**Goldenrod Showboat**

### Location
- **Address:** Showboat Landing, 400 N. Wharf Street, St. Louis, Missouri
- **Status:** Occupied
- **Use:** Commercial

### Classification
- **Category:** Building
- **Ownership:** Private
- **Status:** Accessible
- **Present Use:** Commercial

### Owner of Property
- **Name:** Frank C. Pierson, President, Goldenrod Showboat, Inc.
- **Address:** Showboat Landing, 400 N. Wharf Street, St. Louis, Missouri

### Location of Legal Description
- **Assessor's Office:** City Hall, Room 114, 12th and Market Streets, St. Louis, Missouri

### Representation in Existing Surveys
- **Title:** Historic Sites Survey
- **Date:** 1967
- **Depository:** Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service, 1100 L Street NW, Washington, D.C.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>—EXCELLENT</td>
<td>—UNALTERED</td>
<td>—ORIGINAL SITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—GOOD</td>
<td>—ALTERED</td>
<td>x_MOVED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—FAIR</td>
<td>—RUINS</td>
<td>DATE_Moving structure last moved 1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Describle the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The **Goldenrod** Showboat was built in 1909 for W.R. Markle, the most successful showboat owner of the era. It was the largest showboat ever constructed, measuring 200 x 45 feet. The exterior was plain by contemporary standards, but its interior was lavishly decorated. The stage, 40 x 25 feet, faced an auditorium 162 x 40 feet seating 1400 people. Five thousand lights illuminated the theater, and full length mirrors exaggerated the size of the room. Gilt, friezes, red valour draperies and bright carpets helped reinforce the illusion of opulence.

In recent years the **Goldenrod** has been altered to accommodate smaller dinner theater audiences. About one-third of the original auditorium has been partitioned off to serve as buffet and bar. Seats have been removed from the forward half of the truncated auditorium and replaced with small tables and chairs. Air conditioning and heating ducts have been installed in recent years.

The exterior is less altered. The open porch at the bow has been enclosed to serve as a ticket office. Several years ago it became necessary to place the boat inside a steel barge in order to keep her afloat. The old hull, however, is still intact.

The most serious problem is the constant peeling of the exterior paint, caused by heavy pollution. This is one factor in the present management's decision to consider moving the **Goldenrod** to another berth below the city in the near future.
### Significance

#### Period
- Prehistoric
- 1400-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

#### Areas of Significance -- Check and Justify Below
- Archeology: Prehistoric
- Archeology: Historic
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Community Planning
- Conservation
- Economics
- Education
- Engineering
- Exploration/Settlement
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape Architecture
- Law
- Literature
- Military
- Music
- Philosophy
- Politics/Government
- Religion
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Theater
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)

#### Specific Dates
| 1909-1937 |

#### Statement of Significance

The **Goldenrod** Showboat was built in 1909 and was the largest, most elaborately decorated showboat ever constructed. The **Goldenrod** was docked at St. Louis in 1937 and continues to operate as a theater specializing in the traditional melodrama of the late showboating period.

Showboating was a means of bringing dramatic and musical entertainment to frontier families who lived along the great rivers of Middle America. The institution of showboating flourished during two great eras. The first began in the 1830s and ended with the outbreak of the Civil War. The second era began in the 1870s and continued into the 1920s.

It was during the second great period of showboating that the **Goldenrod** was built, in 1909. It was the largest showboat ever constructed, and drew large crowds across some fifteen Midwestern States each season.

Showboating reached its peak around 1910, when 21 boats plied the waters of the Mississippi basin. In 1928 there were 14, and 5 in 1938. Motion pictures, increased mobility, and the Great Depression contributed to the decline.

In September 1937, the **Goldenrod** docked at Locust Street landing in St. Louis. Rapidly diminishing support from smaller towns prompted the owners to remain permanently in the city. Today the **Goldenrod** continues to specialize in old-time melodrama, entertaining thousands each year.
Graham, Philip, Showboats: The History of an American Institution, 1951

The Goldenrod Showboat is not permanently moored. It may in fact be moved from its present site in the near future. The boundaries, therefore are defined by the dimensions of the showboat. For the past 38 years the boat has been moored approximately 800 feet south of Eads Bridge, St. Louis, on the west bank of the Mississippi (see map B) labelled "Hydrographic Survey, Mississippi River," and dated Sept. 8 & 9, 1966.)