NPS Form 10-900
Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Kirkwood Building

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 1737-41 McGee Street [n/a] not for publication

city or town Kansas City [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64108

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO Date 13 June 2001

Missouri Department of Natural Resources State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date
[ ] entered in the National Register See continuation sheet [ ].		
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet [ ].		
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.		
[ ] removed from the National Register		
[ ] other, explain See continuation sheet [ ].		

5.Classification

Ownership of Property

[x] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property

[x] building(s)
[ ] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

Commerce/Trade: business
Commerce/Trade: warehouse
Commerce/Trade: specialty store

Current Functions

Commerce/Trade: business
Industry: communications facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Commercial Style

Materials

Foundation Stone
Walls Brick
Roof Other: Tar and gravel
Other Concrete

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8.Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

[x] **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.

Criteria Considerations

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
Commerce
Transportation

Periods of Significance
1920-1939

Significant Dates
1920

Significant Person(s)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Wight and Wight/ Long, R.A. Construction Co.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Primary location of additional data:

[x] State Historic Preservation Office

[ ] Other State Agency

[ ] Federal Agency

[ ] Local Government

[x] University

[x] Other:

Name of repository: The Kansas City Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	363390	4328190			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Richards Johnson, President and Nicole Sabatini

organization Susan Richards Johnson & Associates, Inc. date February 20, 2001

street & number 818 Grand Boulevard, Suite 1150 telephone 816.474.0900

city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64106

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Thomas W. Levitt, Levitt Enterprises, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 414740 telephone 816-474-2244

city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64141

SUMMARY

The Kirkwood Building, constructed in 1919 -1920, is a brick, four-story building, located at 1737-41 McGee Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Irwin R. Kirkwood developed the property specifically for lease to two automobile dealerships and hired the prominent Kansas City architectural firm of Wight and Wight to design the building and the R. A. Long Construction Company to build it.[1] The building, which rests on a concrete foundation, is constructed of a concrete framework with structural clay tile walls clad with rugface brick laid in a decorative pattern, cut stone and terra cotta trim on the exterior and plaster on the interior. The main, or west, façade of the building, located on McGee Street is four bays wide with 99 feet of street frontage. The secondary south façade, located on 18th Street, is five bays long and has 116 feet of street frontage. The east façade faces a parking lot and the north façade is adjacent to a smaller, one story building. Upper stories of the two main façades contain one-over-one double hung windows while the storefront level is made up largely of infilled storefront windows. Although the fourth floor was not shown on the original drawings in either plan or building elevation, it is original to the building. Aside from new interior partition walls, other alterations that have been made to the building include the renovation of the first story storefront and the replacement of the window sashes on the upper stories; however these changes are largely reversible. The majority of the building fabric is intact and in place. Consequently, the Kirkwood Building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

ELABORATION

The area surrounding the Kirkwood Building is largely made up of two story brick buildings that were constructed at approximately the same time as the Kirkwood Building. The building to the north of the Kirkwood Building is a one story building that has had considerable facade alterations. Across the street to the west, a surface parking lot is surrounded by a brick wall, approximately four feet in height. Across the street to the south of the Kirkwood Building is a two-story brick building. This building has recently been renovated and is in good condition. Another surface parking lot is located directly east of the Kirkwood Building. Overall, the McGee Street streetscape is intact, though many of the buildings have had considerable alterations and lack integrity. The areas behind the Kirkwood Building

1 Kansas City Records. Building Permit #61048

are not as intact. Several buildings have been demolished in order to make room for surface parking. The Kirkwood Building stands out in its surroundings because of its size. Its four stories rise above the other buildings and call attention to its simple, restrained design.

West Elevation

The primary (west) elevation of the building is divided into four equal bays. The first floor bays are separated by brick pilasters set in a Flemish bond, measuring approximately three feet wide, and capped with a terra cotta crown molding. Large display windows were originally placed between each pilaster. As the building was initially a car dealership, the original windows extended to the foundation of the building, to nearly floor level. Because the grade slopes to the south, the concrete foundation wall steps down approximately eighteen inches in the middle of the façade. This accommodates the need for the display windows along the entire facade while avoiding high foundation walls at street level. According to the original drawings, the windows were tripartite systems with copper set plates. Transoms were placed above each display window within each bay. The transom muntins aligned with the muntins of the windows below, though the middle section of each transom appears to have been operable, as it is divided into two sections resembling a double hung window turned ninety degrees. The northern two bays as well as the southernmost bay each contained entry doors. The door in the northernmost bay was placed at the north end of the bay, and the door in the next bay to the south was placed in the middle of the bay. The door in the southern bay was turned 45 degrees to the south, providing a corner entrance.

By the 1970s, the large display windows were no longer needed at the floor elevation. Brick was used to infill the lower two feet, six inches (approximately) of each bay opening, and new aluminum casement windows were placed above the brick infill. The entry door in the second bay from the north was removed and replaced with a window to match the other new windows. The top of the windows aligned with each other, and because the foundation and the brick infill stepped down, the windows in the northern two bays were smaller than those in the southern two bays. The new windows were designed to follow the original tripartite system that they replaced, though they were much shorter in height and had considerably heavier mullions. In the middle window of each bay system, an intermediate vertical mullion divided the window system. Where the brick and foundation stepped down, larger windows were installed in

the southern two bays and a horizontal mullion was placed to align with the top of the brick infill in the northern bays in an attempt to create a visual relationship between the two window sizes. The remainder of each original bay opening, above the new windows, was infilled with wood panels that had a painted stucco finish. Later, another infill project occurred. This infill added more brick within the southern two window openings to align with the brick in the northern two bays. This alteration allowed the height of the brick to be level in each bay, creating uniform openings instead of two opening heights. When this infill occurred, the windows in the southern two bays were removed and boarded up. The windows in the northern two bays were replaced with casement units that fit into the existing openings. Additionally, a corner entrance located on the southwest corner of the building was removed. This original entry was bricked and boarded up to match the new infill. These alterations did not alter the original fabric of the building and is therefore reversible.

The northern bay of the west façade is divided into two parts, separated by brick pilasters, though much smaller in width. The south part of this bay contains aluminum framed infill windows that match those in the adjacent bay. The northern half of this bay contains an entry door which is recessed into the building several feet, creating an entrance vestibule which is clad on the interior with glazed concrete masonry units laid up in a stacked bond. The entrance door consists of an aluminum storefront system that is not original to the building. A large half-sphere canvas awning hangs over this entrance. The awning is mounted to a horizontal board that fits within the original masonry opening, which has been infilled with aluminum siding.

A pronounced terra cotta band of crown molding runs horizontally across the west façade, resting on terra cotta pilaster capitals. Approximately four inches above this horizontal band, centered above each of the five pilasters, are simple eighteen inch round terra cotta paterae embedded into the brick. Another horizontal band of terra cotta crown molding runs continuously across the façade approximately four inches above the paterae, serving as the sills for the second story windows.

The second through fourth stories of this façade are fairly uniform in design. The four bays are divided by sections of brick that are wider than the corresponding brick pilasters below. These brick wall areas maintain the Flemish bond intrinsic to the building's original design. The northern and the southern outer bays protrude one brick wythe from the

middle bays. Their brick wall sections are not uniform in width as compared to the brick wall sections flanking the windows in the middle two bays. The northern and southern bays have four window units flanked by brick wall sections that are four feet, three inches in width. The middle two bays have three window units flanked by brick wall sections that are three feet in width on their north and south ends. The middle brick section between these two middle bays measures six feet, eight inches in width. Although the four bays are equal in size, the northernmost bay and the southernmost bay appear to be larger than the two middle bays. This is because these outer bays each contain four window units rather than three, as the middle two bays do. The width of the outer bay windows is also narrower than the middle bay windows in order to compensate for the similar bay widths. The original double hung wood windows have been replaced with aluminum double hung window sashes that match the original in size and configuration. The window mullions and frames are original, though they have been clad in aluminum.

The spandrel areas between the second and third story windows and third and fourth story windows are filled with decorative brick. A soldier course of brick runs along the perimeter at each of these areas. At each corner of these panels, the bricks are cut to form mitered joints. A single course of stacked bond brick aligns with the window mullions above and below and divides each area into equal sections. The area between the vertical courses of bricks is filled with header bricks laid in a stacked bond, creating a grid. These field areas are recessed slightly from the face of the border bricks.

Approximately one foot, six inches above the top of the fourth story windows, a band of terra cotta crown molding runs the length of the façade. Several additional courses of Flemish bond brick lay above this band, and then a heavier cornice-like band of terra cotta molding followed by several additional courses of brick. This façade is topped off by a plain course of terra cotta that provides a continuous coping for the wall system.

South Elevation

The south façade of the building is similar to the west façade in that the window and pilaster configurations are the same. However, the south façade contains an extra bay on the east end, which has a different configuration. The westernmost bay is the same as the southernmost bay of the west façade. The corner is chamfered to allow for the

corner entrance and the windows in the upper stories of the westernmost bay are the same as those on the west façade (northern and southern bays). The next three middle bays are the same design as the middle bays on the west façade. The fifth bay, or the easternmost bay, originally contained a platform elevator and therefore has a different window configuration. This bay now contains an overhead door on the easternmost half of the first floor section and a large window just to the west of the overhead door. A single terra cotta lintel connects these two first floor openings. Each of the upper stories of this easternmost bay contains two individual double hung window units. An area of brick three feet in width separates these windows. There is no decorative trim around these windows, although each window unit contains a terra cotta sill. A brick parapet wall that housed the original elevator penthouse rests on the roof of the building, flush with the face of the façade. The parapet wall is approximately eight feet tall and spans approximately half of the length of the easternmost bay. All of the windows on the first story of this façade are bricked and boarded up, similar to those on the west façade. Again, these alterations are reversible and sufficient documentation exists to determine the appropriate replacement storefront design.

East Elevation

The east elevation of the building is very utilitarian. It is also divided into four equilateral bays with exposed concrete structure separating them. The brick on this façade is laid in a common bond with smooth brick, rather than with the rugfaced brick set in a Flemish bond on the west and south façades. The southernmost bay on the first floor is comprised of a solid brick wall. The next bay to the north contains three 3/3 double hung units with matching transoms above each unit. Each transom has three muntins that align with the muntins of the windows below. The next bay to the north contains a newer hollow metal entry door near the center of the bay and a newer aluminum overhead door that measures eight feet wide by ten feet high to the north of the entry door. The next bay to the north also contains an overhead door in the southern portion of the bay. Two window units fill the northern portion of this bay. The second through fourth stories of the façade are more uniform in design. The southernmost bays on the second and third stories each contain one double hung window unit near the north end of the bay. The fourth story contains two individual double hung window units. The window unit in the southern portion of the bay is newer and does not match the units on the remainder of the façade. The other window in this bay matches the other 3/3 double hung units and aligns vertically with the unit directly below it. The next bay to the north contains three evenly spaced openings on

each story. The two southern openings each contain windows, and the northern openings in the bays contain emergency exit doors that lead to an original metal fire escape. This fire escape connects the second through fourth floors. The fourth floor exit door is original with a 2/2 half light configuration. The emergency exit doors on the second and third floors have been replaced with solid wood units. All three of these exit door openings have their original transom units in place. The next two bays to the north each contain three evenly spaced window openings with 3/3 double hung units. All of the windows on this façade, with the exception of the newer one mentioned, are original to the building. Because they are located on a façade with close proximity to a property line, the glass in each of these units is fire-rated wire glass. Most of the windows are still operable and appear to be in good condition.

The 8foot parapet wall that began on the east end of the south façade turns the corner and continues along the east façade for the length of the southernmost bay. This parapet wall screens the original elevator penthouse that is located on the roof of the building. This wall contains painted signage referring an earlier name of the current tenant of the building, "Missouri Engravers." A concrete and steel framed water tower platform is located on the roof in the northeast corner of the building. The platform stands approximately ten feet in height and spans the length of the northernmost bay.

North Elevation

The north façade of the building is completely unornamented, as it connected to an adjacent building that is only one story in height. Three windows are placed on the top story, one bay in from the east end of the building. These windows are the same size and configuration as the windows on the east façade. The concrete structural grid of the building is also visible on the façade. All remaining wall areas are infilled with brick laid in a common bond that matches the east, or rear, façade.

Exterior Summary

There have been few irreversible alterations to the building. All of the decorative elements have been retained and are

in good condition, overall. The upper floor window sashes have been replaced, though the original frames have been retained. The first story window units have been replaced in their entirety, but the original bay configuration remains intact. The north entry on the west façade has been altered and the middle door on that facade has been removed. Finally, the entrance at the southwest corner of the building has been altered, though the foundation walls remain intact. No additional window openings have been cut, and the building has been well maintained. Overall, the building retains a high degree of integrity.

Interior

The interior of the building remains largely intact. Few alterations have been made to its historic fabric. The first floor areas have had little alteration. The floor in the original display room is a grid of black terrazzo with inlaid sections of Carthage marble and is in very good condition. The original used car department and the additional rental space have their original terrazzo flooring, although a small area of floor has been altered for the installation of a printing press and other equipment. The floor in the original repair shop is concrete and remains intact.

The mezzanine also remains intact. The original stair leading to the mezzanine level remains in use and in its original configuration. The wrought iron stairs are fitted with Carthage marble stair treads and a decorative iron railing with a hardwood handrail. With the exception of the non-skid tape that has been added to each tread, the stair remains original. The original floor of the mezzanine is finished concrete, presently covered with composition flooring. The original south and west sides of the mezzanine had an open railing providing a direct connection between the display room, the sales offices, and the used car department below. Solid plaster walls have been infilled where the original railings were located along the south and west sides of the mezzanine.

The ceilings in the first story of the building are intact and in good condition. The plaster beams are highly ornamented and show very little deterioration. The beams in the original display room are ornamented with an emblem depicting a wheel with wings located on the vertical face. A triglyph is located between each emblem. Above this metope, a cornice of beaded molding is located beneath a rope molding which supports a final area of beaded molding A unique design feature includes an integrated ventilation system utilizing the wheel with wings emblem applied to these

perimeter beams. Alternating wheel emblems have areas between the spokes left open, allowing for ventilation from within the beams.

The original used car department has decorative beams, though they are less elaborate. They feature a plaster egg and dart motif with a rope molding above and a beaded molding below. The plaster crown molding in the mezzanine area is the same egg and dart motif that occurs in the used car department. A simple extruded molding with little ornamentation is located in the rental space on the north side of the first floor. The underside of the all first floor beams is flat plaster with simple ornamentation at each edge. The plaster ceiling plane has remained intact. A few holes have been punctured in the surface of the ceiling to allow for a sprinkler system and additional lighting.

Two elevators are located along the north wall of the building. The east elevator appears to be historic, although it is not known if it is original. The main passenger elevator is not historic and was installed in the 1960s. This elevator is located next to the historic elevator. Both elevators are operable and in good condition. There is a stairway and stair hall located along the north side of each floor that is not indicated on the original drawings. The stair appears to be historic and is similar to the mezzanine stair. The stair hall has Carthage marble wall panels, and the floor has Carthage marble rectangular tiles with a marble border and marble base. The stair treads are Carthage marble as well.

The first floor is currently used as a printing company's production area. The space requirements for this operation do not demand a different layout from what existed originally, and therefore the space remains intact.

The second floor of the building is occupied by the same printing company and is used for office space and an additional production area. Walls were erected to define this area and a lay-in ceiling system was installed to provide acoustical separation from the second floor production area. Carpet was laid in the office areas and wood paneling was applied to several walls. All of the alterations to this floor of the building are cosmetic and can be removed with little difficulty. Although the freight elevator was removed from the southeast corner of the building, minimal structural alterations have been made over the years.

The third floor of the building is used for several different office spaces. Walls have been installed to create these

spaces and carpet was installed in the hallways and some of these tenant spaces. Additionally, acoustical ceiling tile has been installed in some areas. The original floor was concrete, which is intact under the carpet. The fourth floor of the building is similar to the third floor. It is also rental space and is therefore subdivided. The remaining historic fabric remains intact. The original building had minimal restroom facilities. Several restrooms were added during a prior remodeling of the property and remain intact. The current plumbing is antiquated.

Integrity

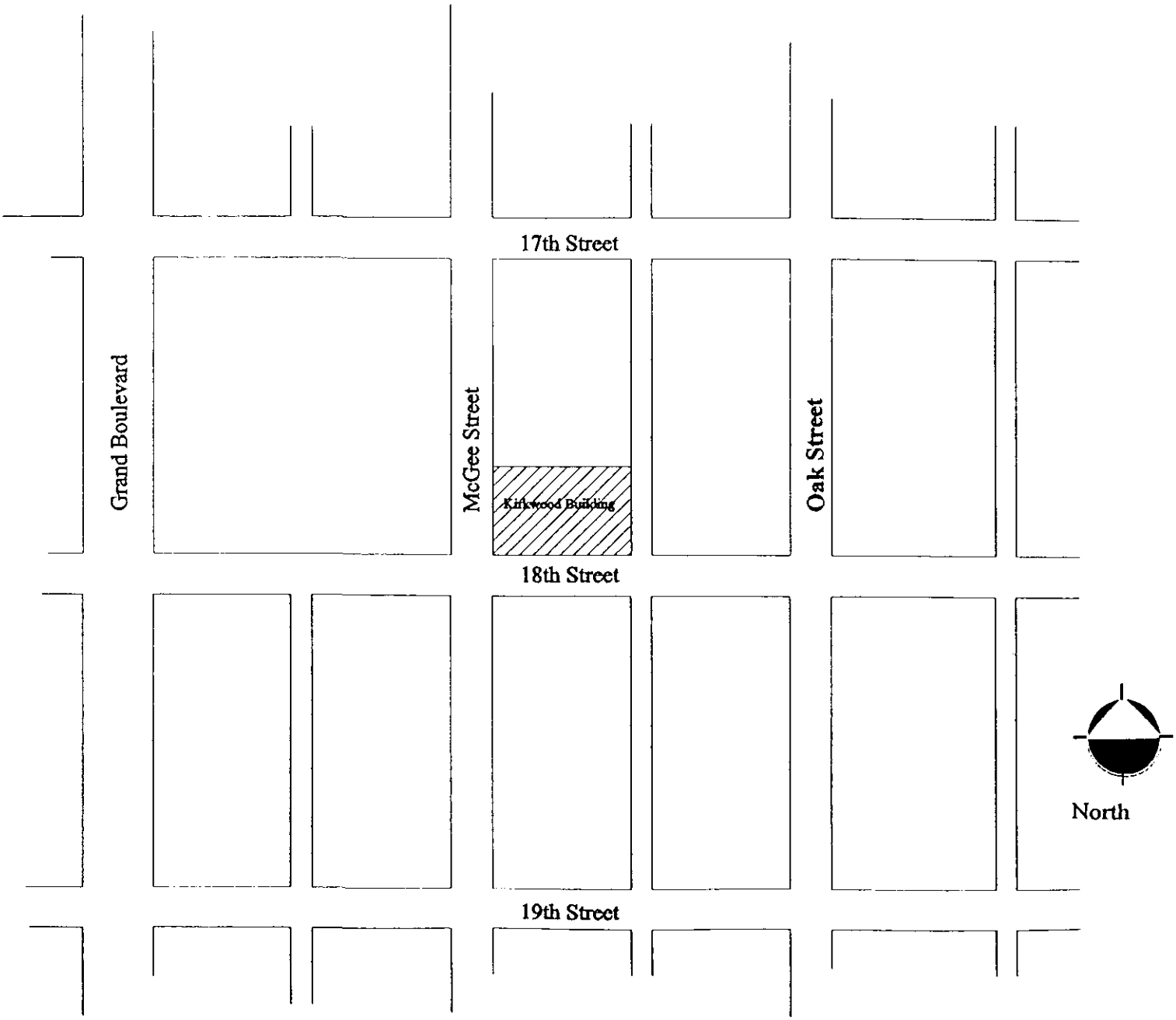
The Kirkwood Building retains a significant amount of its original design integrity. The first story façade has been altered to accommodate the building's current use as a printing and pre-press business. The storefront windows have been infilled with stucco, though no structural modifications have taken place to damage the original fabric of the building, and the infill could easily be removed without damaging the original material and its configuration. More importantly, the infill has not compromised the building's ability to communicate its original first floor display usage. A corner entrance was removed and filled in to gain space on the interior of the building; the foundation of the building has not been altered (thus denoting the alteration). The replacement sashes on the upper stories match the original in configuration and size. Portions of the interior of the building have been modified with the addition of contemporary partition walls to accommodate offices. The character of the first floor showroom space, however, remains in place and intact. The plaster ornamentation on the ceiling beams is in excellent condition, and the terrazzo and marble floors are in good condition as well.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of integrity in its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, all of which convey the building's historical significance. The setting retains its commercial appearance and considerable density of its historic period of importance. Original materials of the building have been retained and maintained, and a significant percentage of the design elements remain intact. These factors allow the Kirkwood Building to convey its historic associations and to communicate feelings of the period of time in which it is historically significant.

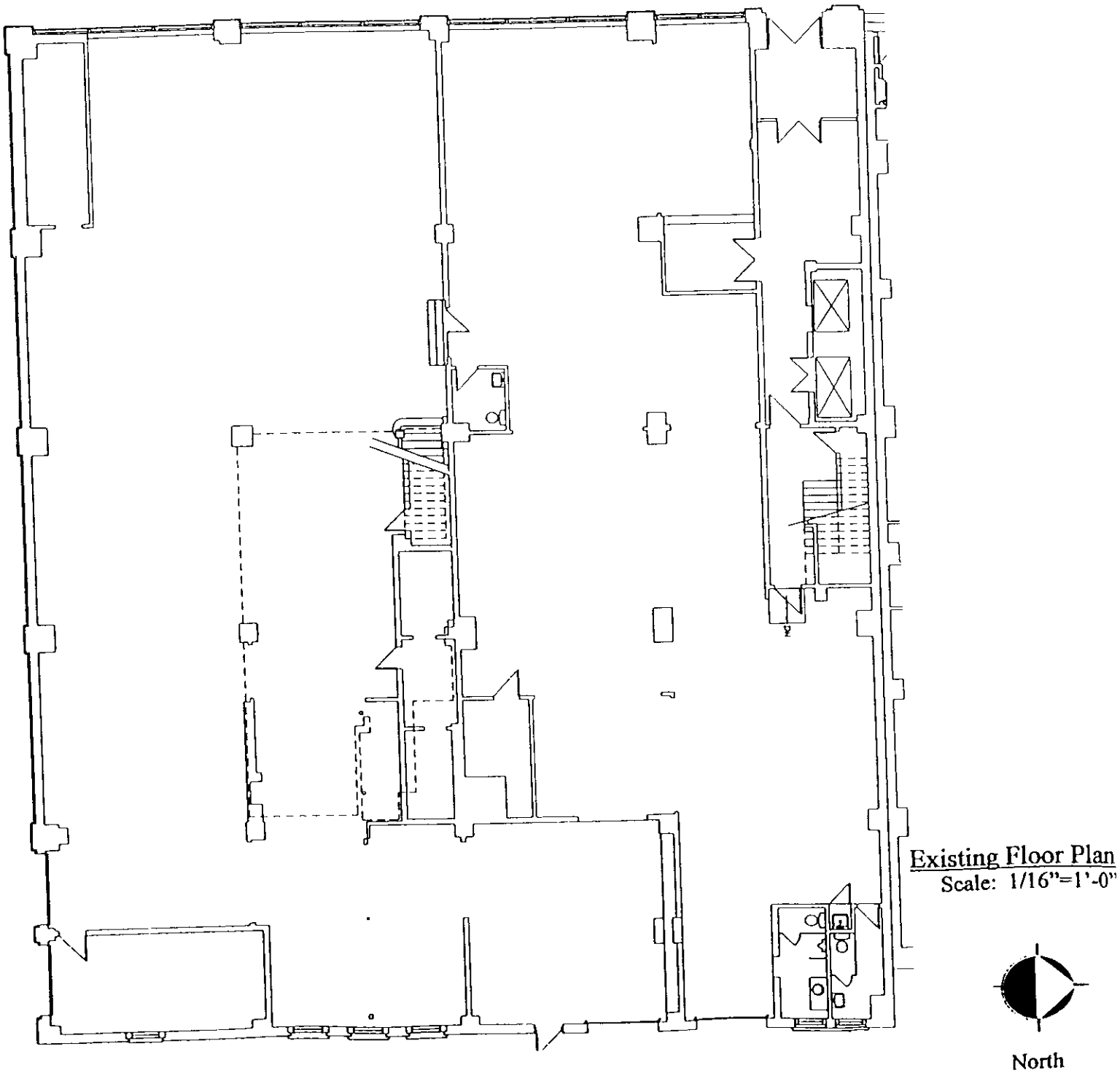
Future Plans for the Building

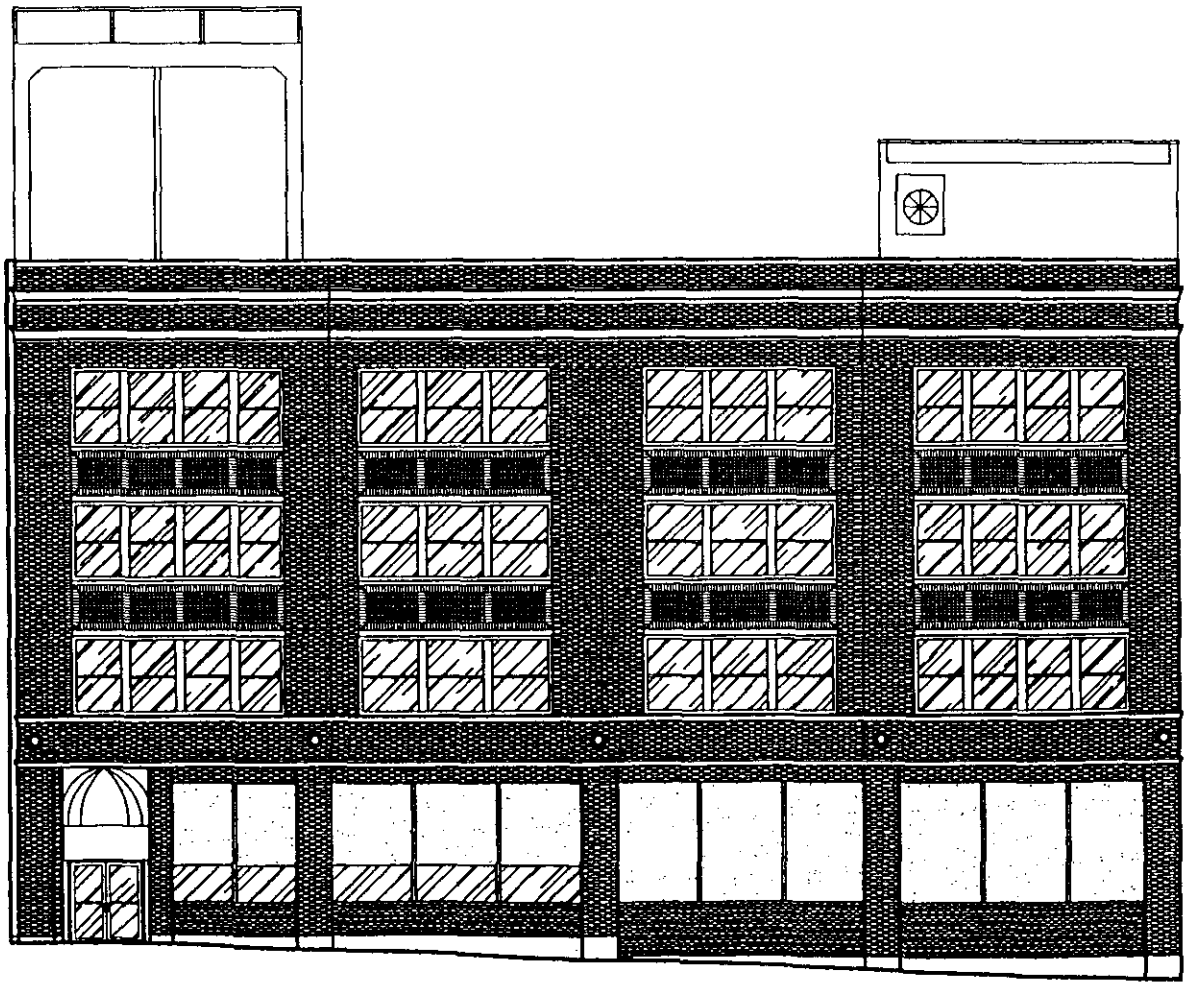
Historic photographic documentation shows the various stages of alteration of the west and south façades. Original building plans document the design of the building and show open floor plans on the second and third floors. These original plans do not indicate the fourth floor as it was added during construction. The owner wishes to restore the original storefront windows and entries on the first floor of the building and to re-open the mezzanine to the first floor below by removing the infill walls and by installing open railings that match the original. The owner expects to remove the majority of the non-original partitioning and restrooms, as the renovated building will most likely serve as office space and will require new wall, stairway, and restroom configurations. Additionally, the building will need to meet current and applicable building code standards and ADA guidelines, but the historic features will be retained and restored where possible.

Site Map

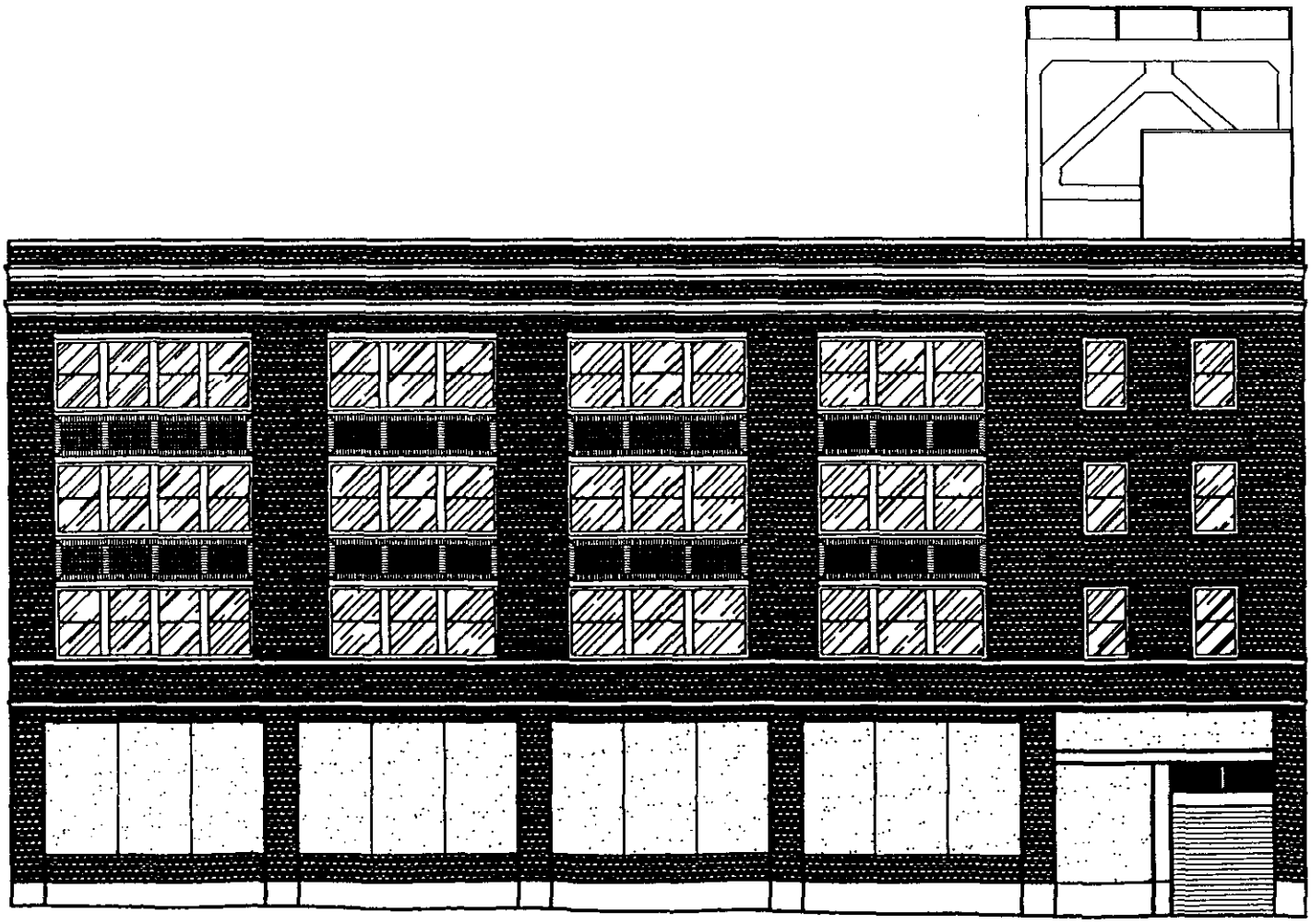

17th Street
Grand Boulevard
McGee Street
Kirkwood Building
Oak Street
18th Street
North
19th Street

First Floor Plan

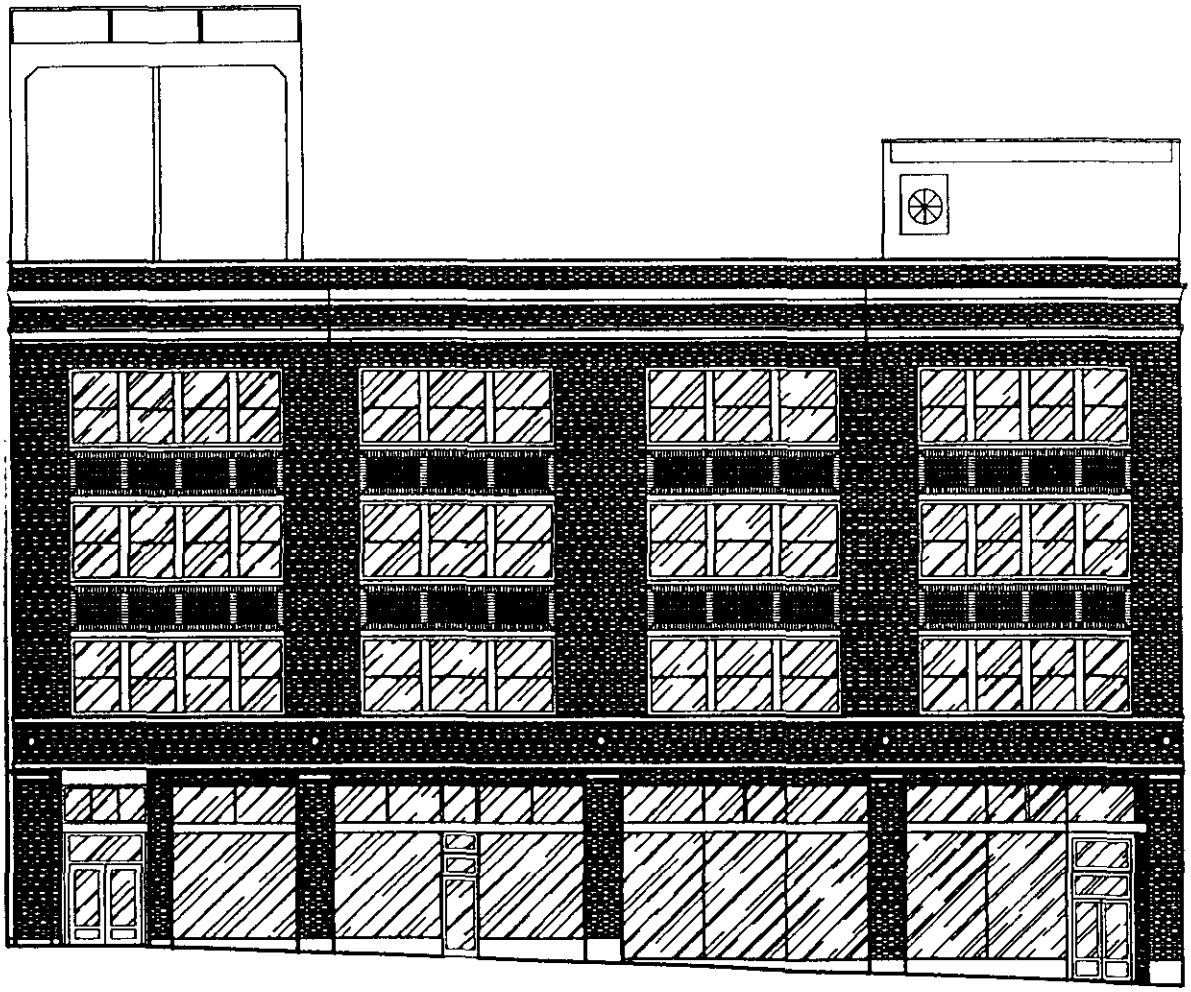




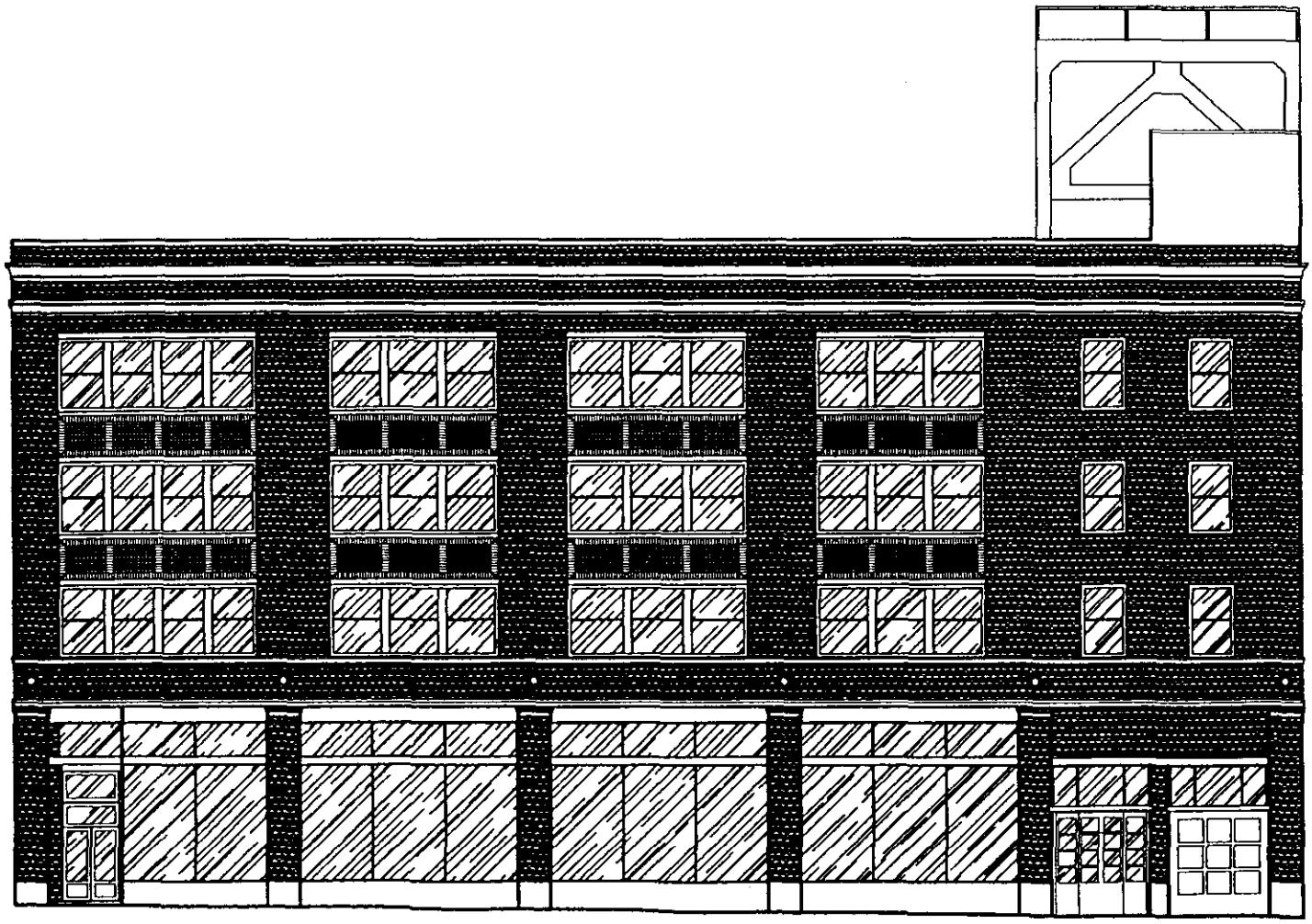
EXISTING WEST ELEVATION



EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION



PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION



PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION

SUMMARY

The Kirkwood Building, located at 1737 McGee Street, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** for its significance in **Commerce and Transportation**. This automotive dealership building is located in an area of Kansas City that was known as "Automobile Row" during the first half of the twentieth century. It is significant as an example of a dwindling and increasingly rare resource, an early 20th century automotive dealership. The design of the building communicates information about the development of the automotive sales and distribution business, the growth in use of automobiles in the early decades of the twentieth century and the expansion of specialized real estate related to the automobile sales business. Real estate developer Irwin R. Kirkwood hired the prominent Kansas City architectural firm of Wight and Wight to design the building to accommodate two separate automobile dealerships. The architectural design reflects the quality of the restrained, streamlined Neoclassical style typical of the firm's commercial buildings. As a representative example of the firm's commercial work, the Kirkwood Building is an important contrast to their prominent "high style" designs for institutional buildings that include the First National Bank Building, the Kansas City Life Insurance Company headquarters and the Nelson-Atkins Gallery of Art. Upon the building's completion in 1920, the Gridley Motor Company and the Indiana Truck Company occupied it as the original tenants. For the next twenty years, other automotive businesses occupied the building, including Hathaway Motors, Durant Motors, Kansas City Flint Autos, Faeth Company Auto Suppliers, Republic Gear Corporation, and Thompson Products Auto Parts. The period of significance is 1920 to 1939, when the Kirkwood Building ceased to be used for automotive related business.

ELABORATION

Historic Context

By 1920, the year the Kirkwood Building was completed, automobiles had been in production in the United States for only 24 years. "Benz in Germany was the first to put an automobile into production, a three-wheeler built in 1885. In

the United States there were tinkerers, but no industry until 1896."[1] Between that time and the early 1920s the industry in the United States grew from only a few producers to hundreds, many of which began as carriage companies.

When the automobile was introduced, it was a machine only the wealthy could afford. The price, $2,000 to $3,000, was twice the average salary of a U.S. worker. By the end of World War I, automobile manufacturers produced 1.5 million cars a year, and as the production process became streamlined, the automobile became more affordable to everyone. By the mid 1920s, many working class people owned automobiles, and innovations such as Henry Ford's introduction of continuous plate glass made closed cars possible at an affordable price.[2] "What happened was that manufacturers had learned to build closed cars that were not hideously expensive, that did not rattle themselves to pieces, and that could be painted with a fast-drying but durable paint; and that meanwhile the car-buying public had discovered with delight that a closed car was something quite different from the old 'horseless carriage.'"[3] The closed car not only allowed the passengers to stay dry and clean, a transportation luxury in the beginning of the century, but also created less of a distinction between higher and lower priced cars.

Nationwide, the Federal Highway Act of 1916 spurred the construction of highways throughout the country, making distance travelling much easier. The automobile was becoming much more than a substitute for the streetcar. It was also a substitute for the train. In 1916, "railroad travelers had 300,000 miles of fixed lines along which they were channeled by the companies. Motorists now had three million miles of road, even if those sections were still dirt and pocked by mudholes, and they could choose their path as they wished."[4]

As the economy grew after World War I, automobiles became quite common. By 1920, the United States had 76 cars per 1,000 population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of the United States in 1920 was 106,012,537 people, translating into over 8 million automobiles in the United States. Two million farmers owned

1 Richard A. Wright, *A Brief History of the First 100 Years of the Automobile History in the United States* (website) http://www.theautochannel.com/content/mania/industry/history/chap1.html 1996 [Wayne State University's Department of Communications] accessed 13 December 2000.
2 Bill Moyers, *America on the Road* (Alexandria, Virginia: PBS Video, 1988).
3 Frederick Lewis Allen, The Big Change, America Transforms Itself (New York: Harper and Row Publishers 1952), 109.
4 Spiro Kostof, *America by Design* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 191.

automobiles, and by 1922 "more than 100,000 suburban homes in the United States [were] wholly auto dependent."[5]

From its introduction, the automobile caught on quickly in Kansas City. "Only a couple of hundred Kansas Citians owned automobiles when the first auto show came to town in 1907, but 20,000 people showed up."[6] Between 1908 and 1923, the rise in the number of automobiles in Kansas City is staggering. In only fifteen years, "Kansas City's motor population has grown from 400 to 55,000, streets from 300 to 600 miles."[7] The growing number of automobile owners is evident from the many new houses built with garages and the new garages added to existing properties. Many of the building permits issued in Kansas City in the early 1920s were issued for garage additions. This increase in automobile use allowed the growth of the city to occur several miles south of downtown, because Kansas Citians were no longer dependent on electric streetcars for transportation. Growth continued southward, following the construction of new roads. The *Kansas City Star* reported, "Most of the increase in thoroughfares since 1908 has been in outlying parts of the city, new additions in particular."[8]

Subdivisions in Kansas City began moving farther south as early as 1905, when real estate developer J.C. Nichols began the development of a subdivision south of Brush Creek. Soon after, Irwin Kirkwood developed a residential area between 55th and 59th Streets and between Troost Avenue and Holmes Street, known as Rockhill Ridge. These areas of development expanded all the way to 65th Street by 1917.[9] This growth was welcomed in Kansas City. "As long as technology kept pace with growth, bigger did indeed seem so much better that Kansas City swelled to immense geographic proportions, covering an area nearly three times that of Manhattan, San Francisco, and Paris combined."[10] According to a map depicting the locations for which building permits for new residences were issued, a vast majority of the residential construction taking place in Kansas City from 1921 to 1926 was in the area from Brush Creek to 63rd

5 Clay McShane, *The Automobile.*
6 Rick Montgomery and Shirl Kaspar, *Kansas City, An American Story* (Kansas City: Kansas City Star Books, 1999) 229.
7 "Cars Flood the Streets," *The Kansas City Star*, 24 June 1923, 3.
8 *ibid.*
9 George Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990 Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 72.
10 Sherry Lamb Schirmer, and Richard D. McKinzie, *At the River's Bend: An Illustrated History of Kansas City, Independence and Jackson County* (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company 1982), 83.

Street, between Wornall Road and Prospect Avenue.[11]

Because much of the newer residential development was occurring south of downtown, shopping centers were constructed that catered to these residents, many of whom owed automobiles. J.C. Nichols developed the Crestwood shops at 55th Street between Oak and Brookside Boulevard in 1922 with the automobile in mind. "While convenience for pedestrians and accessibility to public transit routes were factors in their placement and organization, they were situated to serve also the automobile. In this respect they recognized that convenient, free parking for commercial buildings was of growing importance."[12] This design idea played out on a much grander scale in 1923 within the Country Club Plaza. "The Plaza planners from the first recognized Kansas City's growing dependence on the private automobile by the provisions for a garage, filling stations, and the construction of free, off street parking lots."[13]

Although residential development continued spreading to the south, much of the business world in Kansas City was still downtown at this time, meaning many residents had to commute downtown. Commuting wasn't always easy, however. The large number of automobiles on the roads caused heavy congestion on the city streets, making travel from the southern part of the city to downtown time-consuming and frustrating. The City worked to respond to the pressure. Dirt roads were being paved and improved. The City Plan Commission was devising a new system of roads that could be implemented to relieve congestion and to expand into new areas.[14] The new roads, including Wornall Road and Ward Parkway, were wide and easy to navigate. However, it wasn't until 1925 that a local gas tax was implemented to generate funds for road repair, making Kansas City roads more serviceable.[15]

As more people bought cars, the entire automotive industry grew to become a major aspect of Kansas City's commerce. Early on, automobile makers determined that is was far more costly to ship fully assembled cars to showrooms across the country than to assemble them in regional factories for the regional market. Ford opened a plant in Kansas City

11 Craig Dawson, "Roads for the Rich: Highway Development and the Upper Class of Kansas City, 1923-39" (Undergraduate Honors Thesis, University of Kansas, 1978), map 4-7.
12 Ehrlich, 73.
13 *ibid.*
14 *Kansas City Star*, June 24, 1923.
15 Dawson, p. 22.

in 1912, and a number of carriage manufacturing businesses in the West Bottoms also began the assembly of automobiles, including the Studebaker Company. Furthermore, the wholesaling of cars, parts and accessories became an important part of Kansas City's overall wholesale trade.

Because of the City's role as a major wholesale distribution center for manufactured goods, the development of a regional center for automotive sales in Kansas City was assured. "By 1919 auto dealers ranked second only to purveyors of food in the number of retail establishments operated in Kansas City."[16] The 1919 Polks Directory lists 207 businesses under the heading of Automobiles and Supplies, indicating that a vast amount of automobile business was occurring. According to a *Kansas City Star* article from February of that year, "Fifty million dollars is a conservative estimate of the amount changing hands for motor cars, trucks and accessories here in a year."[17] During the same year, 226 Automobile and Supplies businesses were listed in the Polk's Directory, showing an increase of 9% over the previous year.

The rapid growth in automobile use spurred construction of specialized buildings related to the sales of automobiles. When automobiles first came to market at the turn-of the century, car manufacturers needed considerable outlays of capital to tool up their factories, while simultaneously developing national retail networks quickly and at minimum costs. This was most easily accomplished by granting selling rights to local entrepreneurs which allowed them to develop their own automobile dealerships. Businessmen already engaged in other transportation related sales and services – livery stables, blacksmith shops and carriage dealers – were among the first dealerships or "agencies." By the time the auto business became well established, owners dropped other endeavors and concentrated solely on car and truck sales.[18]

Entrepreneurs erected new dealership buildings to house the specialized spaces needed to sell and service automobiles, designed along the lines of the older commercial blocks they superseded. The facades of the new buildings continued to reflect the conventional Main Street commercial building hierarchy – storefront, upper-story, and cornice. However,

16 Schirmer, 229.
17 "From Nothing to a Million Dollar Business," *Kansas City Star*, February 1, 1920, page 4D.

the storefronts were generally larger in order to provide a better view of the cars displayed inside. Existing commercial block forms also influenced the interior organization of space. Most early showrooms resembled the typical large retail shop, with display space in the front and sales areas in the rear. Instead of being filled with drygoods, the space behind the show room accommodated sales offices and sales areas for auto-related products. The traditional back storage room became the repair shop with workbenches, oil pits, wash racks and turntables. Rather than containing offices or apartments typically found in retail areas, the upper stories instead provided space for inventory and storage accessible by a freight elevator.[19]

By the first years of the post World War I period, the place of the automobile became entrenched in the middle-class lifestyle. Throughout the country, automobile dealerships were being constructed by the hundreds. In a city the size of Kansas City, a certain degree of magnificence was needed to try to win the attention of a potential buyer. "Now architectural imagery was used not just to give credibility to fledgling companies, but also to symbolize the power of well established corporations and the prosperity of successful dealers. To create these...status symbols, auto companies and their dealers scrambled to obtain the services of prominent architects."[20] As automobile buyers were faced with multiple dealers to choose from, dealers were forced to seduce the potential buyer not only with their cars, but with a beautiful building that would properly show them off. "Producing good cars and convincing advertisements was one way to inspire public confidence. Building impressive and attractive showrooms was another...Model showrooms were crafted to resemble the most impressive office buildings, banks, and railroad depots so that they would be instantly perceived as civic assets."[21] Bas-relief terra cotta, ornamental cornices and accentuated portico entrances were frequently incorporated into the design of the exterior. Large opulent sales salons were placed inside.[22]

Along with the development of these specialized buildings for auto vending came the birth of a new type of commercial district – "Automobile Row." In many cities throughout the country, districts of buildings related to the automobile industry were located in an area just outside of the downtown retail and financial center in order to avoid higher real

18 Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 76.
19 *ibid.*
20 *ibid*, 81.
21 *ibid*, 79.

estate costs. The new automotive business areas typically began with one dealer erecting a new building outside of downtown, then another following. Soon, smaller automotive companies would fill in the gaps, and whole districts were formed.[23]

Kansas City was no exception. According to the 1909 Sanborn Fire Map, the neighborhood around 18th and McGee Streets was filled with middle class housing and related commercial buildings that supported the area. As documented by the Midtown Survey, conducted by the Kansas City Landmarks Commission and as directed by Sherri Piland, many of the remaining buildings in the area were constructed in the mid 1910s, replacing the housing that had existed there before. By the early 1920s the area was largely commercial, and McGee Street, between 15th and 20th Streets, became part of Kansas City's "Automobile Row," which extended from Truman Road south to 20th Street on both Grand and McGee Streets. According to Polk's Directories from 1920-1922, the immediate area was home to approximately 47% of all automotive related businesses. A typical commercial building in the area was a two-story structure clad in brick with terra cotta detailing, and many automobile showrooms and maintenance shops had main facades that incorporated storefronts with large expanses of glass and overhead doors on the ground floor level. Today, only 49 automobile related buildings remain in the area. The Kirkwood Building is one of seventeen that retains sufficient integrity to communicate their original function and one of only several that retain a high degree of architectural integrity. As such, it is a rare example of the early twentieth century automobile dealership property type.[24]

Property History

The original owner of the building, Mr. Irwin Kirkwood, was the son-in-law of William Rockhill Nelson, founder of the *Kansas City Star* newspaper, whose headquarters building was located at 18th Street and Grand Avenue across the street from the Kirkwood Building. After arriving in Kansas City in 1905, Kirkwood worked for the B.T. Whipple Real Estate Company and later, with Nelson's financial assistance, began his own "private real estate business with a

22 *ibid*, 79.
23 *ibid*, 83.
24 *ibid*.

$150,000 gift and land to develop south of Nelson's Rockhill area."[25] After Nelson's death in 1915, Kirkwood became actively involved in the *Kansas City Star*, of which he became the managing editor in 1924 and whose employee buyout from Nelson's estate he engineered in 1926. Kirkwood was also centrally involved in the plans for the construction of the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, for which Wight and Wight were selected as the design architects. According to a 1928 *Kansas City Star* article, in addition to the Kirkwood Building, Mr. Kirkwood also owned two buildings and one vacant lot in the immediate area of the Kansas City Star Building.

Kirkwood developed the building to accommodate two auto-related businesses, as each tenant area on the first floor had a separate automobile entrance along with its own wash rack. The main tenant area was designed for the Gridley Motor Company who had access to three additional floors. The first floor housed a display room, a used car department, a repair shop, and additional rental space. A mezzanine used for office space, measuring 22 feet by 41 feet, is located near the center of the first floor area. The second floor of the building was used for storage while the third floor served as a machine shop. The fourth floor was not shown on the drawings, so it is not clear what use occupied that floor. As the Gridley Motor Company grew from a one-car showroom highlighting a $75 car into a million-dollar business in only six years, their demand for space had increased rapidly. According to a February 1, 1920 *Kansas City Star* article, the business moved approximately once every year, from their first year in business until they moved into their new building, to accommodate that need for more space.

> Now another move is being made. Gridley is going to move into a building of his own, where all the departments can be together, at Eighteenth and McGee Streets. The first plans of the building two years ago called for a 2-story structure. Last spring Gridley asked the owner to make it a 3-story building, and when workmen had finished the steelwork for that Gridley asked to have a fourth story added, with provision for two additional floors. [26]

The company was the city's only authorized dealer of the Auburn car.[27] The Auburn Automobile Company, from Auburn, Indiana, would later produce three American classics -- the Auburn, the Cord, and the Duesenberg. "The

25 Kristie C. Wolferman, *The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art: Culture Comes to Kansas City* (Columbia and London: The University of Missouri Press, 1993), 34.
26 *The Kansas City Star*, 1 February 1920, 4 (D).
27 *The Kansas City Star*, February 1, 1920.

Duesenberg was arguably the finest car ever built in this country; America's answer to the Rolls Royce and the Bugatti...The Duesenberg J was the ultimate automobile and the ultimate status symbol."[28] The Auburn, which was manufactured in several styles, boasted its quality performance, comfort and reliability. Gridley also sold the Peerless and the Locomobile, both high priced luxury cars. A 1921 advertisement for the Peerless Eight Chassis boasted, "In the chassis of the Two-Power Range Eight are realized the characteristics most desired by the motorist. These characteristics are dependability, smooth performance and ease of operation."[29]

In 1922, Gridley Motors became Peerless Automotive, and B.E. Gridley became the vice president of the newly formed company. That year Peerless moved to another building, and Hathaway Motors moved into the Kirkwood Building.[30] In 1923, the Kansas City Durant Company moved in. William Durant, owner of the Durant-Dort Carriage Company, the largest maker of horse-drawn carriages in the country, had become head of General Motors.[31] "About two months after his second and final ouster from GM in late 1920, Durant incorporated Durant Motors. He had no car, but he had the faith of investors and goodwill of dealers and before production began in 1921 of the Durant 4, he had 30,000 dealer orders...Durant was on his way again."[32] Before long, Durant added other names to his line, including Flint Autos, who was also listed as a tenant in the Kirkwood Building in 1925-26, along with Durant Motors. Durant Motors was a tenant in the Kirkwood Building from 1923-26.

In 1926, no automobile dealerships leased the building. That year, City National Bank, which later became United Missouri Bank and then UMB Bank, leased the building as their headquarters while their new headquarters building was under construction a block to the southwest, at 18th Street and Grand Avenue. City National Bank was a strong supporter of the automobile businesses located within the area. The bank provided many auto loans for buyers, and many automobile dealers, in return, banked at City National Bank. "An automotive trade publication,

28 Wright, Chapter 7.
29 Advertisement for Peerless Automobile, *Kansas City Star*, February 1, 1920 p. 21C.
30 1922 Polk's Directory.
31 Wright, Chapter 7.
32 Wright, Chapter 7.

Motortrade,...praised Crosby Kemper's bank for keeping car dealers 'off the rocks' during the previous two years."[33] Auto dealers liked the bank for their willingness to loan money to consumers, but the State Banking Examiner didn't believe it was good banking to invest in something as volatile as automobile loans. "The State Banking Examiner, in his 1920 annual audit, criticized City National Bank's large number of automobile loans: 'A noticeable feature is a very large amount of automobile paper, $165,000.00 of which is secured by chattel mortgages on cars.'"[34] City National Bank's support of automobiles went further than lending money to automobile owners. The bank also provided an extra convenience for them. In 1931 the bank created a drive-through window by cutting a hole in a rear door in their new bank building at 18th Street and Grand Avenue. This created the first drive-through bank in Kansas City and one of the first in the nation.[35]

When City National Bank moved from the Kirkwood Building across the street to their new building in 1927, the Kirkwood Building's automotive character continued with Faeth Company Auto Suppliers and later Republic Gear Corporation and Thompson Auto Supplies, who leased the building for many years. Though from 1922 on, the building was not used solely for automotive related business, the building maintained its ties to the automotive field through these businesses. Other tenants included the Grand Aerie of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Southwestern Bell, and the Central Surety and Insurance Corporation.

Architectural History

Kirkwood hired Wight and Wight in 1917 to design a building for "Automobile Row." The buildings located there were typically second-generation buildings on their respective sites. City building permits showed that demolition of a two-story brick building on the northeast corner of 18th and McGee Streets took place in July of 1915 and that another round of demolition took place just prior to commencement of construction of the Kirkwood Building in March of 1919. As many of the "Automobile Row" business properties were designed to be automobile showrooms and/or

33 Brent Schondelmeyer, *Building a First Class Bank, The Story of United Missouri Bank* (Kansas City: United Missouri Bancshares, Inc. 1986) 44.
34 Schondelmeyer, 45.
35 Schondelmeyer, 49.

shops, they shared common design elements such as large display windows on primary facades and large entrances. The Kirkwood Building incorporates these design elements but is taller than neighboring buildings in the area, giving it an air of grandeur and importance. The materials used for this building are also similar to the other buildings in the area. Exterior materials of red brick and white terra cotta create much of the streetscape of "Automobile Row." Additionally, many of the buildings exhibit a restrained order of ornamentation, though on a much less streamlined basis than the ornamentation of the Kirkwood Building. The building's use of space and design reflect a restrained elegance of the post-World War I automobile dealership idiom. Decorative plaster beams and terrazzo and marble floors are used in the Display Area, giving the showroom a dressed-up feeling without being too opulent. As such, the Kirkwood Building displays a dignified, straightforward ornamentation that is a simple version of the classical idiom and is an excellent example of the post-World War I commercial work by the firm of Wight and Wight.

The Kirkwood Building was located along a streetcar line, which stopped in front of the building. This was advantageous because it allowed potential first time car buyers to see the cars displayed in the windows. "By walking, driving, or riding a trolley down the street, shoppers could survey the latest cars available, while gaining an impression of dealers and the companies they represented from the appearance of their buildings."[36] The building's design displayed not only the cars in the windows, but the success of the dealership.

Wight and Wight were well established in Kansas City by the time they designed the Kirkwood Building. Previous prestigious commissions included the First National Bank Building, the old New England Bank Building, and Livestock Exchange Building, as well as many other commercial buildings throughout Kansas City.[37] Thomas Wight came to Kansas City in 1904 after working ten years for one of the country's leading architectural firms, McKim, Meade, and White. There, he was listed among the firm's forty exemplary employees out of over seven hundred employees "whose activities and accomplishments have made them preeminent in their profession."[38] After considering several other cities, Thomas and his partner Edward Wilder, also a former employee at McKim, Meade

36 Liebs, 83.
37 All are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: The First National Bank Building in 1976, the Old New England Bank Building in 1973 and the Livstock Exchange Building in 1984.
38 *Missouri*, (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, Inc. 1930), 41.

and White, decided on Kansas City to begin their firm.[39] After several projects fell through, the firm, Wilder and Wight, was given a chance by a realtor to do a preliminary design for the First National Bank in an attempt to lure the bank to the location at 10th and Baltimore Streets. The bank liked the design and hired Wilder and Wight as their project architect.[40] That was the beginning of a successful architectural firm, who would design many of Kansas City's most prominent buildings.

In 1911, Thomas's younger brother, William, came to Kansas City, also from the New York firm of McKim, Meade and White. "His architectural aim, expressed to his friends and family and displayed in his work, was to achieve all the beauty possible in a building without losing an inch of space or any functional value,"[41] a skill he learned from McKim, Meade and White. That year, William bought out Wilder's share in the firm, as Wilder was retiring. The firm, then called Wight and Wight, continued their successful practice in Kansas City for over 45 years.

Known for their Neoclassical style, Wight and Wight were often selected for Kansas City's monumental building commissions. Their training at McKim, Meade and White, a firm known for their classical building style, influenced their use of classical idioms. "In Kansas City they became major exponents of Neo-classicism, and the First National Bank was an important early statement in that mode."[42] This style became much more commonly practiced throughout Kansas City once Wight and Wight began to design using these classical elements. "The growth of Neo-classicism in Kansas City, with some admixture of forms derived from the early Italian Renaissance, was strongly influenced by the firm of Wight and Wight."[43] However, not all of Wight and Wight's clients were willing to embrace this high style. Their taste was much more conservative, as much of the building in Kansas City at the time was quite restrained. "This conservatism acted as a restraint on even the most esthetically aware architects,"[44] as is evident in Wight and Wight's commercial designs. Their more formal designs were reserved for only those clients who demanded it. The firm was prolific enough to design an unornamented office building for a modest business owner or a highly ornamented

39 Richard B. Fowler, "A Dream Put Into A Drawing Was Thomas Wight's Turning Point," *The Kansas City Star* 26 April 1931.
40 *ibid.*
41 "Wight, William D. Death," *Kansas City Times*, 30 October 1947.
42 Ehrlich, 63.
43 *ibid*, 88.
44 *ibid*, 88.

Neoclassical monumental building for a larger institution.

Typically, American architects were trained through apprenticeships until the turn of the twentieth century, as only a few educational institutions offered architectural coursework at that time. When Thomas began working at the New York firm, "he didn't know at the time that McKim, Meade and White was the greatest training school for young architects in the country, or that no architects in the United States were individually superior to any one of the members of the famous firm."[45] The firm of McKim, Meade and White, whose employment was considered a post graduate education in architecture, had obvious influences on the brothers, as many of Wight and Wight's designs were classical in nature. Additionally, both Thomas and William Wight spent a year studying in Europe before coming to Kansas City. Thomas's trip to Italy and Greece had a large impact on him, influencing his classical designs. In a series of *Kansas City Star* articles documenting the careers of well-known Kansas Citians, Thomas related that "late one afternoon he went for his first sight of the Acropolis. He passed through the entrance and paused. There, before him, was the Parthenon – simple, magnificent even in ruins. Five minutes he stood without a sound. Then, for the first time he said, 'Thank God I'm an architect'."[46] As his brother followed the same educational path, Wight and Wight had similar experiences and were influenced by the same sources, both at home and abroad.

The restrained design of the Kirkwood Building reflects the standard preferences of the time of commercial clients in Kansas City. "With the renewed construction after World War I, historic eclecticism served the needs of Kansas Citians, and despite the advances that had taken place in architectural design, taste was channeled primarily toward predictable forms."[47] The Kirkwood Building also reflects the classical preferences of Wight and Wight. The pilasters are capped with terra cotta abacus, giving them the appearance of columns. Additionally, the symmetrical building has a distinct base, shaft and crown. The base of the building was originally made up of a series of pilasters with large windows between them. An entablature is comprised of a band of terra cotta, a plain brick metope and another band of terra cotta, which forms the cornice. The shaft of the building is comprised of the three upper stories, which are unornamented, with the exception of the checkered brick patterns in the spandrel areas. Finally, the cornice of the

45 Fowler, *Kansas City Star*, 26 April, 1931
46 *ibid.*

building is made up of a larger version of the entablature on the first story. A band of terra cotta molding forms the fascia, a plain brick band forms the metope, and another band of terra cotta forms the cornice.

In its current state, the Kirkwood Building is a good representative example of Wight and Wight's commercial designs. It compares favorably with other examples of Wight and Wight's restrained classicism. A building they designed at 20th and Grand Avenue, located only a few blocks away from the Kirkwood Building, is similar in detailing, massing, proportion, and materials. The brick patterning is set in the same pattern as on the Kirkwood Building, though in a less decorative pattern. The spandrel area under the windows is similar to the Kirkwood Building, though the protruding brick surrounds only one field, rather than the three fields aligning with the window mullions on the Kirkwood Building. Rugfaced brick is used and laid in a Flemish bond. Additionally, the terra cotta detailing is similar in nature to the terra cotta on the Kirkwood Building. Pilasters are capped with terra cotta to simulate columns and a simple cornice tops the building, which is reminiscent of a classical entablature.

Wight and Wight also designed another building on the same block at approximately the same time as the building just described. This building again shows similar classical characteristics, but is void of any ornamentation above the first story. The first story façade has been covered with metal siding, but some original terra cotta is still visible. The terra cotta is more ornate than on the other buildings previously noted, though only a small portion is visible. Another example of Wight and Wight's restrained classical detailing is the Music Building at Saint Theresa's Academy located at 55th and Main Streets in Kansas City, Missouri. This building is similar to the Kirkwood Building in that it is embellished with pilasters capped with terra cotta abacus, followed by a terra cotta cornice.

Many of Wight and Wight's commercial commissions contained design features similar to these buildings. Though these commercial buildings are not what the firm of Wight and Wight is best known for, these are the buildings that sustained their careers. Monumental institutional type building commissions were not awarded very often. Although the First National Bank Building was designed in 1904, it was not until the late 1920s and even later that many of their larger formal buildings were designed.

47 Ehrlich, 82.

"Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, if alive today, would own a motor car.

It would be, not a haughty, turned-up-nose kind of car, but a solid, honest, democratic car, with a stout heart and a friendly response.

We have built the Peerless Two-power-range Eight with a feeling that Old Ben would approve it. We believe we have infused into it the spirit of resolution he expressed:

"Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve."

"Let all things have their places," he said, "waste nothing, lose no time—cut off all unnecessary actions; use no hurtful deceit, avoid extremes."

Sterling virtues these—Order, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Moderation.

The Peerless-Eight is a well-ordered car; it is a frugal car, an industrious car, a sincere car, built entirely in our own factory of materials our own metallurgists have selected and treated; and it is a car of moderation, without extremes of line or finish or equipment, for extremes are soon conspicuously antiquated—involving frequent changes.

The Peerless is a genuinely American car—a car you can be sure of and proud of always. The Two-power-range Eight is the full expression of Peerless master-building which began nearly twenty years ago.

Touring Car $3,250 Roadster $3,200
Coupe $3,950 Sedan $4,150
Sedan-Limousine $4,400

Prices effective June 1, 1920

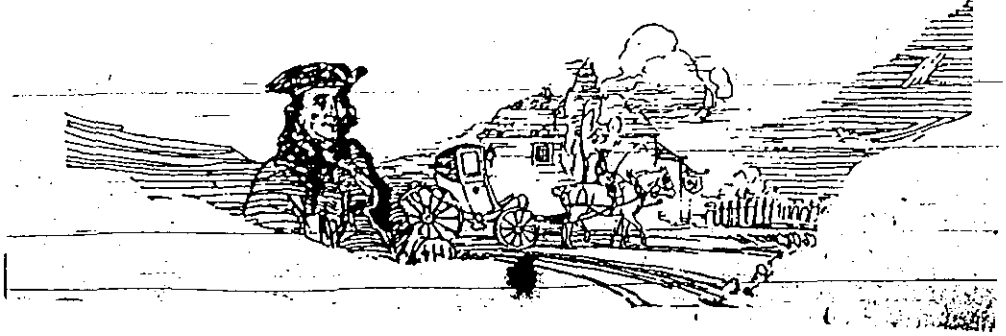
F. O. B. CLEVELAND

Peerless
2 POWER RANGE EIGHT

"LOAFING" RANGE — "SPORTING" RANGE

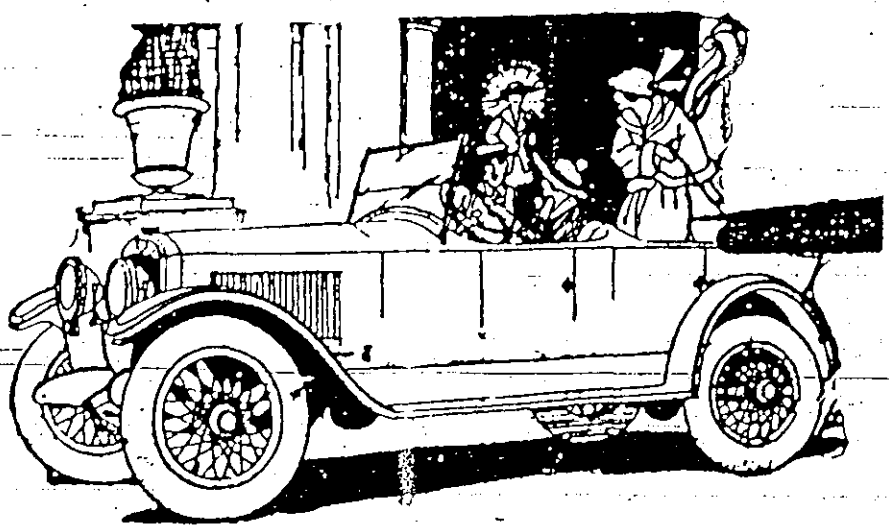
THE PEERLESS MOTOR CAR COMPANY
Cleveland, Ohio

Gridley Motor Co.
McLice at 18th
Wholesale and Retail Distributors.



Kansas City Star July 25, 1920

AUBURN
Beauty-SIX



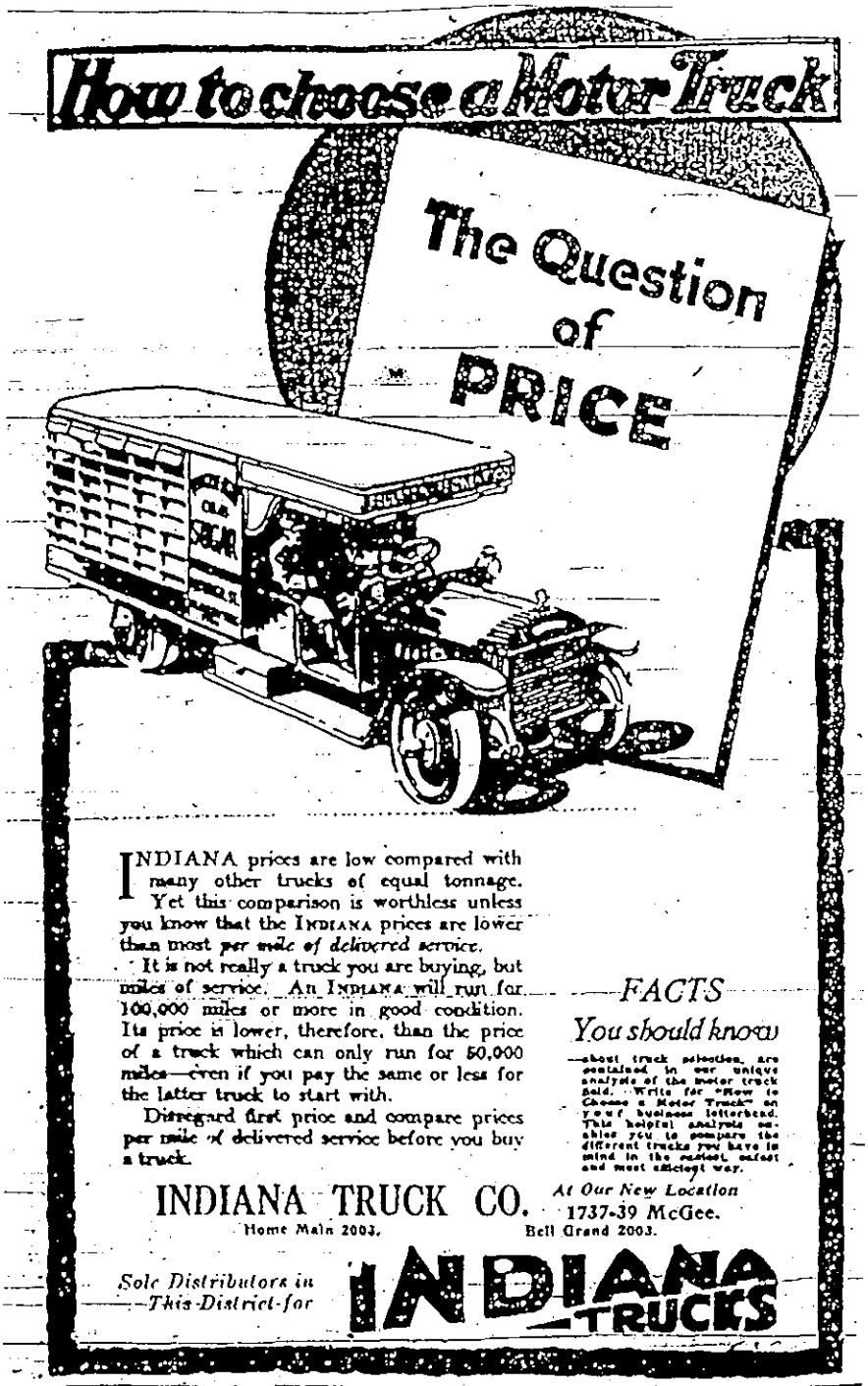
The purchase of an Auburn Beauty-SIX means investment in reliable transportation. To enable you or your family to go where you wish, when you wish, in comfort and at low cost of maintenance, has been the twenty-year aim of Auburn builders. Inbuilt strength and dependable power are outstanding qualities.

Five-Passenger Touring Car, $1895; Five-Passenger Sedan, $2995
Four-Passenger Coupe, $2995; Four-Passenger Tourister, $1895
Two-Passenger Roadster, 1945. f. o. b. Auburn, Indiana.

AUBURN AUTOMOBILE COMPANY, AUBURN, INDIANA

GRIDLEY MOTOR COMPANY,
Distributors
18th and McGee Sts.

Kansas City Star October 20, 1920



NO MATTER WHAT YOU WANT
It will save you time and money if you use THE STAR'S WANTS.

Kansas City Star June 27, 1920

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Verbal Boundary Description

All of Lots 407 and 408, except the west 14 feet thereof in McGee Street, Block 30, McGee's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof. The lot size is depicted as 99 feet north-south by 118 feet east-west.

Boundary Justification

The Kirkwood Building occupies the entire parcel of land, bound on the west by McGee Street, on the south by 18th Street, on the east by an alley, and on the north by another property with a building placed on it.

List of Photographs

Kirkwood Building

Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri

Chris Wilborn of Wilborn and Associates Photographers took all current photographs (numbers 1-7) on October 31, 2000. All negatives, including those of the historic photographs, are located at Wilborn and Associates Photographers, 3101 Mercer, Kansas City, Missouri 64111.

1. Front Elevation, looking east
2. Southwest Corner, looking northeast
3. Rear (East) Elevation, looking west
4. Main display Room, looking west
5. Mezzanine Level, looking east
6. Simple Plaster Molding
7. Historic Stairs
8. Bird's Eye View of Area, c. 1930s, looking north and slightly west
9. Southwest Corner c. 1939, looking northeast
10. Southwest Corner, May 6, 1944, looking northeast
11. Front Elevation c. 1954, looking east

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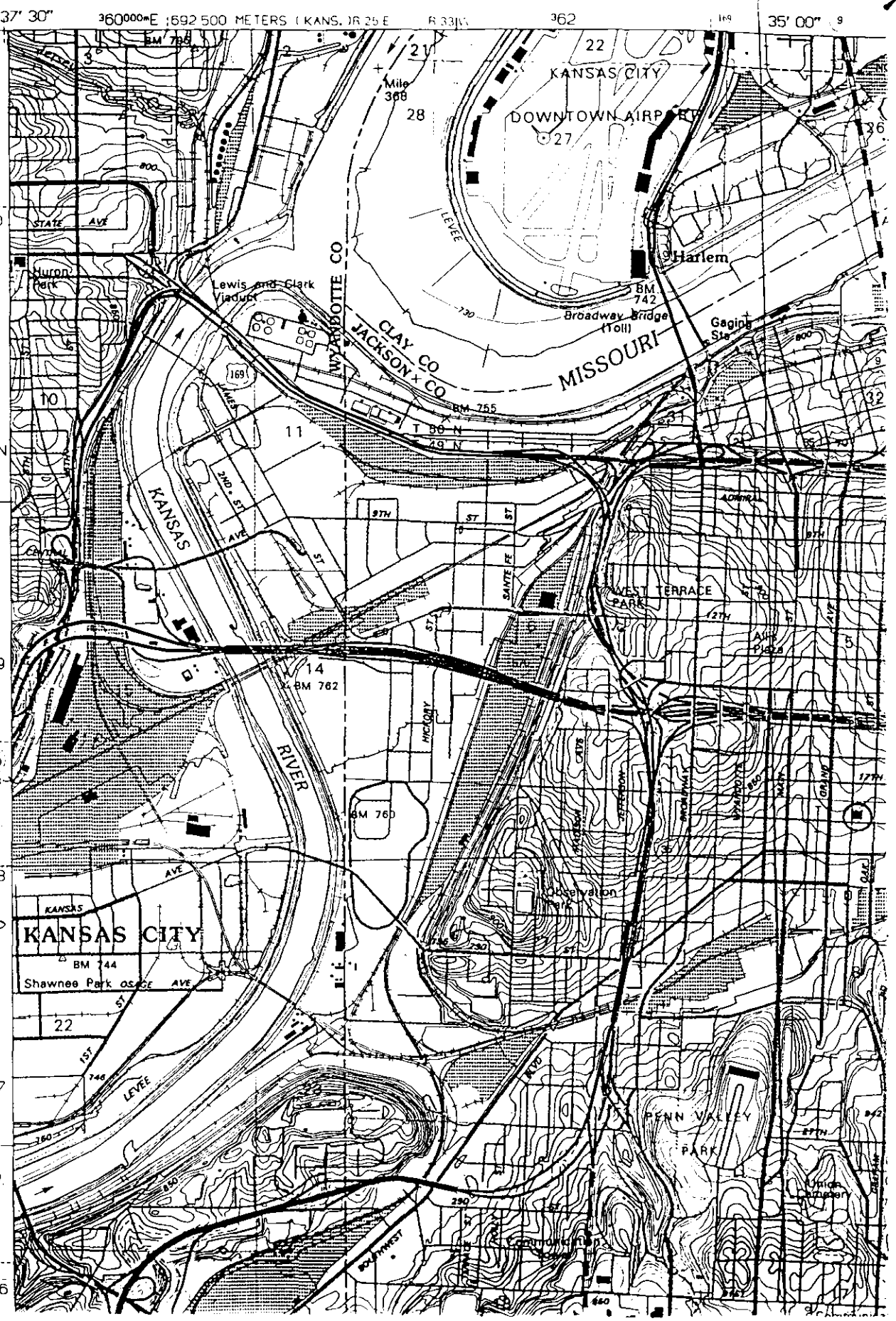

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