

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Other names/site number n/a

Name of related Multiple Property Listing n/a

2. Location

Street & number <u>2653 Locust Street</u>	<u>n/a</u>	not for publication
City or town <u>St. Louis</u>	<u>n/a</u>	vicinity
State <u>Missouri</u> Code <u>MO</u> County <u>St. Louis (Ind. City)</u> Code <u>510</u> Zip code <u>63103</u>		

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles, Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (explain:) _____ | |

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse



7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Brick

roof: _____
other: _____

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Bradshaw, Preston J., architect

Gamble Construction Co, Inc., builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State

Acreege of Property 0.537

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 38.634792 -90.215687 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael R. Allen/Director
organization Preservation Research Office date June 3, 2014
street & number 3407 S. Jefferson Avenue #211 telephone 314-920-5680
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63118
e-mail michael@preservationresearch.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
 - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photographs

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: General Electric Supply Corporation Building

City or Vicinity: St. Louis

County: St. Louis (Ind. City) State: MO

Photographer: Michael R. Allen

Date Photographed: July 3, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 5: View of building looking northeast.
- 2 of 5: View of primary elevation looking northwest.
- 3 of 5: View showing west and north elevations looking southeast.
- 4 of 5: View of primary staircase looking northwest on first floor.
- 5 of 5: View inside of first floor looking northeast.
- 6 of 6: View inside of second floor looking southeast.

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Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. First floor plan.
2. Second floor plan.
3. Photograph of Preston J. Bradshaw.
4. National publications of architectural works by Preston J. Bradshaw.
5. The Plaza Hotel (1915).
6. Lacassian Laboratories Building (1916).
7. Postcard view of the Weber Implement and Automobile Company Building (1919).
8. Postcard view of the Mart Building (1932).
9. The commercial building at 26-40 Maryland Plaza (1935).
10. Kirkwood Insurance Company Building (1936).
11. Rendering of Manhasset Village Apartments (1938).
12. The warehouse at 4011 Forest Park Avenue (1946).
13. The Ford Apartments (1948).
14. St. Louis County Courthouse (1949).
15. Endicott-Johnson Shoe Distribution Warehouse (1924).
16. The Standard Auto Parts Building at 3200 Locust Street (1944).
17. Reed Rubber Company Warehouse (1941).

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Summary

The General Electric Supply Corporation Building is located at 2653 Locust Street in the Midtown neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri. The building, completed in 1939, is a two-story reinforced concrete commercial warehouse with rough-faced red brick cladding on its street-facing elevations and exposed concrete framing and brick infill on its rear elevation (photograph 1). The flat-roofed building measures 150 by 100 feet and encloses 45,000 square feet of space on its basement and above-ground levels. The Modern Movement building has minimal ornamental features and steel windows. The floor plan historically had few partitions but later partitioning divided up parts of the first and second floors. The building employs the Turner reinforced concrete structural system. There is a 25-foot deep asphalt parking lot on the west side of the building. Overall the building has excellent integrity.

Setting

The General Electric Supply Corporation Building stands on the 2600 block of Locust Street in Midtown, an area characterized by moderately high building density and a rectangular street grid. Locust Street historically was known as "Automobile Row" for the preponderance of automobile dealerships, distributors and suppliers located between 18th Street and Grand Boulevard. Locust Street is one of the area's east-west streets, which have longer block frontage than the relieving north-south streets. One block east is Jefferson Avenue, a major north-south city artery that bends to disrupt the otherwise regimented grid. The area's blocks have wide sidewalks and alleys running east-west down the center of the blocks. Buildings in the area range from one to twelve stories and generally are commercial and industrial buildings that sit on the sidewalk line. Directly across the street is the Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building (NR 2/16/2006), a large telephone switching exchange built in phases between 1902 and 1946. Directly to the west across Beaumont Street is the Phyllis Wheatley Branch YWCA (NR 7/24/1984), completed in 1927 and designed by LaBeaume & Klein.

Exterior

The primary elevation of the building faces Locust Street and is clad in dark red brick with a limestone cap on the parapet (photograph 2). The elevation is divided into seven bays with an entrance bay placed as the third bay from the west. The entrance bay is noted by projecting piers, with vertical pattern courses of alternating projecting headers that rise beneath a triangulated limestone pediment at the parapet above. Soldier courses run nearly continuous at the header level of the basement and second floor window openings and beneath the wall cap. The first floor openings have soldier courses and those to the east of the entrance bay are joined by a rowlock course above sill level. All openings have canted rowlock sills. The first and second floor openings (with noted exceptions) ribbons of steel windows configured with a lower hopper and upper transom around pairs of two casement windows. The first floor windows have opaque glass. The first floor window openings west of the entrance contain fixed two-pane replacement windows. The basement openings contain ribbons of three or four steel hopper windows with three vertical lights each. The entrance consists of a double-leaf wooden door with concrete stoop at sidewalk level set between high sidelights in openings with canted rowlock sills. A two-light wooden transom window is above the door. A soldier course runs at the

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

header above. The window openings in the three westernmost bays are partially concealed by metal louvered awnings that are not original.

The western elevation is divided into six bays and is treated the same as the primary elevation (photograph 3). The three northernmost bays consist of centered openings on each level with ribbons of four windows like those on the primary elevation. The two bays south of these have single-window openings at each level of the fourth bay but only on the second floor of the fifth bay. The southernmost bay contains a four-window opening above an entrance that now contains double-leaf metal-framed glass doors beneath a single-light transom flanked by replacement fixed-pane sidelights in high openings.

On the rear elevation, the formal brick cladding wraps the westernmost bay, which has four-window openings at each level like those on the other elevations (photograph 3). The remaining six-bay run has an exposed reinforced concrete column and slab grid with red brick infill. The two bays east of the westernmost bay have second floor window openings with ribbons of four windows like those in the westernmost bay. The remainder of window openings on this elevation are distributed irregularly and contain multi-light steel sash windows, some with center hopper windows for ventilation. There are large openings on the first floor at the three bays at the east; these contain double-leaf (the easternmost) and roll-up metal doors with freight docks. The westernmost dock has two round steel columns rising to an integrated shed roof. In the second bay from east, the elevator equipment house rises above the roof line. At the northeastern corner, a brick base rises to support a steel ventilation stack with tapered base.

Interior

The interior of the building is characterized by historic open plans and the structural grid of concrete "mushroom" columns. The basement is a completely open space with a concrete floor and partition walls around the elevator and staircase of clay tile. The first floor currently is divided into two areas through a lateral partition placed three bays from the west (figure 1). This partition and other partitions creating offices in this area are made of drywall on metal framing. The original sales room and offices are no longer evident in the plan. In the western area near the entrance on the western elevation is an original open staircase to the second floor with terrazzo treads and an iron railing (photograph 4). The remainder of the first floor is an open area with plain concrete floor, exposed columns and concrete block and clay tile partition walls (photograph 5). A loading bay area, enclosed staircase and freight elevator are located on the north elevation. The south wall consists of exposed, finished red brick infill between columns.

On the second floor, the space is largely open with wall finishes of brick or exposed clay tile and brick between outer columns (photograph 6). In the southwest area at the top of the open staircase, there are three rooms created through non-historic partitions of drywall over metal framing (figure 2). At the northeast corner, there is a mechanical room enclosed by exposed clay tile and gypsum block partitions. To the west of that room are the freight elevator and the enclosed staircase, then two restrooms with plastered block walls and concrete floors.

Integrity

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The General Electric Supply Corporation Building has changed little since completion in 1939. The exterior's most significant changes are the removal of original windows and replacement with non-conforming windows in the western three bays of the first floor, and the installation of metal awnings over some of the second floor windows. These reversible alterations do not affect the overall building composition or fenestration. The interior layout has changed somewhat through the construction of easily-removed partitions and the removal of the original salesroom and offices. Overall, the building conveys its historic character clearly. The General Electric Supply Corporation Building retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, design, feeling and association.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Summary

The General Electric Supply Corporation Building (GESCO), located at 2653 Locust Street in St. Louis, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE. The nominated building is an outstanding example of the work of master architect Preston J. Bradshaw (1884-1953) during the Depression era. Educated at Columbia University, Bradshaw's practice throughout the twentieth century was highly significant in St. Louis and well-published nationally. Bradshaw's prodigious output included the designs for residences and apartment buildings in the 1990s and 1910s, major hotels and office buildings in the 1920s and 1930s and later work in apartment complexes and government projects in the 1930s through his death. Bradshaw frequently published in major national journals including *Architectural Forum*, *Western Architect*, *American Architect* and *the Architecture Review*, and others. Bradshaw designed the General Electric Supply Corporation Building at a time when the influence of European modernism led to an American industrial modern aesthetic, which he adapted to the building while employing his own sensitivity to façade composition, material and architectural context. The modern form marked both the embrace of a significant mode in American industrial architecture and part of Bradshaw's own turn toward modernist design in the 1930s. The period of significance is 1939, the year of the building's construction.

Preston J. Bradshaw, Renowned St. Louis Architect

Native son Preston J. Bradshaw (1884-1953) rose from fairly modest middle class roots to the top of the city's architectural profession (figure 3). As a teenager, Bradshaw attended Columbia University in New York between 1899 and 1900.¹ He studied with prominent New York architects Henry Hornbostel and Donn Barber in 1903 and briefly worked as a draftsman for McKim, Mead, and White. Upon his return to St. Louis in 1905 Bradshaw led a short-lived publishing and advertising firm called Bradshaw, Kerr & Brownell, followed by work as draftsman for the city's Commissioner of Public Buildings before setting off to practice independently.²

Bradshaw's earliest known works include single dwellings and small apartment buildings in the city's growing suburban streetcar neighborhoods. Bradshaw designed the Art Nouveau-influenced dwelling at 6345 Westminster (1908) and twelve other dwellings in Parkview Garden (four in partnership with renowned architect Edward F. Nolte).³ At this same time, Bradshaw designed a house for his widowed mother and aunt located at 5947 Clemens Avenue (1908).⁴ Bradshaw's design of this house showed a progressive mind, as he attenuated the two story brick base on the hipped-roofed house with a blind attic story clad in stucco that supported massive consoles under the cornice. The Craftsman influence was very strong. After early residential work and establishment of his own office, Bradshaw designed several six-unit walkup apartment houses in the city's Shaw neighborhood (Shaw Certified Local District, 6/28/1985).

¹ Lindsey M. Derrington, "Preston J. Bradshaw, AIA (1884-1953)," Landmarks Association of St. Louis website. <http://www.landmarks-stl.org/architects/bio/preston_j_bradshaw_aia_1884_1953/>. Accessed 20 July 2013.

² Derrington.

³ Jean F. Eberle and Judith P. Little, editors, *Urban Oasis: 75 Years in Parkview, A St. Louis Private Place* (St. Louis: Boar's Head Press, 1980), p. 27.

⁴ Derrington.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

These works included the fairly conventional sun-room-faced building at 3867 Shaw Avenue (1914) and the eclectic Harpley Hall at 3616 Castleman Avenue (1916), which mixed Tudor Revival elements with a pergola-like Craftsman cornice. Bradshaw's design of paired buildings at 4933-39 West Pine Boulevard, called the Wellmore and Lancaster Apartments (1916), appeared in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* with accompanying photograph.⁵

In 1915, Bradshaw saw completion of the Plaza Hotel (NR 5/7/1985), located in Midtown St. Louis. The six-story Plaza Hotel was Bradshaw's first design of a form for which he would achieve renown, the hotel (figure 5). The building's stucco-clad walls, heavy cornice and reliance on sparse geometric elements seem to place it in the same Craftsman vein as the dwelling at 5947 Clemens, but Bradshaw's own statements suggest he was channeling the Italian Renaissance.⁶ The Italian Renaissance influence was more evident in the two-story wing on the west of the hotel, which included a figural sculpture by noted artist Robert Bringhurst, and a two-story automobile showroom to the north. These buildings were built as part of the Plaza Hotel development, which framed a famous cut-off between Lindell and Locust streets.⁷

The automobile showroom at the Plaza Hotel complex also set the architect on a prolific building form. Between 1913 and the early 1920s, Bradshaw designed remodeling or new buildings for nearly two dozen automotive companies located along Locust Street's "Automobile Row."⁸ Many of these buildings are contributing resources in the Locust Street Automotive District (NR 9/15/2005) and its boundary increase (NR 2/19/2008). Most of these buildings explore Renaissance Revival themes although they emphasize the modern materials of terra cotta and brick, and heighten whimsical attributes to draw the attention of buyers.

Bradshaw's earliest major industrial building was the Lacassian Laboratories Building at 2200 Locust Street (1916; figure 6). The Lacassian Laboratories Building, used to develop and manufacture perfumes, was a six-story reinforced concrete building. Although the building included relief panels of terra cotta and a projecting cornice in its Renaissance Revival ornamental scheme, its body essentially was a functional daylight factory. Located three blocks east of the GESCO Building, the Lacassian Laboratories Building is a precursor in some ways. The building was fully truck-served as well, like the GESCO Building.

In 1919, Washington University commissioned Bradshaw to construct an automobile distribution house at 1815 Locust for the Weber Implement and Automobile Company (NR 4/21/2004; figure 7).⁹ The three-story building would compare in plan to the later GESCO Building: a horizontally-oriented low-rise form, the building was divided into a ground floor showroom and upper floor warehouse areas, the exterior was clad in brick with minimal ornament (here, Renaissance Revival terra cotta common for the period) and emphasized gridded bay fenestration, and the structural system was reinforced concrete.

⁵ "New Apartments Designed on the Private Residence Plan," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 12 November 1916, p. A8.

⁶ Deborah B. Wafer, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Plaza Hotel Complex* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985), p. 8-1.

⁷ Wafer, p. 8.

⁸ Derrington.

⁹ Bivens, Matthew. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Weber Implement and Automobile Company Building*. (Washington, D.C. Department of Interior, 2004), p. 8.7.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Success led Bradshaw to design a suite for his firm in the prestigious International Building downtown, where his firm took occupancy in the 1920s; the architect also ended up as developer and owner of some projects.¹⁰ Bradshaw's productivity in the decade between 1920 and 1930 led to many important hotels and apartment buildings. Bradshaw's most recognizable landmarks from this period include the Melbourne Hotel (1921), Coronado Hotel (1923-6; owned by Bradshaw), Chase Hotel and Apartments (1922) in the Midtown Historic District (NR 7/7/1978) and the Paul Brown Building (1926; NR 12/12/2002), all located in St. Louis. Bradshaw's name was known outside of St. Louis as well. Bradshaw's acumen for hotel design garnered commissions including the Bellerive Hotel in Kansas City (1922; NR 2/28/80), the Brown Hotel (1923; NR 2/17/78) and Brown Theatre (1925) in Louisville and the Baker Hotel in Dallas (1925; demolished 1980).¹¹ In St. Louis, toward the late 1920s Bradshaw saw the construction of his designs for the Landreth Building (1926; demolished, 1965) and Mayfair Hotel (1924; NR 9/17/1979) downtown and the exotic Churrigueresque Vesper Buick Building at 3900 West Pine (1927, demolished 1995) in Midtown.

Bradshaw's high-rise 1920s buildings share an indelible design approach: tripartite division emphasized through terra cotta bases, brick shafts and belt courses and cornices of terra cotta marking divisions and attic stories. The buildings tend to have complex ornamentation, usually derived from Italian Renaissance sources, especially foliate pattern work, but also inclusive of classical elements like festoons, urns and pediments. Despite the handiwork in Bradshaw's terra cotta programs, what may be most noticeable about large blocks like the Coronado Hotel and Paul Brown Building are the expanses of plan modern brick that serve as stark contrast to the decorated elements. The interior planning also is modern, with efficient layouts of often cellular floorplans. Architectural historian Mary M. Stirtz writes in the National Register nomination for Bradshaw's Lennox Hotel (1929) of the "architect's facility in integrating utilitarian ideals of functional plan with a handsomely articulated facade treatment..."¹² This tendency in Bradshaw's work links his vast 1920s output with his smaller body of late career work.

On the eve of the Great Depression, St. Louis developers financed major building projects across the city that included substantial high-rise buildings like the Continental Building (1929; William B. Ittner, architect; Midtown Historic District, NR); the Park Plaza Hotel (1929; Baumann & Schopp, architects; Central West End Certified Local District, NR); and the South Side National Bank Building (1928; Bank Building & Equipment Corporation, architects; NR 1/3/2003). These three high-rise buildings evinced the influence of the Art Deco style and the confidence in building tall buildings in parts of the city outside of the Downtown area. Bradshaw himself saw his design for the Renaissance Revival Lennox Hotel (NR 9/6/1984) completed in 1929, placing him in the high-rise spirit but not the modernizing style of the time. The 25-story, nearly 400-room Lennox was the city's tallest hotel.¹³

Throughout the 1920s, Bradshaw published extensively in national architectural publications (figure 4). Bradshaw's office published a portfolio in 1924, highlighting its prowess. Bradshaw joined a handful of Missouri architects to receive multiple projects included in John Albury

¹⁰ Derrington.

¹¹ Derrington.

¹² Mary M. Stirtz, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Lennox Hotel* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1984), p. 8.

¹³ Stirtz, p. 8.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Bryan's seminal *Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture* (1928), a volume that selected the state's most significant architectural works for publication. Bryan included three Bradshaw designs: the Hotel Chase, Chase Apartments and Chester Apartments (1922) in St. Louis; the Hotel Coronado (1923, 1926) in St. Louis; and the Embassy Apartments (1926) in Kansas City.¹⁴ Bryan's volume also included the story of Bradshaw's establishment in 1923 of an annual \$100 prize for the St. Louis Architectural Club's Summer Sketch Class.¹⁵

The Great Depression shattered the local real estate market, and placed many proposed major buildings on hold. One of the few notable Downtown projects that was completed after the 1929 stock market crash was the Civil Courts Building at Market and Twelfth streets (Klipstein & Rathmann, architects), completed in 1930 with construction publicly financed through a 1923 bond issuance. Commissions for major buildings became scarce, and major designers like Bradshaw experience series downturns in work. Bradshaw remained active in the Depression's early years through his service on the Memorial Plaza Commission, entrusted by city officials to design the major buildings of the city's \$50 million civic center project. When the Commission was created in 1925, Bradshaw was one of eight architects or architectural firms to be tapped to serve.¹⁶ The Commission made collaborative design assignments, with Bradshaw being paired with Mauran, Russell & Crowell to design a memorial to the city's soldiers lost in World War I.¹⁷

The Soldiers' Memorial designed by Bradshaw and Mauran, Russell & Crowell was published in 1928 but not completed until 1938.¹⁸ The memorial's somber classicism reflected the influence of modernism in the simplified peristyle with capital-free columns, emphasis on geometric mass and abstraction of most traditionally classical elements. Heroic sculptures by artist Walker Hancock reinforced the aesthetic, which the dedication brochure described as "a harmonious correlation between Hellenic simplicity and the austere simplicity of modern functional architecture."¹⁹ The Soldiers' Memorial represented Bradshaw's earliest attempt at engaging emergent modernism in architecture, but it was not wholly successful. Critics compared the completed building to fascist architecture, and Frank Lloyd Wright pronounced it to be a "deflowered classic."²⁰ Today the memorial is better-appreciated and is the centerpiece for downtown festivals and concerts.

Although the early years of the Depression were marked by few major building projects in the city, Bradshaw designed the most substantial downtown building in the period, the Mart Building at 415 S. Twelfth Street (now Tucker Boulevard). The Terminal Railroad Association had elected to build a large merchandise mart in the late 1920s, and selected a site on the south end of downtown. Bradshaw received the commission to design the large complex, whose 20-story tower crowned nearly 1 million square feet of interior space (figure 8).²¹ The Mart Building was Bradshaw's second major building with warehouse functions, and he worked with

¹⁴ John Albury Bryan, *Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture* (St. Louis: St. Louis Architectural Club, 1928), p. 201, 211 and 237.

¹⁵ Bryan, p. 81.

¹⁶ Carolyn Hewes Toft, Esley Hamilton and Mary Henderson Gass, *The Way We Came* (St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1991), p. 58.

¹⁷ Toft, Hamilton and Gass, p. 59.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *The St. Louis Mart*, St. Louis: Terminal Railroad Association, 1932. (Pages are unnumbered in this brochure.)

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

engineers to connect the building to private railroad sidings that could accommodate 30 freight cars at one time as well as automobile docks that could handle 50 trucks at once.²² The giant Mart Building included space for merchandise exposition, showrooms, offices and warehouse bays.

Bradshaw's design for the Mart Building combined formal elevations in the Art Deco style with informal elevations consisting simply of ribbons of steel windows set into plain brick walls. The main elevations' articulation is brown brick, red Missouri granite and geometric buff terra cotta was Bradshaw's most modern design yet, and became the most ornate building built downtown in the 1930s. Downtown's other major buildings from the decade include three buildings by the same firm located in close proximity on north Twelfth Street: St. Louis Star-Times Building (1936; Mauran, Russell & Crowell, architects); the St. Louis Globe-Democrat Building (1939; Mauran, Russell & Crowell, architects); and the Central Terminal Building (1932; Mauran, Russell & Crowell, architects). These buildings displayed very limited ornamentation and Art Deco and Art Moderne sensibilities, with some decorative relief work around entrances. The Central Terminal and Globe-Democrat buildings exhibited plain brick wall cladding on their formal faces. The utilitarian design of the Central Terminal Building presages the GESCO Building's design.

Additional works by Bradshaw during the 1930s include small office buildings, houses and one church. The stylistic range of these projects is wide, although the commercial buildings embraced the modern design trends that Bradshaw mastered with the Mart Building. Bradshaw's St. Philip Neri Roman Catholic Church in the Walnut Park neighborhood (1931), his only religious structure, demonstrates a command of the Italian Renaissance vocabulary. A dwelling at 8000 Gannon Avenue (1935) in University City had diffused Colonial Revival traits. Bradshaw's most modern works were an Art Deco commercial building developed at 26-40 Maryland Plaza in the Central West End (1935; figure 9), and the Art Deco Kirkwood Insurance Company Building at 462 N. Taylor Avenue (1936; figure 10). These buildings continue Bradshaw's pragmatic exterior programs, with emphasis on gridded fenestration and deliberate and sparing use of ornament to accent building elements. The GESCO Building followed these projects with an equally minimal modern design as was common for industrial buildings across the nation in the 1930s.²³

Around the time that Bradshaw was designing the GESCO building, he was working on one of two multi-building suburban apartment complexes, called Manhasset Village (1938; now-demolished). Manhasset Village, located in the suburb of Richmond Heights, consisted of seven buildings on 21.44 acres.²⁴ The \$2 million project created 60 3-room apartments and 294 4-room apartments, designed for suburban commuters.²⁵ Bradshaw's building designs for Manhasset Village mingle the Colonial Revival (quoining, window divisions) with modernistic traits like flat roofs (figure 11). *Architectural Record* included the project in its 1938 review of

²² *The St. Louis Mart*.

²³ Betsy H. Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 251.

²⁴ "Building Types: Apartments," *Architectural Record* 84 (April 1938), p. 93.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

apartment design around the nation, alongside projects in Houston, the District of Columbia, Seattle, Los Angeles and other cities.²⁶

Bradshaw's later Lucas and Hunt Village Apartments (1939), also shows negotiation between traditionalism influenced by the Colonial Revival style and modern minimalism.²⁷ Yet at the same time Bradshaw produced these works, he was working on the GESCO building. After the GESCO Building, Bradshaw produced only a few major works, three of which show an even more pronounced modernism. One reason for Bradshaw's small number of later designs is his decision to move to land in Grey Summit, Missouri in 1940, where he directed a chicken farm.²⁸ Bradshaw retained a small office and a suite at the Coronado, which he still owned and managed. Two later commercial works are the slipcover and remodeling of the Roberts Chevrolet Building at 5875-91 Delmar Boulevard (1947; NR 6/22/2007) and the two-story streamlined brick store and warehouse at 4011 Forest Park Avenue (1946; figure 12). With alternating bands of buff and black brick, rounded corners and banks of steel windows, the Forest Park Avenue building is Bradshaw's most unwavering embrace of the International style.

The 14-story Ford Apartments (1948; NR 1/26/2005) at 1405 Pine Street was Bradshaw's last work, completed just four years before his death.²⁹ Built as an urban renewal housing project, the tower is strikingly modernist with a stark red brick body accentuated by geometric patterns and steel windows (figure 13). Bradshaw's final architectural chapter shows that the GESCO Building was designed at a turning point in the designer's career. However, the continuity in Bradshaw's long path from the Renaissance Revival-styled 1920s works to the Ford was noted by architectural historians Lynn Josse and Stacy Sone, who wrote in the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Paul Brown Building that "[Bradshaw's] apartment building at 13th and Pine Street (1948), one of the city's first tall Modern buildings, reflects the same economy of detail and elegance of line found in his work of the 1920s."³⁰ This continuity, of course, does not establish Bradshaw as a latent modernist, but does join his larger body of work.

After the Ford, Bradshaw is known to have designed two other major projects completed in 1949: the new St. Louis County Courthouse in Clayton and the Hampton Village shopping center in St. Louis. Both projects embraced the postwar interest in colonial-themed architecture, rather than modernism. The St. Louis County Courthouse was a rather tame symmetrical office building that employed the formal traits of the Georgian Revival style (figure 14). Hampton Village was a shopping center located at the busy intersection of Hampton and Chippewa avenues in south St. Louis city. Completed in 1949, the center featured a retail strip and a freestanding grocery store building, oriented toward a large parking lot. The plan of Hampton Village (still extant, with alterations and demolition of the grocery building), published in *Architectural Record's* 1949 review of shopping centers, was typical of St. Louis' postwar

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Carolyn Hewes Toft, Stacy Sone and Matt Bivens, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Ford Apartments* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 2005), p. 8-9.

²⁸ Derrington.

²⁹ Toft, Sone and Bivens, p. 8-11.

³⁰ Lynn Josse and Stacy Sone, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Paul Brown Building* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2002), p. 8-8.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

automobile-oriented retail architecture.³¹ Hampton Village's buildings were in the Colonial Revival style, apparently inspired by Williamsburg according to one article, and included cupolas and porticos.³²

At the time of Bradshaw's death, the architect had retired from active design work in favor of running Bradfield Farms. Bradshaw's obituary in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* described the farm as a "huge chicken-raising venture."³³ Bradshaw's death notices also reiterated both his ownership of the Coronado Hotel and laundry lists of his projects. Tellingly, both the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* obituaries list his 1920s apartment and hotel projects as well as the St. Louis County Courthouse, Mart Building and the two suburban apartment complexes.³⁴ Neither obituary made any suggestion that Bradshaw's Depression-era drop in projects impacted the local recognition of the importance of his career. Architectural periodicals that reported the architect's death included the *Michigan Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin*, a suggestion of Bradshaw's standing given that the architect is not known to have ever designed a building in that state.³⁵

Numerous Bradshaw buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing resources to historic districts or as single sites. Six buildings attributed to Bradshaw are listed in the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture: the Lennox Hotel, Mayfair Hotel, Paul Brown Building, Plaza Hotel and Versailles Apartment building in St. Louis, Missouri, and the Brown Hotel Building and Theater in Louisville, Kentucky. Additionally, the Ford Apartments in St. Louis is listed under Criterion A for Social History and the Roberts Chevrolet Building is listed under Criterion A for Commerce.

Wholesale Warehouse Architecture in Downtown and Midtown St. Louis

The General Electric Supply Corporation (GESCO) Building is a later example of the wholesale warehouse building type, an industrial building type that has received little formal study although several local examples have received listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Wholesale warehouses are distinguished from manufacturing facilities or combined manufacturing facilities in that they are purpose-built for the function of the storage and distribution of goods to retailers or clients. The building demonstrates the evolution of downtown wholesale warehouses from small-scale wagon-served commercial buildings on the riverfront to rail-served multi-story buildings around downtown to truck-served facilities located away from other transportation routes. The GESCO Building is one of the last examples of a substantial multi-story wholesale warehouse to be built in the larger downtown area. Its construction came in a period where the Great Depression and World War II slowed major construction, and changes in goods distribution transportation were changing rapidly.

St. Louis became a center of major industry in the early 1800s, and early reliance on steamboat water traffic led to the development of the city's industrial waterfront. Early warehousing consisted of small frame, stone and brick buildings located proximate to river connections. Few

³¹ "Shopping Center, Hampton Village, St. Louis, Missouri," *Architectural Record* (August 1949), p. 113.

³² "Retail Center is Prospering: St. Louis Drive-In," *Milwaukee Journal*, 23 June 1949, p. 2.

³³ "Preston J. Bradshaw, Noted Architect, Dies Unexpectedly," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 7 December 1953.

³⁴ Ibid.; "Preston J. Bradshaw Dies; Architect Here," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 December 1953.

³⁵ *Michigan Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin* 28.1 (January 1954), p. 21.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

warehouses were taller than three stories or wider than a few parcels on a city block.³⁶ The opening of the Eads Bridge in 1874 provided vital connections to other cities, allowing for increases in imports and exports. Additional rail bridges increased connections and made St. Louis a more attractive outpost for distribution of products made elsewhere. Still, in 1890 St. Louis ranked as the fifth-largest manufacturing city in the United States and could produce nearly everything its residents needed within the city limits.³⁷ Generally few branches of national manufacturers or wholesalers arrived until the early twentieth century.

The modern wholesale warehouse emerged in St. Louis during the 1870s. Architectural historian Lawrence Lowic writes in *The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis* that a new scale of commercial building emerged after the Civil War.³⁸ New wholesale warehouses were up to six stories high, made use of iron columns and facades, included mechanical elevators and increased natural light on the interiors. Lowic notes the “monumental, block-like appearances” of these buildings as well as the reliance on classicism to articulate the facades.³⁹ The new wholesale warehouses located near the riverfront downtown made use of brick bearing walls on secondary and rear elevations with front elevations of either decorated brickwork or modern cast iron. Buildings like the Chouteau Building (1870-5; demolished) at 523-9 N. 1st Street, emphasizing its corner location, and the mid-block Gantt Building (1877; demolished) at 219-21 Chestnut Street were cast iron-fronted examples. The buildings were connected to rail and river lines by wagon service. (Pre-1880 wholesale warehouses are almost extinct today.)

Warehouse construction in the nineteenth century increasingly relied on proximity to rail connections. The city’s earliest concentration on the riverfront enjoyed both access to water and rail transportation, and later concentrations grew along rail lines that connected to the city’s bridges. From the north riverfront to the south end of downtown, 19th century warehouse buildings were almost exclusively brick bearing-wall structures with timber interiors, and aesthetically not very different from factory buildings. Extant examples in the downtown St. Louis area that embody the late 19th century traits of central city warehouses include the Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company warehouse at 1900 Pine Street (1889; NR 2/10/1983), the remaining Cupples Station warehouses (1894-1917; NR 6/28/1998) and the Christian Peper Tobacco Company Warehouse (1898) in the Laclede’s Landing Historic District (NR 8/25/1976). All have either direct or short-transfer access to rail lines, elevator service, red brick cladding with emphasized corbelling and “fireproof” mill method timber structures.

Improved rail connections allowed for St. Louis companies to distribute to larger regions. By 1920, the city’s railroad package car distribution network encompassed 14 states.⁴⁰ Warehousing was a key part of industrial districts that grew along the city’s major rail transportation corridors. James Neal Primm identifies nine “clearly identifiable sub-districts” of industrial St. Louis.⁴¹ “Downtown” encompasses an area larger than the official Central Business District, and included “the major wholesale and retail firms.” The largest concentration

³⁶ Lawrence Lowic, *The Architectural Heritage of St. Louis: 1803-1891* (St. Louis: Washington University Gallery of Art, 1982), p. 55.

³⁷ James Cox, *Old and New St. Louis* (St. Louis: Central Biographical Publishing Company, 1894), p. 29.

³⁸ Lowic, p. 120.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1981), p. 463.

⁴¹ Primm, p. 464.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

was on 24 blocks of Washington Avenue extending from the Eads Bridge westward to Jefferson Avenue. Washington Avenue had become the center of the wholesale dry goods trade by the 1870s.⁴² Given the street's prominence, wholesale warehouses along Washington were built with heavily ornamented main elevations and followed fairly consistent height patterns. Buildings on Washington had docks on their rear elevations, where wagons and later trucks moved goods to and from rail lines and streets. By the late 19th century, Washington Avenue wholesale warehouses tended to employ fireproof mill construction. The neo-classical Hargadine-McKittrick Company Building (NR 3/19/1982) at 911 Washington, designed by Eames & Young and completed in 1898, is a good example of the very formal architectural treatment of warehouses in this district.

In the North Riverfront Industrial Historic District (NR 5/1/2003) stand two early examples of mill-method wholesale warehouses, the five-story Kennard & Sons Rug Company/Shapleigh Hardware Company Warehouse (1904-1906) and the five and six-story Beck & Corbitt Iron Company Warehouse (1903-1911). These rail-served buildings are block-like in appearance, with the Kennard warehouse occupying a full city block. The detailing in the brickwork is minimal, especially in the Corbitt building, which is a functionally utilitarian building. Around this time the Crunden-Martin Manufacturing Company built several six-story wholesale warehouses south of the central riverfront between 1905 and 1920 (NR 2/9/2005; extant).

Two early twentieth century buildings designed by Mauran, Russell & Crowell at the same time showed the potential for reinforced concrete warehouse design in the downtown area. Concrete floors and structural elements combined with clay tile or gypsum block walls that further resisted combustion. The mammoth Butler Brothers Company Building (1906) at 1717 Olive Street occupied a full city block, with its progressive structural frame concealed under brick and terra cotta masonry. The *Realty Record and Builder* proclaimed that the new warehouse brought "to St. Louis the largest monolithic re-enforced concrete building in the world."⁴³ The more *avant garde* Lesan-Gould Building at 1307 Washington Avenue (1907) demonstrated the structural system developed by Detroit engineer Julius Kahn. Kahn's segmental post and truss system allowed the architects to reveal the structure (with brick infill) on the side elevations.⁴⁴ The Lesan-Gould Building housed both manufacturers and distributors as tenants, making it a hybrid. The Butler Brothers Building, built by a national distributor and utilizing traditional masonry cladding, better serves as precedent for the General Electric Supply Corporation Building.

The Century Electric Company, a local manufacturer of electrical supplies, completed a three-story reinforced concrete warehouse in a functional utility design at 330 S. 21st Street in 1916. The building enjoyed access to the south downtown railyards. One of the few national companies to build a major wholesale distribution warehouse in the downtown area in the twentieth century besides GESCO was the Endicott-Johnson Shoe Company, which built a six-story warehouse on Tucker Boulevard designed by Nolte & Naumann in 1924 (NR 10/11/2007). The Endicott-Johnson building had a terra cotta entrance and parapet details but otherwise was

⁴² Mary M. Stiritz, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Washington Avenue: East of Tucker District* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service: 1987), p. 8-0.

⁴³ "Largest in the World," *The Realty Record and Builder* (June, 1908).

⁴⁴ Deborah Wafer, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Washington Avenue Historic District* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1987), p. 8-6.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

an industrial brick box with steel windows (figure 15). National retailer J.C. Penney Company built a massive 13-story rail-served reinforced concrete warehouse at 400 S. 14th Street in 1929. The J.C. Penney Company Warehouse (NR 12/31/1998) related in function to the GESCO Building: a national retailer's distribution center serving regional retail outlets. However, J.C. Penney did not contract sales of good to other buyers as GESCO did, and its warehouse was one of only two used by the company nationally.

St. Louis held 2.1 percent of the U.S. wholesale business during the 1930s. Primm notes that a decline in wholesale transactions from \$1.4 billion in 1929 to \$900 million in 1935 that reversed somewhat by 1939 when the city reported \$1.2 billion.⁴⁵ In per capita wholesale volume, St. Louis ranked fourth in the nation behind San Francisco, Boston and New York.⁴⁶ The city's manufacturing rank declined during the same period. Primm observes that increased use of trucking to reach small towns in Missouri and Illinois that had rail connections to Chicago but not market-grabbing St. Louis.⁴⁷

The stylistic tendency of later warehouse buildings perpetuated the utilitarian design strain demonstrated by the J.C. Penney Company Warehouse. In the 1930s, the move in industrial architecture toward modernism influenced local wholesale warehouse buildings, including the GESCO Building. Factory and warehouse design across St. Louis explored the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles, but generally avoided pronounced stylistic traits. The "Depression Modern" industrial buildings often lacked discernible style at all, with designs focused on utilitarian function.⁴⁸

The nominated building is also one of a few industrial buildings built in the center city between 1935 and 1945 not related to the automobile industry. Also among this group of midcentury industrial buildings, the GESCO building at 2653 Locust is one of few that has not undergone major renovation and therefore remains as a prime example of midcentury industrial architectural design. Many historic warehouse and factory buildings in the central city have lost integrity through the demands of continuous use.

The GESCO Building is substantially larger than its contemporary wholesale warehouse peers, making it a benchmark in the transition of scale. Two other Midtown warehouses, the former Standard Auto Parts Building at 3200 Locust (1944; Saul Rubin, architect; figure 16) and 3100-3118 Washington (1942) occupy corner lots similar to the GESCO building. These later buildings were automotive supply warehouses built in the streamlined industrial modern style and are substantially smaller. The former shoe warehouse and retail building at 1523-25 Washington (1937; Edward J. Lawler, architect), located in as prominent a location as the nominated building, and the Reed Rubber Company Building (1941; figure 17) at 3115 Washington Avenue are good examples of these small-scale facilities.

The architectural impact of changes in wholesale distribution made the General Electric Supply Corporation Building one of the city's last urban distribution warehouses. Few facilities built after 1945 were multi-story urban buildings. The era of the central city wholesale warehouse

⁴⁵ Primm, p. 468.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Martin Greif, *Depression Modern: The Thirties Style in America* (New York: Universe Books, 1975), p. 31.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

effectively ended by 1945, with the streamline Art Moderne warehouse at 4011 Forest Park Avenue (1946) being the last identified example of the type built in the central corridor of the city. From 1941-1943, the federal government cleared 40 blocks of the St. Louis riverfront for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, erasing many of the city's 19th century wholesale warehouses. St. Louis' wholesale distribution facilities were no longer tied to railroad or river after World War II. St. Louis would become the nation's second-largest trucking center by 1970, a clear turning point when trucking eclipsed rail freight distribution in St. Louis.⁴⁹ Warehousing built between 1945 and 1970 tended to be concentrated along major streets in St. Louis city outside of downtown, especially Hampton, Manchester, Natural Bridge, Union and Broadway.

The General Electric Supply Corporation Building: Bradshaw's Modern Warehouse

Washington University's relationship to the property at 2653 Locust dates back to 1861 when William Beaumont leased his farm (bounded by Locust, Beaumont, Washington, and Jefferson) and home to William Greenleaf Eliot, the university's founder. Eliot lived on the Beaumont farm with his family until 1868.⁵⁰ In the mid-1870s George Partridge and James Smith, wealthy merchants and charter directors of the university, provided funds for Washington University to purchase the land at the corner of Beaumont and Locust to erect the second home of the Mary Institute, a college preparatory school for young women.⁵¹ The Eliots—Henry Ware and Charlotte Stearns, and their six children, who included writer-to-be Thomas Stearns (T. S.) Eliot—maintained a presence on the quickly changing landscape of the former farm until 1905. The future Nobel Laureate often played after-hours on the Mary Institute playground and later joked that he was its "one and only alumnus."⁵²

By the turn of the twentieth century, the city's streetcar network enabled out-migration for the city's wealthy. Locust Street shifted from an enclave of mansions, churches and institutions to an emerging commercial district. Mary Institute vacated the Locust Street site in 1902. The University utilized the Mary Institute building briefly as an interim location for the Undergraduate Department with the engineering school located in a four-story building on the north end of the property. The university's Dental Department occupied the building between 1905 and 1909, during which time the university built five-story warehouse to the east at 2647 Locust Street. In 1911, the Straus Company rented the Mary Institute building. The company started as a saddlery, transitioned to auto supplies in 1924, and finally operated as a radio distributor between 1928 and 1934.⁵³ Charles A. Lieber, an iron worker, was the last occupant at the old Mary Institute in 1936 and 1937 before Washington University demolished the building.⁵⁴

In the 1930s, Washington University faced a serious threat to the stability of its endowment fund due to the Depression's impact on real estate. In 1930, the university reported that 75% of its endowment fund consisted of real estate investments, mostly in commercial buildings in St.

⁵⁰ O'Connor, Candace. *Beginning A Great Work: Washington University in St. Louis 1853-2003*. (St. Paul, Minnesota: Washington University in St. Louis, 2003), 37.

⁵¹ *The Gentle Spirit and the Understanding Heart: 125 Years*. (St. Louis, Missouri: Mary Institute, 1984).

⁵² Cuoco, Lorin and William H. Gass. *Literary St. Louis: A Guide*. (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2000), 160.

⁵³ Polk-Gould Directories, various years.

⁵⁴ Polk-Gould Directories, 1936 and 1937.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Louis. Ten years later, the percentage of endowment held in real estate had not changed significantly, but the income had declined 40% over the last decade.⁵⁵ A university board committee had studied the real estate investments in 1937 and found that vacancies in university-owned buildings cost more than \$135,000 a year in lost revenue, or one-third of the total decline in real estate income.⁵⁶

Furthermore, the university was in a battle with the city's assessor, who had placed the university's traditionally-exempt real estate under property taxation in 1932.⁵⁷ Economic depression had lowered city property tax revenues, and the assessor endeavored to boost collection by taxing the tax-exempt holdings of universities, charities and even churches. Washington University sued the City of St. Louis to retain its property tax exemption, and prevailed when the Missouri Supreme Court ruled in its favor in 1937.⁵⁸ This victory was tentative, and the assessor once again placed Washington University property under assessment in 1943 and 1944.⁵⁹ Finally, in 1947, Washington University agreed to taxation of its investment properties in exchange for permanent exemption of property used for educational purposes.

By the late 1930s Washington University faced the need to improve the value of its real estate holdings for both revenue enhancement and the possibility of paying commercial real estate taxes. According to historian Ralph Morrow, it was "public knowledge" by 1939 that Washington University was selling off much of its commercial real estate holdings. However, the university sold few of the properties in its inventory.⁶⁰ In the absence of sales, the university had the chance to upgrade some of its properties, and that is what happened at the old Mary Institute property. Although records do not exist to document the process, when the Mary institute property became vacant in 1937 the university lured the General Electric Supply Corporation (GESCO) to lease a new purpose-built building on the site. At the time, GESCO was located in an aging university-owned investment warehouse located downtown at 200 South Seventh Street, and wished to find a site for constructing a new facility.

The university's goals for improving the property on locust Street aligned with GESCO's need to build a new facility to handle its increasing distribution of household appliances. General Electric had aggressively purchased local electrical suppliers in the 1920s, including St. Louis' Wesco Supply Company in 1927, merging them into the national GESCO company. A directory included in the November 1930 issue of *St. Louis Commerce* lists the local GESCO outpost as being a wholesaler in electric appliances, electric supplies, electrical refrigeration, electric ranges, and radios and radio recording equipment. By the late 1940s, General Electric was manufacturing the "Hotpoint" line of electric ranges, refrigerators and dishwashers for consumers, and GESCO was the primary distributor to retailers.⁶¹ GESCO undertook a campaign to build leased wholesale warehouses capable of handling the truck-transfer supply

⁵⁵ Ralph E. Morrow, *Washington University in St. Louis: A History* (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), p. 362.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Morrow, p. 365

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Morrow, p. 363.

⁶¹ Gorowitz, p. 48.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

chain of its increasingly-popular appliances. GESCO branches moved out of older warehouses and into modern reinforced concrete facilities. Other known examples still stand in Wichita (1937) and Portland (1945) as well as in St. Louis.

As early as spring of 1938, GESCO's area manager A. H. Shirley and Washington University's veteran properties manager Isaac A. Hedges began negotiating plans to construct a new building to best meet General Electric distribution needs, as well as a 20-year lease on the site. Due to the financial sensitivity of the project, the university needed an experienced architect who could design an asset that would sustain a valuable lease feeding the university's endowment. The university hired Preston J. Bradshaw, whose significant career made him a wise choice for the task. Next Washington University commissioned the Gamble Construction Company to erect the \$90,000 mercantile building at 2653 Locust for GESCO between fall 1939 and early winter 1940.⁶² At the time, the city was in a slump of building activity; 1937 recorded 5,107 building permits while 1938 recorded only 4,685.⁶³ By 1939, permits were up to 5,108.⁶⁴

Washington University had previously contracted with Bradshaw to design the building for the Weber Implement and Automobile Company in 1919, a factor that could have led to his employment for the new GESCO Building.⁶⁵ Bradshaw's design approach for the new building not only followed the Weber building, it adopted national conventions for the design of industrial support structures. As American industrial architecture developed specialized design conventions for factories and warehouses in the 19th century, the practice of "functional simplicity" emerged.⁶⁶ Factories and warehouses did not require lavish ornament to lure in prospective tenants, lodgers or shoppers, so their exteriors became relatively austere. Industrial building planning required functional attributes to dominate over aesthetics, so engineers had more influence over the look of these buildings, and often adapted the simple detailing found in machinery design to building envelopes.⁶⁷

The GESCO Building relates to what architectural historian Betsy Bradley describes as "the engineering aesthetic": industrial architecture typified by largely unadorned exteriors with emphasis on the window grid needed to light the facility's interior.⁶⁸ Bradley identifies buildings possessing the engineering aesthetic as having windows placed in rigid grid patterns, with dimensions usually determined by placement of structural piers; cubic massing; flat roofs; avoidance of façade decoration or texture; open exposure of ventilation systems, loading docks and other elements of function. Bradshaw's avoidance of ornament is thus deliberate and stylistically conventional for the building type. In the 1930s, designers often implanted Art Deco or Art Moderne traits into very simple, functional industrial buildings, including strips of steel windows and projecting or towered entrances (both traits here).⁶⁹ Architectural historian Terry Smith writes that the seemingly simple warehouses and factories of the late Depression era

⁶² Lease of Property at 2653 Locust (at Beaumont) to General Electric, 1939. Office Records, Series 03: Files of Comptroller and Treasurer Thomas E. Blackwell, 1931-1950.

⁶³ *St. Louis Commerce* 13.4 (25 January 1939), p. 4.

⁶⁴ *St. Louis Commerce* 14.4 (24 January 1940), p. 3.

⁶⁵ The Washington University Archives cannot locate any non-ledger real estate records from the period of 1935-1940.

⁶⁶ Bradley, p. 231.

⁶⁷ Bradley, p. 223.

⁶⁸ Bradley, p. 230-2.

⁶⁹ Bradley, p. 251.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

constitute “American industrial modernism,” embracing four criteria: actual functionality and expression of function; the importance of engineering values; the role of the architect as designer primarily of the exterior; and the influence of European modernism in the buildings’ avoidance of ornament and streamlined appearances.⁷⁰

While the General Electric Supply Corporation Building design engages the dominant tendencies of industrial modernism in the late 1930s, it offers Bradshaw’s own masterly, accomplished hand in the façade treatments. Bradshaw maintained his classically-oriented senses of proportion, detailing and façade division in the design. The prominent location and association with both Washington University’s real estate efforts and GESCO’s modernization necessitated more than a utilitarian box. Bradshaw adorned the GESCO Building with refinement that breaks with dominant industrial modernism. The main elevation was anchored by an articulated entrance bay rising to a stone pediment, and the window groupings on the designed elevations evoke utilitarian design but do not strictly correspond to the building’s structural grid. Furthermore, the front and side elevations are clad in textured tapestry brickwork with evident red, green and brown tones, showing material richness that modernist design discarded in favor of resolute material simplicity. The masonry cladding forms patterning around the entrance bay, at the sills and in belt coursing reminiscent of Bradshaw’s earlier essays in masonry detailing.

Furthermore, Bradshaw’s building echoes the material and massing of surrounding extant buildings, including the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, the original section of the Beaumont Telephone Exchange and, most notably, the adjacent Classical Revival warehouse to the east (constructed by the university in 1908). Bradshaw’s relation of the building to context defied modernist convention, while his simplified design embraced discrete modernist design principles. Bradshaw was not a modernist at core, and the GESCO Building relates its modernism back to the architect’s larger body of work. Bradshaw was extending an established career, not jumping wildly into a new one, and the GESCO Building’s design should be understood in that context.

More in keeping with the period’s utilitarian industrial design, Bradshaw included an attribute that peer warehouse buildings did not possess: a vehicle parking lot on the western elevation, designed for GESCO’s fleet of delivery trucks. The building is recessed from Beaumont Avenue on the corner, unlike any other peer industrial building of the time. Furthermore, the building retains a historic entrance onto this parking lot, marking an early example of a large Downtown or Midtown building placing a primary entrance adjacent to vehicle parking. The building was built when goods distribution had shifted away from railroad transfers to direct truck in-loading and out-loading. Bradshaw did not conceal the parking area or loading dock from street view, in an open nod to the building’s functional nature.

GESCO’s spatial needs were well-met by Bradshaw’s plan. Bradshaw’s plan for the GESCO Building divided office and sales functions into the western end of the first level, so that both the vehicle and street entrances could be utilized. This placement further emphasized the utility of the building’s provided parking and the convenience of a secondary entrance – features that later Modern Movement commercial buildings on city streets like Lindell and Hampton avenues would include. The remainder of the 45,000 square foot building was a typical concrete-

⁷⁰ Bradley, p. 245.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

columned, open-plan warehouse perfect for the storage of GESCO's numerous products. GESCO continued to use the building through a long tenancy that demonstrated the viability of Washington University's decision to invest in the building. Between 1953 and 1960 GESCO connected the building at 2653 Locust to the building directly to the east at 2647 Locust. The General Electric Supply Corporation vacated the nominated building after 1977.

Summary

The General Electric Supply Corporation Building was one of Preston J. Bradshaw's few major projects during the Great Depression, and it underscored the prolific architect's embrace of modernist trends. The GESCO Building advanced not the showy traits of commercial or residential modernism, but the "engineering aesthetic" of functional modernism through the crucible of Bradshaw's own design ideas. Bradshaw's career is significant for its duration and breadth of building types and styles, marking this building as a key transitional work between early and late career. Furthermore, the building is one of only a handful of major wholesale warehouses built in the Downtown or Midtown areas during the Great Depression, so that what may have been a modest commission in other decades was a significant project for any major architect in St. Louis during the 1930s. Today the building maintains structural and material integrity largely due to a consistent use throughout its history.

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 19

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

St. Louis (Ind. City), MO

County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 20

General Electric Supply Corporation Building

Name of Property

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County and State

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 21

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 22

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

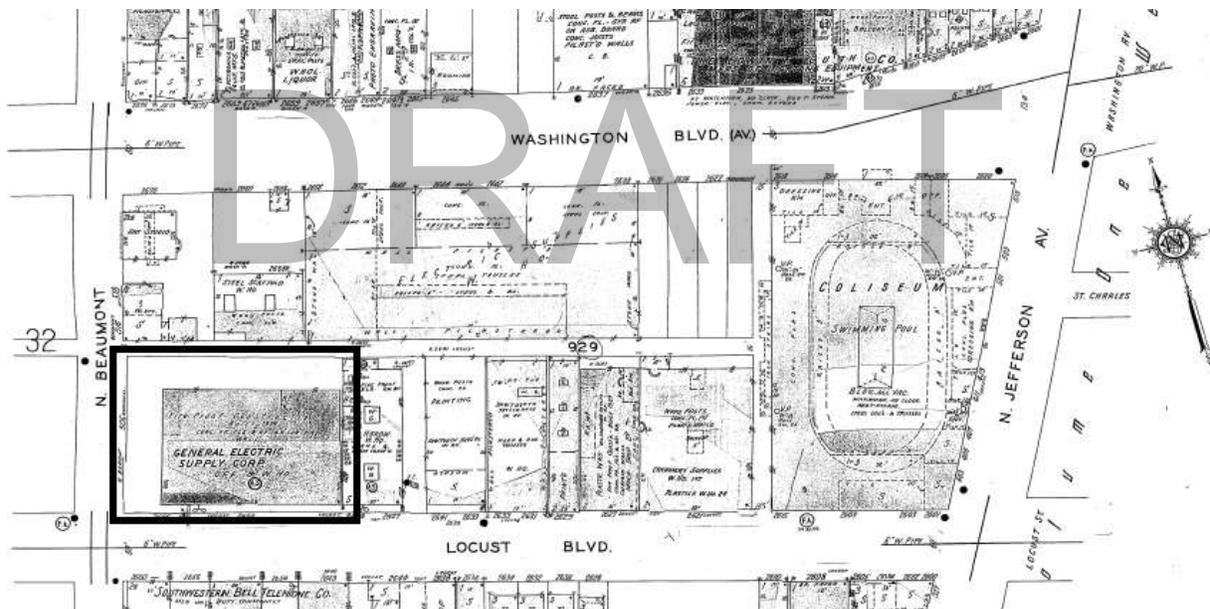
Boundary Description

The nominated property is located at 2653 Locust Street in St. Louis, Missouri. The building stands on City Block 929. The property is legally identified by the Assessor's Office as parcel number 092900055. The nominated property is indicated by a heavy line on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel includes the entire historic site of the General Electric Supply Corporation Building.

General Electric Supply Corporation Building Boundary Map. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951.

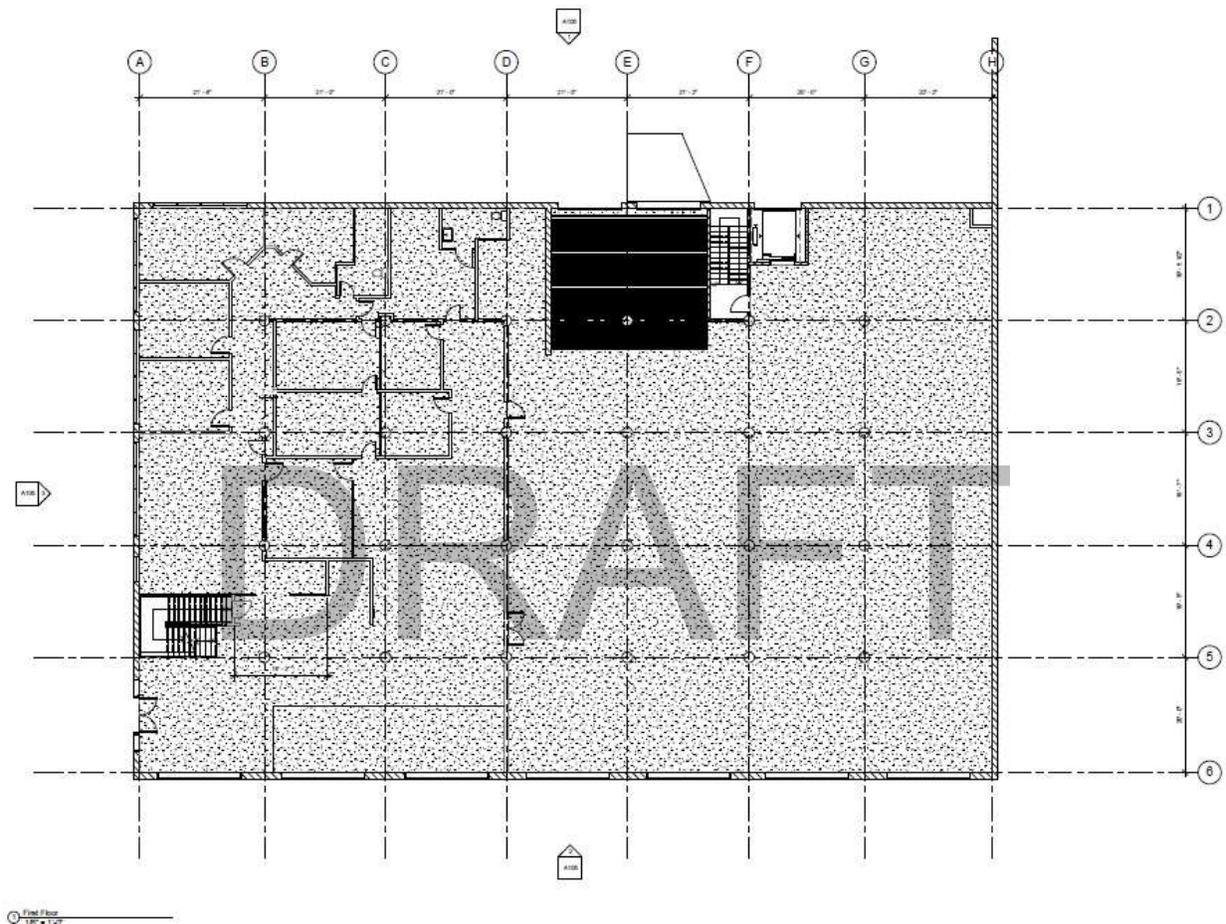


National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 23

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 1: First floor plan. (Source: Gregory J. Christian AIA, 2013.)

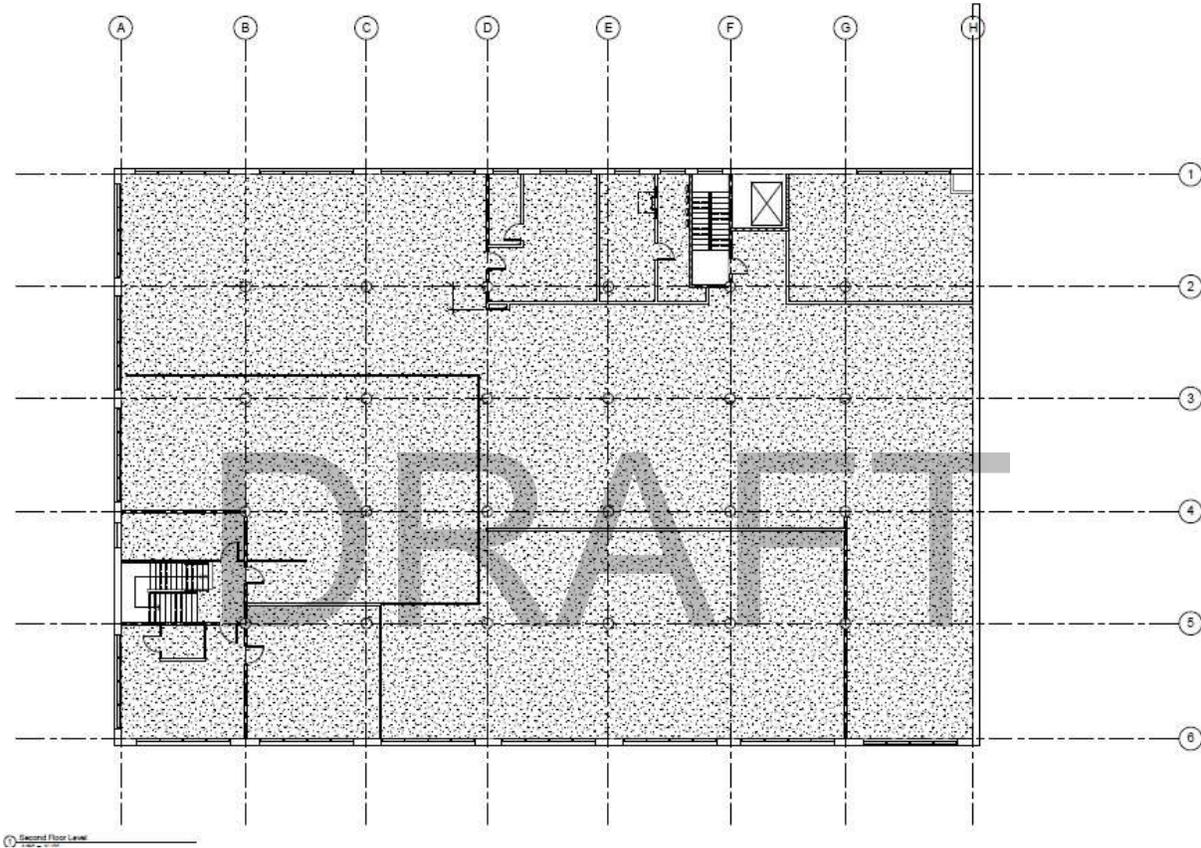


National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 24

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 2: Second floor plan. (Source: Gregory J. Christian AIA, 2013.)



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 25

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 3: Photograph of Preston J. Bradshaw. Collection of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis.



DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places
 Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 26

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 4: National publications of architectural works designed by Preston J. Bradshaw.
 Compiled by Michael R. Allen, Preservation Research Office.

Title	Publication	Date of Publication
"Residence at St. Louis, Mo."	<i>Western Architect</i>	July 1911
"Plaza Hotel at St. Louis, Missouri"	<i>Western Architect</i>	June 1916
"Pickel Building at St. Louis, Missouri"	<i>Western Architect</i>	June 1916
"Lacassion Laboratories Building, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>American Architect</i>	January 1918
"An automobile sales and service building, Weber Motor Car Co., St. Louis, Mo."	<i>Architectural Forum</i>	February 1921
"The Chase Hotel" and "Chase Apartments, Chester Apartments"	<i>Architecture</i>	June 1922
"Melbourne Hotel, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>American Architect</i>	December 1922
"Hotel Chase"	<i>American Architect & The Architectural Review</i>	August 1923
"Coronado Hotel, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>Architectural Record</i>	1924
"The Brown Hotel, Louisville, Ky."	<i>American Architect & The Architectural Review</i>	August 1924
"The Bellerive, Kansas City, Mo., an apartment house hotel"	<i>American Architect & The Architectural Review</i>	November 1924
"Mayfair Hotel, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>American Architect</i>	April 1926
"Embassy Hotel, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>American Architect</i>	August 1926
"Office building for Sears, Roebuck & Company, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>American Architect</i>	June 1928
"Hotel Lennox, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>Architectural Forum</i>	December 1929
"Merchandise Mart, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>Architectural Record</i>	March 1934
"Building Types: Apartments"	<i>Architectural Record</i>	1938
"Shopping Center: Hampton Village, St. Louis, Mo."	<i>Architectural Record</i>	August 1949

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 27

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 5: The Plaza Hotel (1915). Source: Michael Allen, Preservation Research Office, 2014.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 28

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 6: Lacassian Laboratories Building (1916). Source: Michael Allen, Preservation Research Office, 2014.



Figure 7: Postcard view of the Weber Implement and Automobile Company Building (1919). Source: Landmarks Association of St. Louis.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 29

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 30

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 8: Postcard view of the Mart Building (1932). Source: Preservation Research Office Collection.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 31

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 9: The commercial building at 26-40 Maryland Plaza (1935). Source: Michael R. Allen for Preservation Research Office, 2014.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 32

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 10: Kirkwood Insurance Company Building (1936). Source: Michael R. Allen for Preservation Research Office, 2009.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 33

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 11: Rendering of Manhasset Village Apartments (1938). Source: *Architectural Record*.



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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 34

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 12: The warehouse at 4011 Forest Park Avenue (1946). Source: Michael R. Allen for Preservation Research Office, 2014.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 35

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 13: The Ford Apartments (1948). Source: Michael R. Allen for Preservation Research Office, 2014.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 36

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 14: St. Louis County Courthouse (1949). Source: St. Louis County.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 37

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 15: Endicott-Johnson Shoe Distribution Warehouse (1924). Source: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, 2007.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 38

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 16: The Standard Auto Parts Building at 3200 Locust Street (1944). Source: Michael Allen, Preservation Research Office, 2013.

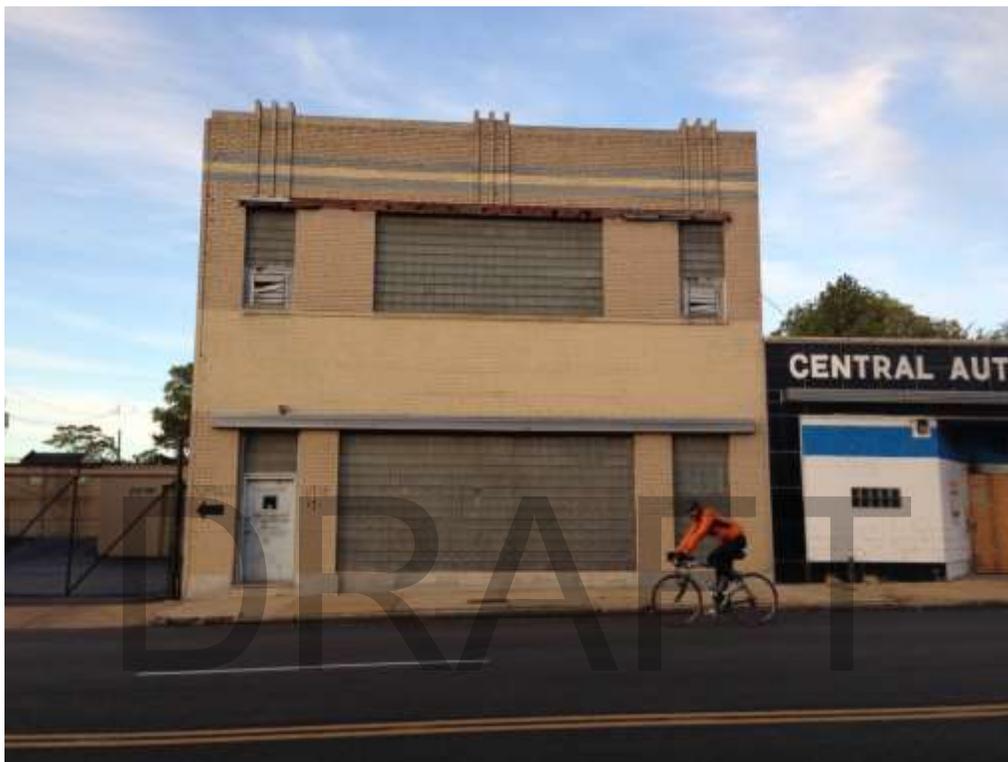


National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 39

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 17: Reed Rubber Company Warehouse (1941). Source: Michael R. Allen, Preservation Research Office, 2013.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Map Page 40

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

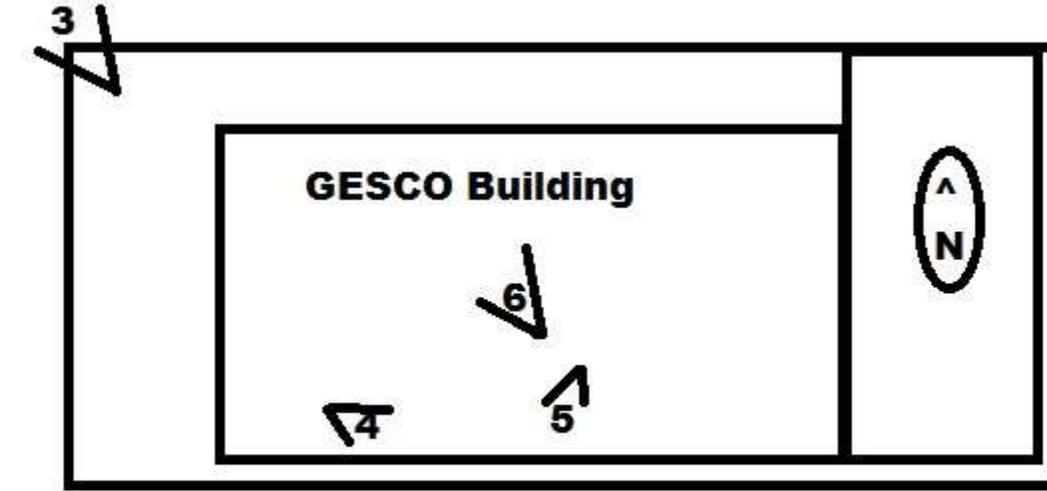
General Electric Supply Corporation Building
2653 Locust Street
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
Latitude: 38.634792
Longitude: -90.215687



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photo Key Page 42

General Electric Supply Corporation Building
Name of Property
St. Louis (Ind. City), MO
County and State
n/a
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



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