

**Loomis Historic District (c. 1840, 1886, 1912, and 1944)
8325 Johnson Drive, 5900 Hadley Avenue, and 5923 Handley
Avenue—Merriam
*National Register of Historic Places***

The Loomis Historic District, a recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places, provides a handy *Cliff's Notes* version of the progression of major architectural styles in Johnson County. The four structures in this Merriam district—the Emily Loomis House at 8325 Johnson Drive, the Charles Loomis House at 5900 Hadley Avenue, the Lloyd Griffith House at 5923 Hadley Avenue, and the Quaker Mission Shed which also sits on the Griffith House property—illustrate the trends that dominated residential building in the county from early settlement through the mid-20th century.



The Italianate style of the Emily Loomis house, pictured here about 1905, symbolized the prosperity of the Loomis family. Courtesy Historic Merriam, Inc.

The Quaker Mission Shed, with a circa 1840 construction date, is the most venerable of the structures. Like the other buildings that populated the grounds of the Quaker Indian Mission, which operated on acreage near 63rd and Hadley Streets from 1834 until 1870, the shed was built of native hewn timbers assembled in a simple rectangular form. These hallmarks of early vernacular architecture reflect the early settlers' dependence on local resources, and their isolation from the finished goods of Eastern markets.

The Emily Loomis House, which bears an 1886 date marker, is a two-story Italianate farmhouse with decorative trimwork on its porches, eaves, and window surrounds. The house, originally sited on a quarter section of farmland, was built by Emily and Edgar Loomis, who divorced the next year. The fashionable homes of this period reflected the progress made in opening lines of communication and transportation between the eastern United States and Kansas in the years after the earliest non-native settlements. The Loomis House is no exception—the home's Italianate style indicates the availability of both the publications which advertised architectural trends fashionable in the East, and the affordable mass-produced decorative trimwork which arrived in Kansas via the railroad.

The Charles Loomis House, constructed in 1912, displays the hallmarks of the Craftsman Bungalow; its wood shingled exterior, massive brick chimney, and low pitched roofline tie the house to the landscape. This architectural style, with its extensive use of natural materials, embodied the suburban ideal of the time. Suburban developers such as William Strang and J.C. Nichols urged middle-class families to leave the pollution and stress of the city for a “reunion with nature” in a house much like this one.

The simplicity of the Lloyd Griffith House, which was constructed in 1944 in the Minimal Traditional style, reflects the building trends which dominated the years following World War II. During this time, materials for construction were still quite limited, but the return of servicemen and women and the beginning of the Baby Boom necessitated the quick construction of enormous numbers of homes for new families. Lloyd Griffith, a World War II veteran, constructed a simple structure distinguished by a large brick chimney and multiple-paned double-hung windows which nod to the Tudor style popular in the 1930s—the definition of the Minimal Traditional style.

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