had this big developmental grant and they really did a lot. They have lots of murals, lots of murals that are painted, you know, historical scenes. And it's a neat...and they've got a lot of industrial growth too. And sometimes I think St. James...that's one of their faults, or that's been a fault, or maybe not a fault, but that's been a disadvantage, because I've always gotten the impression that we want to preserve our small town, and yes you do, but you still have to have some growth just to maintain that, and I think that they've tried to shy away from different things coming to our town before. Different businesses coming to our town, restaurants coming to our area, just because they want to keep that small town...and then, too, they don't want to drive the local out of business.

I know Cuba was pretty progressive, and I kind of envy that a little bit. But then having lived here 32 years now, you know, I don't want to commercialize our town too much. You want people to come in, but when people come in, you also have a lot of riff raff coming along with it, you know. And the older I get, the more conservative I am, and the more...I'm becoming like those older people when I first moved here, and I thought, "Why wouldn't we want to have that restaurant there?" I think the older you get the more you take ownership in it. (Solaro 2007)

## **Addendum – A Critical View of St. James**

### ***Negative Perceptions***

Sense of place does not just consist of positive perceptions. The negative feelings and opinions one holds about the environment also contribute to the person's perception of the place. At this point, I will discuss some of these negative perceptions and opinions. In each interview, I asked residents what they do not like about St. James, but negative

critiques also surfaced during discussions of other topics as well. Comments in this area were varied, but the most common responses can be grouped into a few common themes. Some of these themes are discussed in other sections; I will discuss three remaining themes in detail below.

Three lesser complaints are worth mentioning first. First, some residents felt St. James needs more commercial development. Specifically, they referred to retail stores and especially another grocery store that could rival the almost universally maligned Country Mart. Residents also said that St. James needs more motels (a lodging tax funds the Tourist Information Center) to capture interstate traffic, and more restaurants for both locals and travelers. Second, some people said that they do not like that some groups are averse to change or progress, specifically in reference to community action projects or the behavior of landowners when commercial developers want to buy. Finally, a few residents said that they like St. James, but they do not like the conservative attitudes and demonstrations of closed-mindedness they observe in public and on the landscape.

Several residents expressed their displeasure with perceptions of town deterioration and lesser status. While sympathizing with the plight of the less fortunate, some residents say that they do not like that St. James is, overall, a poor community that needs progress. Many people cited outward signs of poverty like run-down houses, trailers, and unkempt and cluttered yards. Abandoned buildings and graffiti were other vital cues. Some residents lamented the expansion of rental properties into neighborhoods, associating them with declining neighborhood quality, displays of disturbances and disorderly conduct, and more frequent police responses. Ruth Forest spoke of St. James as always being a rather poor town, at least on the part the general

population:

I always wondered why St. James didn't have big homes. If you've traveled at all, you'd know some small towns are just loaded with...but we never had money here. Certain people had money, it seemed like, and others didn't. (Forest 2007)

Gladys Aldridge commented on the current state of poverty in St. James:

I just notice at school, you're getting a lot of low income people that are moving in. I'm not sure why, and I'm not sure what they're doing, I just know you're finding more people having so many needs that are moving into the communities. We've always had a certain group, I mean we're definitely not a wealthy community, but it seems like we're getting...there's so many people, families that are moving in that have so many needs, and I don't know what's bringing them and how they are surviving that are here. (Aldridge 2007)

Still on the theme of quality, a few residents blame the lack of high quality housing growth on the lack of open, developable land within the city limits, leaving older and smaller houses in the city paying notoriously low property taxes. Infrastructural improvements are also seen as needed for sidewalks and street paving, for example. The aging high school needs improvements, and St. James needs another elementary school to supplement the existing one.

Several residents (especially if they have children) deplored the prevalence of drugs, especially crystal methamphetamine, in St. James over the past ten or twenty years. Along that line, some residents are not satisfied with the amount of law enforcement in St. James, though the residents blame low police salaries and the subsequent high turnover on poor funding by the city and not on the work of the officers, whom they praise.

Melissa Picard expressed a common perspective of a parent:

When our friends from Illinois were thinking about moving down here, because Crystal Lake is just huge and the high schools are huge and they just have a lot of trouble, and then I'm thinking, ok, we have our problems, you know, we have drugs, lots of drug problems, and just as the kids get

older it's just scary thinking about them getting older and the things that they're exposed to, and we have a bad meth problem in St. James. (Picard 2007)

Brandy Cooper provided the view of someone who is familiar with St. James law enforcement:

And of course knowing Evan, I know that, like, the amount of crime that goes on, and drugs, they do not have enough police officers to keep all of that under control, really. (Cooper 2007a)

Finally, negative perceptions were conveyed when I asked residents if they consider any parts of the town as “bad.” The general feeling among the residents is that there are not many areas in St. James that they would consider ‘bad’; there are, rather, scattered sites in and outside of town that are run-down but which are interspersed with better-looking places. When discussing ‘bad’ areas, residents refer to aesthetics and poverty rather than crime. Everyone agrees that there are no parts of town that they would be afraid to visit at night for fear of crime. Common descriptions of bad areas in St. James include scattered eyesores; junk outside the house; blighted areas; places needing work; or that cops are seen there often. Several residents refer sympathetically to the bad areas as places where the less fortunate people with less economic means must live, and they are more run-down possibly because the people who live there cannot afford the maintenance. Bad areas are also often described as being rental properties and older – either older structures or in older parts of town.

The site most associated with the “bad” part of town is a trailer park on West James Boulevard, between the First Church of God and the railroad tracks. Residents identify it as such due to a combination of dilapidated trailers, cluttered “junk” spilling across many of the yards, and the perception of an unsafe place due to the frequent police

presence. Other places include the houses in the area surrounding that trailer park; houses in an area along East James Boulevard; apartments on Parker Lane; the neighborhood behind Delano's gas station; the neighborhood around Casey's convenience store; and a trailer park behind the St. James Winery.

### *Pierce's Extraordinary Dissent*

Dianne Pierce is unique among the residents I interviewed. Actively involved in many local organizations, Dianne moved to St. James from out of state in 2000 to accompany her husband on a new job. Someone had told me that Dianne's husband might be a good person to interview, so I called the house in early August to check on it. He was working, but Dianne said she would like to be interviewed. I had never met or heard about Dianne before, and I met her at James Memorial Library to interview her. I only had an hour until the library closed, and Dianne filled up much of that time with barely a pause. I merely asked my questions and let her elaborate in any direction she wished. As a result, I received a lot of original commentary about life in St. James. Dianne, however, was also incredibly critical. She had positive comments about people and places, but had strong criticisms about people's attitudes, the vision of the town, and the town's structure, drawn from her personal interaction with St. James and its citizens. Since her critique was so much stronger than anyone else, I felt an analysis of her comments by itself would provide an excellent dissenting voice to counter the generally positive feelings of most other residents I interviewed.

Dianne's critiques can be broken down into three topics, ranging from broad to particular. The smallest in scope is Dianne's negative experiences in her everyday life:

poor customer service in banks for example, or her poor impression of the school's openness to ideas and parental involvement. In addition, Dianne said that overall communication of news and events in St. James is poor, especially for newcomers who do not know where places are.

Dianne's second criticism is the town's failure to attract and retain commercial businesses. Rolla and Cuba are surpassing St. James in terms of type and quantity of businesses attracted. Dianne especially hated to see most of the antiques shops close. She saw them as superbly complementing the wineries and bed and breakfasts, and their closing is a blow to tourism appeal in the town. Dianne felt that St. James needs an economic development director to guide its commercial economy into a competitive future.

Dianne's major criticism is that it does not progress and is averse to change. She described the town as being stuck in the 1960s, both in look and attitude. In that respect, she means that it is not progressive, and the town reflects the development that occurred because James Foundation contributions peaked in the 1960s. Dianne is one of the strongest critics of St. James' dependence on and expectations of the James Foundation. She said that the town has an entitlement mentality that has crippled it through support provided by the James Foundation for decades. People do not appreciate the contributions and benefits of the James Foundation, and they blame it for not doing as much as it used to. Dianne said the local James Foundation gets shortchanged because of decreasing support from the New York Community Trust. As an example, Dianne cited the James Memorial Library. Many residents think the library is excellent for a small town, but Dianne looks at it and sees an old building from the 1960s, and she has seen

other small towns with better stocked and equipped libraries in modern facilities, something that she thinks could happen in St. James with more community organizing beyond relying on the James Foundation.

Similarly, Dianne has strong feelings that most people of St. James have no desire to change. She stated, “I would say that, as a whole, the people tend to see the town maybe rosier than it really is, and more affluent than it really is, and more historic than it really is” (Pierce 2007). People feel that the town is good enough, with the mentality that if it was good enough for their parents and for them, it is good enough for their children. One specific example she gave was her perception of the community hall in Nelson Hart Park:

The community center at Nelson Hart Park I think desperately needs some attention, and nobody sees that...you go to this thing and you're kind of going, eww. The bathroom looks like something that would be in a campground. The curtains hanging off the stage are not hanging very well, they don't open and shut any more. The kitchen's not usable for anything of any size, really. But it was good enough for mom and dad, it's good enough for me. (Pierce 2007)

Because of the reluctance to change, her experience with community groups has shown her that the people of St. James like to conduct studies, but nothing happens from them. Dianne expressed this in the interview:

This town is really big on talk and no action. We have lots and lots and lots of good ideas, but nobody who really wants to do them. They somehow think if they have the idea it's just going to happen.

I think it's great that there's a lot of people here that have a lot of pride in the town, but it doesn't always follow, like I said, they have a lot of good ideas, it doesn't always follow through with action. (Pierce 2007)

Dianne argued that times change, things deteriorate, and so the town's approaches and solutions to problems need to adapt to remedy them. She stated that more grassroots

organizations should devote time to fix problems like the broken swimming pool and infrastructure improvements, and maybe form a Friends of the Library to update the library, and there needs to be more collaboration between the city and the county or Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla to solve problems from a regional, rather than local, perspective.

## **Conclusion**

The topics that I examined in this chapter, and the outline that I used to frame the discussion, most effectively convey the information that the residents offered in their interviews about St. James. The presentation I used captures the major themes presented by the diverse residents, with their assorted backgrounds and perspectives. The outline used in the discussion also maintains intimacy with the interview subjects as unique people, profiling selected individuals to convey the experience of speaking to them about their personal relationship with St. James, within the St. James setting. The presentation style also allows a virtual tour of the places in St. James that residents see as most important to them in their lived experiences.

Many themes from the interviews were not addressed in this chapter, due to the sheer abundance of information that could be gleaned from the rich interview texts. The completely untouched information from the interviews, as well as different aspects and approaches towards the topics I did discuss, could be used in future research of sense of place in St. James or of themes about the rural Midwest in general. In this chapter's discussion, I also referenced the words and lives of some of the interview subjects more than others. This is not meant to lessen the importance of the less-referenced residents.

Some residents' words and lives simply better explained the themes of the study within the context of the framework I used to present the results. The information I obtained from all of the residents I interviewed influenced my overall understanding of individuals' sense of place in St. James.

This discussion portrayed St. James as a landscape of memory. The town was explored through the memories of individuals, which were then brought together to discuss the individual variations of common themes in the collective landscape. Through the individual interviews, St. James is framed through the lens of personal memory and perception. St. James exists in space on the physical landscape, but St. James as a place, with meaning, exists in the minds of those who interact with it. St. James as a place only takes on meaning through the memories of the lived experiences that occur in it. In the end, St. James is a place that exists on a map, but more importantly, it is a place constructed through the individual and collective experiences of many generations.

To contrast with the point of the previous chapter, sense of place of St. James, Missouri, is derived from highly unique perceptions formed from individual lived experiences. This collection of layers of personal lived experience differs from the public face of the dominant vision of St. James. St. James is more complex than the common, public narrative of St. James as represented by a legacy of iron, wine, and a woman named Lucy Wortham James.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Reflexivity**

This discussion has explored St. James through the perceptions of some of its residents. As the investigator, I let the information I collected from the residents drive the discussion. The focused themes of the discussion were chosen based on their prevalence or strength in the interviews. However, I must address the potential influence my reflexivity had on this ethnographic research. I am a native of St. James. I lived there from my birth until I was seventeen years old, and then for occasional periods of a few weeks or months at a time after that until 2003. I went to school in St. James, and my parents and other family members still live there. Personally, and through my family and friend connections, I am still familiar with St. James and part of the community. In that sense I am still an insider in the St. James community.

As such, I studied a place that was the environment in my formative childhood years, a place that has a particular identity to me that was influenced by my own experiences as an insider living there. But the St. James of my childhood has changed, at least in my mind. I often felt like an outside investigator while conducting my research; my values, expectations, and mannerisms now differ from St. James locals, and I am an insider only on the surface, due to my name and knowing a handful of local contacts that could bring me into the wider community. My partial insider status influenced the design of the research: with choosing a community to study; planning the methods that would prove most successful by thinking about how my insider status could maximize contacts and access information; and potentially by influencing how I worded my questions to

residents, since I have my own intimate perception of the town and which places are important to me. I utilized my contacts and reputation (personal and family) in the town during the implementation of the research and my partial insider status eased the opening of several doors during the course of the research. My simultaneous inside and outside perspective as the researcher adds an element to be considered along with the intended subject of the study.

I took some methodological measures to minimize my subjective influence on the research. The free elicitation interviews I conducted with a few town residents before I began the recorded, semi-structured interviews were meant to provide me with a description of the town through the residents' eyes. This allowed me to create interview questions using the descriptions and terminology of St. James that the residents use and without the sole interpretation of my personal experiences in the town. In addition, my attitude towards my research participants was what England (1994, 82) calls "supplication" – seeking reciprocal relationships based on empathy and mutual respect, and acknowledging reliance on the research subject to provide the researcher with the desired knowledge and insight. This attitude, rather than the researcher practicing intimidation or self-promotion, placed more power with the research participant, thus lessening another potential avenue for my subjectivity in the research to enter the design.

In her reflection on reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research, Kim England suggests that reflexivity – the "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (ibid.) – is crucial to the conduct of fieldwork: it can lead to new insights about the research question; it allows the researcher to be more open to challenges posed on their theoretical positions; and it

requires careful consideration of the consequences of the interactions with participants. Indeed, England asserts that “research is never complete until it includes an understanding of the active role of the analyst’s *self* which is exercised throughout the research process” (ibid., 84). She sees fieldwork as a dialogical process in which the research is structured by both the researcher and the person being researched. In this mutually-reinforced situation, my reflexivity in the St. James research is not a hindrance to objectivity, but rather an additional layer of information that contributes to a sense of place study.

England also discusses the effect a researcher’s biography has on fieldwork, another issue that is part of my reflexivity in St. James. A researcher is positioned by age, gender, race, authority, and biography, all of which may inhibit or enable certain research insights in the field. My biography as an insider in the community and as a person without tremendous authority (a mere graduate student instead of a distinguished professor) possibly allowed me greater access to the information I sought, and that is something to celebrate rather than deride in qualitative research. England says that:

We do not conduct fieldwork on the unmediated world of the researched, but on the world *between* ourselves and the researched. At the same time this “betweenness” is shaped by the researcher’s biography, which filters the “data” and our perceptions and interpretations of the fieldwork experience...What I will be studying is a world that is already interpreted by people who are living their lives in it and my research would be an account of the “betweenness” of their world and mine. (England 1994, 86)

Whatever can be done to come closer within the “betweenness” to the researched people’s own lives in a sense of place study is good, and reflexivity of my own experience in St. James brings me closer to their lived reality than any purely objective research would.

## **Cultural Memory**

The literature on memory in the landscape discusses social, or cultural, memory, as opposed to individual memories. Cultural memory is the collective memory of a community built and sustained through performances, memorials, narratives, and symbols on the landscape. Cultural memory can be manipulated, consciously or not, by the forces that determine which performances, memorials, and landscape artifacts should be present that form cultural memory. In this way, those who hold power in a community can direct members' collective memory in a certain direction, forming group identity and attitudes towards the landscape.

In St. James forces work to construct cultural memory. The expressions of the official vision discussed in this thesis are a strong creator of cultural memory. The local history taught in school and written on the landscape create a strong collective understanding of St. James' past. Visitors to Maramec Spring Park see the remnants of the old iron works, the foundations of old cabins, and the performance of nineteenth-century reenactment and develop a collective sense of the unique founding of the town and what life was like for their predecessors as St. James residents. The legend of Lucy James is perpetuated through narrative accounts and through the display of her visage and artifacts across town. The role of grapes and wine as part of St. James identity are reinforced by the presence of wineries and vineyards on the physical landscape, the St. James name displayed on wine labels sold statewide, and the St. James name on wine labels, and the use of grapes on signs and as the subject of a festival. In addition, the planning documents reinforce and perpetuate the values that a small group of involved

citizens think should represent St. James, and these values are translated into a common, collective memory of how St. James has been defined in the past and how it should be defined in the future. The words and decisions of the town's leaders persuade resident perception and cause changes on the landscape that influence how future residents will see the resulting cultural memory. And places like the Tourist Information Center, City Hall and the James Foundation form perceptions of St. James and determine its makeup, influencing cultural memory.

In her article *Ramona Memories: Fiction, Tourist Practices, and Placing the Past in Southern California* (2003), Dydia DeLyser discussed a "new social memory" of Southern California, a memory practiced by tourists and locals alike, promoted by tourism and local boosters and producing a landscape that was both profitable and meaningful for the local residents (886). Her example involved sites associated with a fictional character from a novel. Although the people and events celebrated in St. James' cultural memory were real, the past as it is presented and celebrated may not be a completely accurate portrayal. This is irrelevant, however, because the cultural memory of St. James' past as it is understood by residents and tourists is meaningful to them. St. James residents take pride in their version of St. James history and readily grasp the people and events in their interpretation to create a unique identity. Local businesses also "sell" the interpreted cultural memory to tourists, who buy into the authenticity created by the local residents. The true history and heritage and the elements constructed around them through legend or modification for convenience become mutually constitutive as a new cultural memory that is visible on the landscape and accepted as meaningful truth by both residents and visitors.

### **The Author's Lived Experience in St. James – A Thought for Future Research**

In the above section about reflexivity, I mentioned that I grew up in St. James, lived there until I was seventeen years old, and have occasionally visited the town and maintained ties with current residents since. I discussed the potential influence this might have had on the research and the ways I tried to mitigate any effects of my subjectivity. Beyond that, my history in St. James was not a focus of the research. My familiarity with the town was undoubtedly expressed in the prose of the thesis, but it was only in the language I used to convey the findings of my participant observation and my interviews with residents.

Another direction I could have pursued in this thesis was an exploration of my autobiographical lived experience in St. James. I could have recounted my life growing up in St. James, and in so doing I could have presented my perception of what the St. James landscape looks like. I could have identified the places that stand out in my perception of the landscape and ascribed meaning to those places in town that were most important in my life. This personal account could have served as the first chapter of the thesis, introducing St. James to the reader through my experience before then breaking down its meaning by positions of power and through the lived experience of other residents. This personal analysis, besides making the overall narrative more interesting, would have added another dimension to exploring sense of place and my reflexivity. The additional layer of meaning might have provided a more thorough understanding of what sense of place in St. James entails.

## **Small Towns Today**

This research offered an opportunity to see, from the inside, what life inside a small Midwestern town in the early twentieth century is like. To analyze that, I will examine the residents' many perceived landscapes of meaning and their overall sense of place below. First, however, I will compare the St. James experience today, gathered through my own observations and those of residents, with some of the descriptions of small town life offered in academic and popular literature throughout the twentieth century. By comparing the key issues of small town life presented in these works to my modern case study, I will point out what has changed and what has remained consistent in small town structure and character.

The assorted sociological case studies from the first two-thirds of the twentieth century (Lynd & Lynd 1929, 1937; Withers 1945; Gallaher 1961; Blumenthal 1932; Williams 1906; Vidich & Bensman 1968) were ambitious attempts to microscopically and deeply examine small-town society. A more recent similar study by William Least Heat-Moon (1991) conducted what he termed a "deep map" study of Chase County, Kansas that was more geographical than the others. The early sociological case studies could prove to be very valuable to understanding the small town situation if they were reproduced today. Small town culture, society, economy, and politics have changed so much since the original studies were written that they no longer serve as a useful description of small town life except for historical comparison. Based on my research, certain cultural traits and landscape features would remain true in the study sites today as in the time of the original research, but the progression of time would force many areas of the research to be updated or eliminated completely. Chapters like "What Middletown

does to Get its Living,” “Inventions Remaking Leisure” (Lynd & Lynd 1929), “Youth: Flaming and Otherwise” (Blumenthal 1932), and “Loafing and Gossip Groups” (Withers 1945) would undoubtedly need to be re-examined and updated or completely redone. A contemporary study conducted in the same method as these earlier studies would be a valuable contribution to understanding small town society.

Sinclair Lewis’ *Main Street* (1920), although a work of fiction, presented a very strong critique of small town society and capitalism in early twentieth century Minnesota. In the almost ninety years since its publishing, some of the characteristics it describes have remained the same, but Lewis’ cynicism about small town attitudes does not fully reflect modern small towns, at least my case study of St. James. Based on the residents’ descriptions, life in St. James does not seem nearly as oppressive as that experienced by Carol Milford in the novel. The residents who moved to St. James from cities did not express quite the dismay felt by Carol upon moving to the small town. Although moral order is still informally enforced through peer pressure and the prominence of religion in town descriptions and community planning, modern technology and more relaxed societal attitudes have allowed people to live comfortably in a small town while having options to privately pursue interests without public judgment. Although clannish social behavior by some people in St. James keeps groups inward-focused and insular, one’s role in the community structure is less vital for one’s success in life, so exclusion from established circles is less damaging. Finally, although movements for change are still challenged by some community members, organized groups that advocate progressive improvements are able to freely work towards their goals, which are often welcomed by the community at large.

In 1952, geographer J. B. Jackson wrote an article in the journal *Landscape* (Jackson 1952) that described the history and layout of a small town on the southern Great Plains that was a fictional archetype of any number of towns of the American Midwest in the 1950s. Jackson described the features that repeated themselves all over the Midwest: a grid street plan centered on the courthouse square and with no regard for topography; the downtown encircling the courthouse square as the center of the county's commercial and civic life; upper class, lower class, and industrial sections of town; a flurry of activity on Saturdays, fueled by farmers coming to town to transact business and socialize; the prevalence of locally-owned stores; a willingness to break with the past amid post-War calls for improvements to attract varied businesses and tourism; a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding agricultural countryside; a fear of losing community identity; and a lack of cultural or artistic value outside of the downtown area. The personal and historical accounts of St. James' post-War era reflect many of these qualities, except the lack of a courthouse square marking the center of town (the railroad tracks substituted in this role). Many changes to these qualities occurred over the fifty years in St. James, and presumably to other small American towns like it. Commercial activity is no longer centered downtown and pedestrian-based, but is diffused across town, especially near the interstate highway, and indeed the county region and is largely automobile-based. Chain stores and services have mostly replaced purely local businesses. Changes in the nature of agriculture mean that the link between the town and the agricultural hinterland is largely gone, and the busy Saturday market day is no more. Finally, St. James still sees a need to maintain its identity in the face of constant pressures to change, but it has also learned how to market its identity for tourism and commerce.

Peirce Lewis (1972) chronicled the rise and decline of a small town in Pennsylvania, claiming that its experience is similar to any given small town in America. Lewis used the town's situation in 1972 as a bellwether for the state of small towns in America, which many people were claiming was on a slow path towards irrelevance and death. St. James shared several traits with Bellefonte, the site of the research. Some of the residents in my study lamented the loss of a more glorious and prosperous town past, although St. James did not have quite a precipitous rise and fall as Bellefonte. Both towns live in the shadow of a larger town that serves as the regional center: St. James has long been dwarfed by Rolla, and Bellefonte was quickly eclipsed by nearby State College after World War II. St. James, like Bellefonte, had past difficulties adapting to changes and progress, as well as past difficulties with preserving its structural heritage on the landscape. In contrast to Lewis' bleak assessment of the future of small towns in America, my research has shown that small towns (at least those blessed with certain advantages) do play a role in modern American society. Although accounts say that St. James showed signs of dying in the 1970s, like Lewis' town, that is not the case anymore. Its location at a strategic intersection with Interstate 44, and the placement of a Wal-Mart distribution center in the past decade, has strengthened St. James' involvement in the world economy. Countering one of Lewis' assessments, my research shows that small towns no longer have to be cultural backwaters; the postmodern era has provided access that makes small towns as much an equal part of popular culture and affairs as cities, even while conservative attitudes remain dominant on the rural landscape. Most contrary to Lewis' cynical conclusions are many St. James residents' optimistic attitudes about the town's prospects for the future and their happiness and satisfaction with the quality of life

St. James offers. Prospering small towns like St. James are no longer demoralized, dying communities reliving their glory days. They are attractive places to live, and have come full circle to once again be the central desired residential pattern in the American experience.

A final juxtaposition that I will make between St. James and small town literature involves Marsh's (1987) analysis of the relationship between the physical support a landscape provides for the future (means) and the intangible rewards a landscape offers based on its past (meaning). Marsh discusses this concept in the context of declining coal-mining towns of Pennsylvania, which he asserts survive because of strong meaning built from a difficult, community-bonding past in spite of scant means for community survival in the future. As Marsh concluded, "the meaning of place from its history and the means within the place for its future – have different origins and can have entirely separate manifestations, and yet they draw each other along. It is the lag between the two kinds of changes that can be most destructive" (351). Other declining places in the United States besides coal-mining towns – Great Plains farm towns, Rust Belt factory towns, inner cities – experience this growing lag between the strong meaning associated with the place due to generations of lived experience and the failing means to guarantee continued survival of the community. Other places, such as booming suburbs and tourist resort towns, experience the opposite lag – places with sufficient means to provide for future prosperity, but with very little meaning, as a result of weak place attachment, to create a viable community. St. James is in the fortunate position to have both strong meaning for the community based on its shared past experiences in the place, as well as sufficient means to maintain the survival of the community into the future. Although the

town started as a support for a mining operation that failed, it survived because various means were attained or presented themselves: agricultural market with railroad access; monetary support from a charitable trust; location on transportation routes and intersections; and tourism, which capitalizes on part of the very meaning that helps sustain the town.

### **The Multiple Landscapes of St. James**

My research shows that there is not a single landscape that can be identified as the St. James landscape. There is, of course, the physical landscape – the streets, trees, houses, stores, and utility networks – that occupies the space that is delineated as the City of St. James on the Earth. Without humans, however, there would be no assessment of what the landscape is and what it means. There is no point studying the meaning of landscapes without the presence of the highly individual creatures who create that meaning.

The features that stand out on the landscape to one person or group of people may be invisible or inconsequential to another, creating unique collections of places and perceptions that form particular landscapes. Because of that, multiple landscapes exist, which can be layered atop one another to create a collective sense of the St. James landscape. These individual landscapes could be mapped to show the landscape as perceived by individuals or by age group, gender, or length of residence. Each map would highlight different sites and areas of St. James that are deemed important by the person or group in their perception of what St. James is.

In order to explore some of these different landscapes, I will re-examine the three landscapes I identified earlier to summarize what makes each landscape unique and important for assessing sense of place. The first landscape, which I deemed “St. James as palimpsest,” was the landscape constructed primarily by older residents. In this landscape, places that are prominent in personal memories of past lived experience in the place are prominent on the landscape. These places may continue to stand and hold the same meaning as they do in the memories; they may still exist physically but hold different meanings now compared to what they meant in the past; or there are places that no longer exist on the present landscape but still stand strong in the landscape of memory. This is the landscape of legacy: the significance the landscape holds based on past activity that brought success, notoriety, or a sense of worth in the region. An awareness of the progression of time and the changes it causes marks this landscape, with a sense of loss present in some sites, like Dunmoor and Saturday markets downtown, and fodder for community debate, like the changing role of the James Foundation. Pride is evident in this landscape: the high school, the Missouri Veterans’ Home, and even the railroad tracks stand out in this landscape as sources of pride. A map of this version of St. James would be dominated by sites, standing and no longer existing, that are prominent in the memories and senses of pride of the residents who have developed a deep attachment to the place over decades of lived experience.

The landscape described by another group of residents – formed mostly by those who are not natives and who are in the middle stage of life – was a landscape I dubbed “St. James as Mayberry” because of the prevalence of descriptions of St. James that likened it to idyllic small town setting of Andy Griffith’s 1960s television show.

Mayberry was a good place to live – it was quiet, leisurely, wholesome, safe (Barney Fife didn't carry any bullets in his gun, after all) – the perfect place to raise little Opie to be an upstanding citizen. This landscape highlights all of the places and aspects that contribute to quality of life, so churches, streets not choked with cars, quiet neighborhoods and quality schools are prominent to residents who perceive this landscape. Place attachment is marked on this landscape, so the essential places that play a role in the everyday lived performance and become familiar haunts are key features. Places associated with involvement in the community are included in this landscape, since one's obligation to contribute to the community is a compelling force in this group. Finally, the features that people have noticed when first moving to town would be displayed on the map of this landscape, since so many in this group do not have lifelong experience in St. James. This landscape would reflect all of the expressions on the physical layout that are intertwined with people's feelings and experiences of St. James as a good place to live.

The third landscape, "St. James as Cruisescape," is a perception of St. James held by many of the younger generation of residents. This landscape captures expressions of enjoying St. James as a setting for growing up, as well as manifestations of what the future holds in this setting that so many of this generation will live to experience. This landscape is composed of the private and public places familiar to children and teenagers as the background of their scholarly and leisurely activities. The city park, the swimming pool, Ruby's Ice Cream and neighborhood streets for bicycle riding are all sites prominent in children's view of St. James, while the high school, parking lots, gravel roads and the town cruising route mark the landscape in teenagers' minds. This landscape also features the trees in town and recognition of the natural amenities (forests,

fields, rivers) of the wider region that St. James rests among. The sites that play into St. James' future situation – like the industries, the interstate, and the schools – also characterized this landscape. This landscape map would display these places people associate with the lived experience of growing up, the natural attributes that they consider key to small town definition, and the sites that control how the landscape of St. James' future will look.

A seemingly endless variety of landscapes like this could be constructed if I would have interviewed all of the residents of St. James, and also if I would have created different groups based on different ideas I picked out of the interviews, or if I simply would have described the unique landscape found in the mind of each individual. These are just a few of the ways that St. James can be constructed. The key point is that St. James can be perceived in numerous ways, and individual perceptions of the landscape's makeup are just as important for defining sense of place as the combined view of the landscape expressed in the cultural memory.

## **Conclusion**

So what has my research shown? How is it relevant to the world and what has it contributed to the field of geography? First, this study of the experiential sense of place in a small Midwestern town fills a void in the academic literature. Ethnographic studies of exotic or marginalized cultures abound, even studies of North American social groups, but the mainstream, small, rural, Midwestern town has mostly avoided academic scrutiny in recent decades. This study allows entry into a small Midwestern town to experience how the landscape is perceived by residents and how that sense of place impacts their

lives. It provides a true portrayal of small town life that corrects stereotypes and misconceptions about small town life.

This type of research, performed now in this time of discussion about residential patterns and the arrangement of postmodern society, creates knowledge of culture and human/environmental interaction in small towns that can be very beneficial for modern American society. This study documented the perceptions, motivations, values, and dreams of small town residents. This knowledge could be used to inform community development, urban renewal and planning, and historic preservation, creating communities that maintain their meaning for residents while maximizing their potential for improvement. This type of study could also be used to map the lived experience in a community to spatially assess that which is considered by residents themselves to be vital to town identity.

This study shows that there is no single version of St. James. The town exists differently in the minds of everyone who lives in it and visits it. There are multiple interpretations of any given landscape. The discursive reality, created by the community through collective knowledge transfer and interpretations posed and formulated by the group, creates the overall place identity that I have previously called the official vision or the cultural memory. The lived reality, on the other hand, is the experience of individuals in St. James that creates unique interpretations of the environment. The process by which this lived reality is obtained is through free elicitation interviews, allowing the participant's mind to travel down unguided paths that tease out true feelings and perceptions. This knowledge is harnessed by the researcher through hermeneutics, tacking between the exploration of a person's sense of place in his or her mind, coming

back to reformulate the researcher's view based on this new knowledge, then tacking back to see the place through another person's perceptions, establishing an understanding of the studied scene through a melding of the researcher's and research participant's experiences on the landscape.

Memory proved its value in this sense of place study. The results show that the landscape of memory is as valuable in creating place identity as the present facts on the ground. Through memories built around lived experience in a place, meaning is constructed. A place is imbued with meaning by the life that occurs on it, and that meaning is strengthened by its repetitive presence and intensity in personal and cultural memories. Collective, cultural memory is important for establishing the meaning of a place, but my study shows that individual memories also greatly influence the meaning that is ascribed to places. Personal memories are created first, and only through their communication by individuals to the group, and the collective modification of these memories into cultural memory, is cultural memory created in the first place.

I believe the most important lesson of my study is that giving voice to a person leads to a wealth of knowledge. I can think of no better way to truly get to know a place – to know its meaning and worth to the people who interact with it – than to explore it through the minds of those people. The researcher can study the landscape, read the history, and familiarize herself with the structure of the community, but it is only through exploration of the lived experience of those who know it best – the people who conduct their lives as part of the place – that the meaning of a place is truly revealed. In addition, power resides with those who have a voice. When someone is given a voice, their ideas and perceptions are able to be expressed, and then those ideas are passed on to someone

else to inform that person's ideas and perceptions. By giving the residents of St. James a voice, by allowing them to share their lived experiences with the rest of us, they wield the power to define their lives and their relationship with their town from their vantage points, which are the best places to be for understanding sense of place.

## Appendix 1

### Resident Semi-Structured Interview Script

Now that we have completed the consent form, I would like to talk to you about your relationship with the town of St. James.

What is your name?

What is your address?

What is your phone number?

What age group are you in?

18-30; 31-45; 46-65; 65+

What is your gender?

What is your occupation?

How long have you lived in St. James?

What brought you to St. James?

How long have you lived at your current address?

How many residences have you had in St. James?

What would have to happen to get you to move away from St. James?

Are there any places in St. James that no longer exist that you liked or felt were important to the town?

If you grew up in St. James, what kind of memories do you have of the town from your childhood?

If you moved to St. James later in life, do you have any memories of first impressions?

What places in St. James best represent the town to visitors?

What places in St. James are most important for town history?

How involved are you in community affairs or activities?

What places in the town do you spend time at on a regular basis, like daily or weekly?

Where do you shop?

Are there any places or activities in St. James that you associate with town pride?

How do you think town planners or city leaders envision the town?

Do you consider any parts of the town bad?

Where are good parts of the town, or nice neighborhoods?

What places in St. James do you like best?

What do you like best about St. James?

What are some things you don't like about St. James?

## Appendix 2

### Semi-Structured Interview Participants and Stratified Sample Goals

| <b>18-30 Males: Goal 3 or 4</b> | <b>Years of Residence</b> | <b>18-30 Females: Goal 3 or 4</b> | <b>Years of Residence</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Shane Tasus                     | 22                        | Jennifer Tasus                    | 2                         |
|                                 |                           | Josie Cooper                      | 8                         |
|                                 |                           | Angela Kleiber                    | 14                        |
|                                 |                           | Hailey Espelkamp                  | 19                        |
|                                 |                           |                                   |                           |
| <b>31-45 Males: Goal 4</b>      |                           | <b>31-45 Females: Goal 4</b>      |                           |
| Dave Jackson                    | 7                         | Brandy Cooper                     | 26                        |
| Evan Fortune                    | 9                         | Melissa Picard                    | 33                        |
| Dwight Payne                    | 11                        | Laura Read                        | 34                        |
| Kyle McDowell                   | 15                        | Lesley Wallace                    | 37                        |
|                                 |                           |                                   |                           |
| <b>46-65 Males: Goal 4 or 5</b> |                           | <b>46-65 Females: Goal 4 or 5</b> |                           |
| Dale Winters                    | 8                         | Dianne Pierce                     | 7                         |
| Bill Hutton                     | 32                        | Molly Griffin                     | 17                        |
|                                 |                           | Kim Whitney                       | 18                        |
|                                 |                           | Linda Solaro                      | 31                        |
|                                 |                           | Pamela Lewis                      | 45                        |
|                                 |                           | Ruth Forest                       | 50                        |
|                                 |                           |                                   |                           |
| <b>66+ Males: Goal 3</b>        |                           | <b>66+ Females: Goal 3</b>        |                           |
| Tom Sutherland                  | 38                        | Alice Luebbecke                   | 59                        |
| George Johnson                  | 73                        | Gladys Aldridge                   | 65                        |
| Ron Franciosi                   | 78                        | Mary Higgins                      | 77                        |

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