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 Joe Vaccaro Soda Water Manufacturing Company Building

other names/site number Vaccaro Building; Vaccaro Hall

2. Location

street & number 918-922 East 5th Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Kansas City [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64106

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 Mark A. Miles, Deputy SHPO Date

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		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING: manufacturing facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE: auditorium

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

OTHER: two-part commercial block

Materials

foundation STONE
walls BRICK
roof SYNTHETICS
other STONE

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

ETHNIC HERITAGE: EUROPEAN

Periods of Significance

1921-1949

Significant Dates

1921
1923
1936

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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

[X] Local Government

[ ] University

[X] Other:

Name of repository: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	364050	4330225			

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 Kerry Davis, Architectural Historian

organization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date June 2003

street & number 323 West 8th Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133

city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64105

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 Dan Wayne, 5th and Harrison Redevelopment Corporation

street & number 1410 West 39th Street telephone 816-309-3686

city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64111

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT

The Joe Vaccaro Soda Water Manufacturing Company Building (Vaccaro Building) is a two-story, two-part commercial block located at 922 East 5th Street in Kansas City, Missouri. The rectangular footprint of this 15,000-square-foot building is situated at the northwest corner of the intersection of East 5th and Harrison streets in Kansas City's North End neighborhood.[1] Grooved, orange-brown face brick clads the primary façades (south and east). Tall, two-over-two light, wood sash windows arranged in loose pairs define four regular bays on the 5th Street (south) façade and five regular bays on the Harrison Street (east) façade. Storefront entrances, display windows, and vehicular entrances fill the first-story bays of these façades. A raised parapet with a shaped profile on both the 5th Street (south) and rear (north) façades surrounds and effectively hides the barrel-shaped membrane roof. Light-colored limestone ornament on the primary façades includes parapet coping, oculi trim, a segmental-arched sign panel, and a continuous belt course at the sill level of the second-story windows. Projecting brick provides further embellishment in the form of drip molding above the second-story windows and rectangular panels located both above and below the first-story storefront windows. The building retains a high degree of integrity, maintaining its original location and setting, as well as clearly exhibiting its character-defining physical features, materials, and key interior spaces dating from the period of historic significance.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

5TH STREET AND HARRISON STREET FAÇADES

The original, two-over-two light, wood sash windows, arranged in loose pairs, define the bays of the primary façades that face onto East 5th and Harrison streets. The limestone sills of these second-story windows form a continuous belt course across the primary façades. Above each window pair, as well as above a central set of four windows on the East 5th Street (front) façade, a single course of projecting header bricks forms drip molding that unifies and defines each window group. Louvered, limestone-trimmed oculi punctuate the façade above each window pair. New twelve-over-twelve light, wood sash windows replace four of the original windows on these primary façades. Limestone coping caps the parapet, which has a shaped profile above the 5th Street façade. Centrally located on this elevation, a wide, segmental-arched, limestone sign panel framed by a projecting brick header course has letters in relief that read, "JOE · VACCARO · SODA · WATER · MFG · CO.", below which two square limestone panels read, "19" and "23."

At street level, the 5th Street façade contains four display windows, two storefront entrances, and a recessed second-story entrance in the west end bay. Plywood covers the wood-frame transom openings that span the width above each display window and entrance opening on this façade. Half of the transom

[1] Historically known as the North End, this neighborhood is also known as the North Side, Little Italy and, more recently, Columbus Park.

openings contain the original four-pane, wood hopper sashes. Reflecting the floor height of the original interior mezzanine, the transom sills above the easternmost storefront display window and entrance are significantly lower in height than the others. Projecting header bricks form four decorative rectangular panels both above the storefront transoms and below the display windows on the original bulkheads. The panels vary in length to correspond in width to the adjacent openings. The second display window from the west end originally contained both a narrow display window and a storefront entrance, the latter of which has been enclosed and incorporated into the bulkhead. Non-historic, aluminum-framed plexiglass display windows rest on each bulkhead, maintaining the original size and rhythm of these window openings. A doorway, two vehicular bays, and four window openings with plywood and brick infill pierce the street-level wall of the Harrison Street (east) façade.

Rising above the shaped parapet at the westernmost bay of the 5th Street façade is a historic one-story, gable-front penthouse that extends three-quarters of the length of the building. The parapet wall of the west elevation extends upward to form the west wall of this 1928 addition. Piercing this brick and structural clay tile wall are paired, two-over-two light, wood sash windows with brick sills. The remainder of the structure is concrete and wood frame, clad with asphalt shingles and non-historic wood siding. The recent removal of non-historic materials revealed historic, wood-frame window openings across the front and east elevations. The original wood framing that held a system of fixed-sash windows, which filled the majority of the front (south) façade, is intact. Single, small, historic wood-frame window openings, absent the original sash, pierce the east wall of the penthouse.

SECONDARY FAÇADES

Both of the secondary (west, north) elevations are painted brick walls with plain terracotta coping tiles and header brick windowsills and are void of other decorative detailing. The irregular fenestration of these façades is intact. Approximately 40 percent of these window openings contain historic two-over-two light, wood sash windows. The remaining openings are covered with plywood or filled with brick. New twelve-over-twelve light, wood sash windows replace two of the original windows on these secondary façades.

BUILDING INTERIOR

The spatial arrangement of the Vaccaro Building remains nearly unaltered from its period of significance and clearly communicates the building's multiple historic functions. Street-level commercial storefronts, open manufacturing/distribution space, and a second-story reception hall define the interior.

The three storefront spaces facing onto East 5th Street maintain their historic layout across the front of the building. Partial removal of non-historic finishes, including suspended acoustic ceilings and carpet and wall paneling, reveals that much of the historic finishes in these spaces are intact, including fourteen-foot-high pressed-tin ceilings, terrazzo floors, and plaster walls. Historic wood trim, including door surrounds and baseboards, is intact. The brick walls of the easternmost storefront were originally exposed and painted, with no evidence of plaster finish. Joist pockets in these brick walls indicate that an interior mezzanine once stood level with the transom sills.

Behind the commercial space, the manufacturing and distribution area retains its original, open, utilitarian configuration. Two large vehicular bays pierce the brick wall that divides the distribution area in the east third of the space from the remaining manufacturing area.[2] Structural steel columns punctuate the space. A non-historic conveyer accesses second-story storage space through the ceiling. The historic finishes of this space are intact, including concrete floors and painted brick walls. Drywall covers the 14-foot-high ceiling, as well as the historic, utilitarian, enclosed second-story stairwell at the northeast corner.

The second-story reception hall retains its historic configuration and much of its historic finishes. The street-level entrance foyer, stairwell, second-story stair hall, open social hall space, and ancillary rooms along the west wall each maintain their historic layout. Historic wood floors and wood trim, including window surrounds, baseboards, and stair treads and banister, are intact throughout. While historic 14-foot-high pressed-tin ceilings remain throughout much of these spaces, this ceiling finish has been removed from the main hall space due to damage from the January 2002 ice storm and subsequent structural failure and water penetration. Currently, the series of original riveted bow-arch steel trusses that form the barrel-shaped roof and allow for the uninterrupted floor space are exposed. This damage also required the selective removal of failing wall plaster.

Vaccaro Building c.1929, looking north

The penthouse retains its undivided interior space, with no evidence of historic partition walls. The recent removal of non-historic finishes, including a 1960s-era pistol range, revealed the historic window openings along the south and east walls. There is no evidence of historic wall, floor, or ceiling finishes.

SETTING

The 71-by-100-foot rectangular footprint of the Vaccaro Building encompasses the entire lot. The property is bounded by East 5th Street on the south and Harrison Street on the east. East 5th Street is a historic two-lane transportation artery that runs east-west through the neighborhood, leading west to the City Market. Harrison Street is a narrow, two-lane cross street that runs north-south. Defining the area surrounding the Vaccaro Building are one- to three-story mixed-use commercial and residential buildings from the turn of the twentieth century. Immediately adjacent to the west wall stands a one-part

[2] See Section 8, Page 14 for details of the Vaccaro Building's history. This is the original west exterior wall of the 1921 Vaccaro Building.

commercial block constructed in 1930.[3] To the north lies a narrow alleyway and vacant lots beyond. Concrete sidewalks punctuated by timber telephone poles and non-historic streetlights surround the building.

[3] Constructed by C. M. Williams for Joe Dasta in 1930, this building functioned as a billiard hall during the 1940s. It has no historic commercial or architectural associations with the Vaccaro Building.

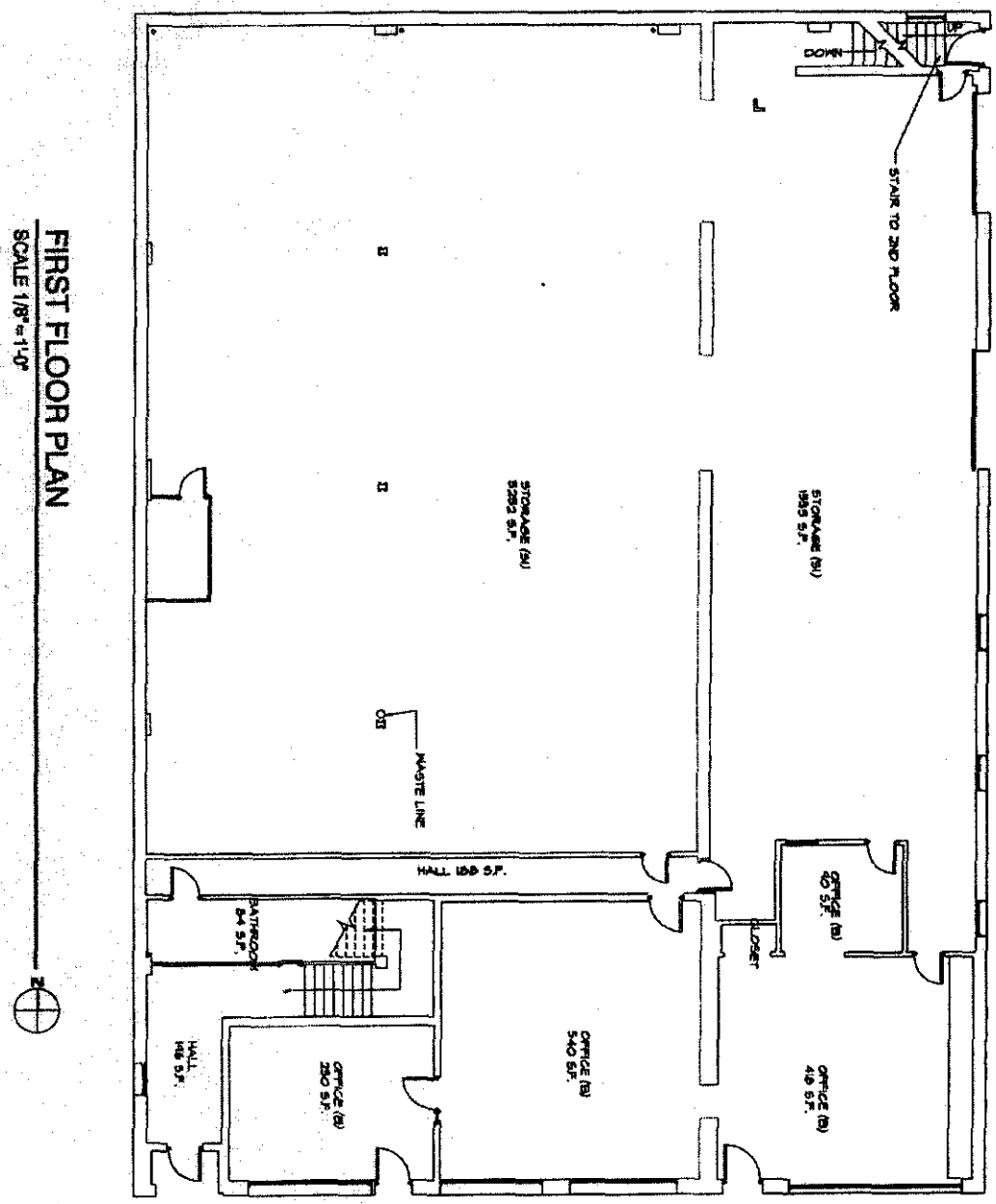
INTEGRITY

The Vaccaro Building retains a high degree of integrity of its character-defining elements. The few non-historic alterations, primarily regarding storefront windows and interior finishes, do not hinder the viewer's understanding of its multiple historic functions, form, or architectural attributes.

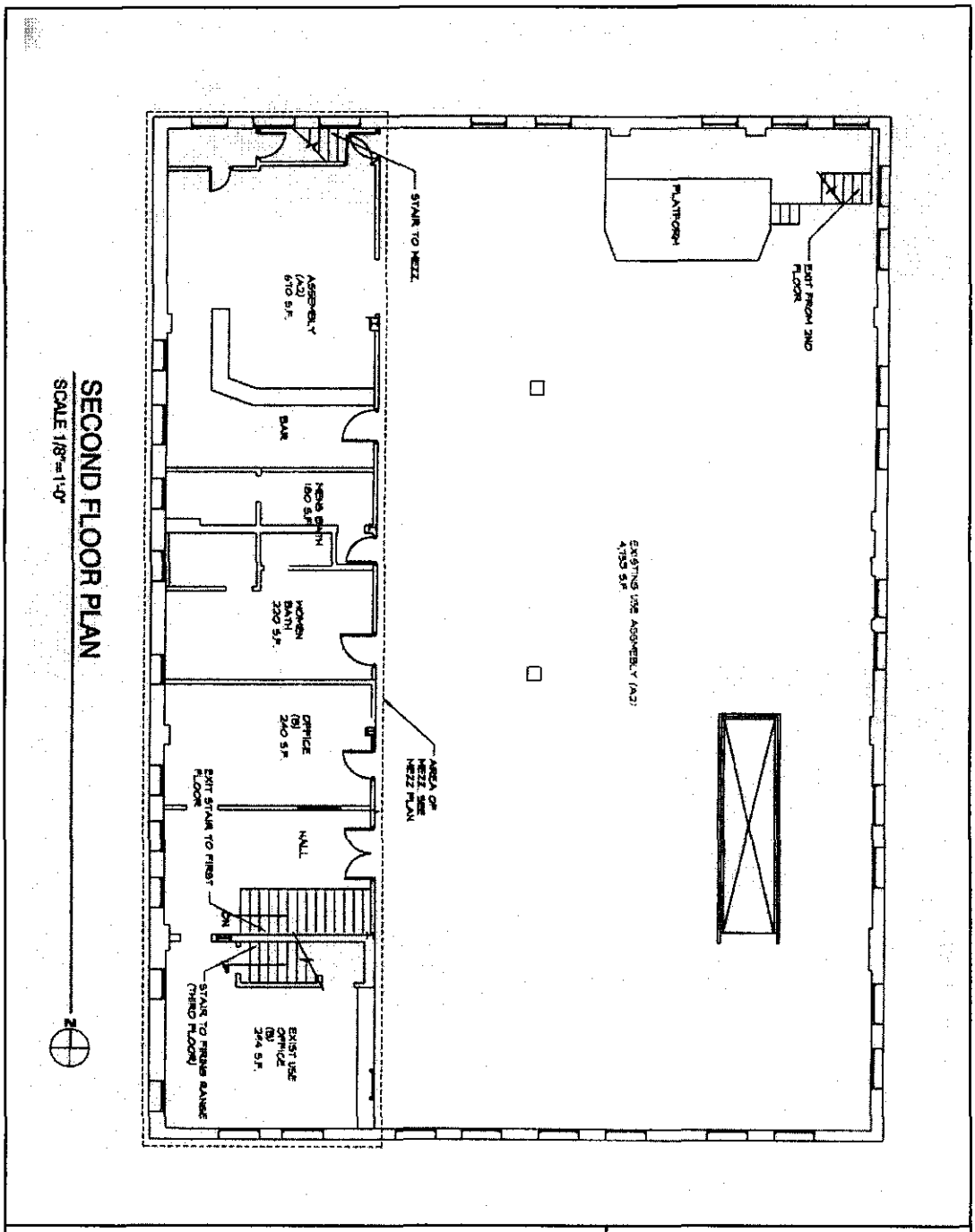
National Register Bulletin 15 states, "Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant."[4] The Vaccaro Building accomplishes this through its retention of significant character-defining features. The exterior decorative treatments, including the grooved face brick and limestone trim, remain unaltered. The building retains the original size, arrangement, and rhythm of the first-story storefronts. The second-story fenestration retains almost three-quarters of the original two-over-two light, wood sash windows. Most significantly, the configuration of interior spaces remains essentially unchanged and conveys the multiple historic functions of the property.

The Vaccaro Building is strong in each of the seven aspects of integrity outlined in *National Register Bulletin 15* as Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. The only alterations of note are the replacement of the original storefront windows, the conversion of a single storefront entrance to a window, and the removal of the reception hall's pressed-tin ceiling. Historic photographs reveal that the current storefront windows match the size, arrangement, and rhythm of the original openings and the current owner proposes restoring the wood-frame storefront window system to the building. Neither the replacement of the windows nor the loss of the single storefront entrance inhibit the ability of the building to convey its original function or its significance as an excellent illustration of trends in community building through social and commercial investment among Italian immigrants.

[4] U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 1997 (rev), 45.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



January 2003

Stephen P. Maslan & Co.
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Vaccaro Building is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of ETHNIC HERITAGE: EUROPEAN. Located at 922 East 5th Street within the historically Italian-American North End neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri, this building epitomizes the common cultural themes and development patterns found within Italian immigrant communities across America. Built in 1921-1923, the Vaccaro Building is one of the best extant examples of community building through social and commercial investment among Italian immigrants in Kansas City. The period of significance for the Vaccaro Building is 1921-1949. The beginning of this range reflects the initial date of construction. The ending date reflects the point in time when the building's function changed under new ownership after the death of Joe Vaccaro. It also acknowledges historic alterations to the building that reflect the growth and expansion of the Joe Vaccaro Soda Water Manufacturing Company and Vaccaro Hall.

ELABORATION

At the close of World War I, an Italian immigrant laborer named Joseph Vaccaro established a bottling business around the corner from his apartment in the heart of Kansas City's North End district. The new business evolved rapidly into a successful local soda water manufacturing, bottling, and distribution company and generated the construction of two commercial buildings on East 5th Street, including the Vaccaro Building. Vaccaro's decision to locate his business within the heart of the Italian neighborhood – one block from his home and one block from the Holy Rosary Catholic Church – followed a pattern of development seen, in Kansas City and nationwide, within Italian immigrant enclaves.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most arriving immigrant groups viewed their crowded neighborhoods as temporary staging areas. As individual prosperity increased, they left for the fast-growing suburban developments of the period. In contrast, Italian immigrants began community-building almost systematically upon arrival in America.[5] Following a nationwide pattern for Italian immigrants, Kansas City's Italian community quickly established a system of cohesive, permanent community building that resulted in what Italians described as colonies.[6] Social cohesion within the colony was paramount. The formation of cultural and commercial establishments physically bonded the residents to the neighborhood. Although their personal incomes may have allowed them to relocate, Italian-Americans typically chose to stay near the local parish church and familiar, Italian-owned businesses. Rather than leave, they acquired land and established their own businesses within the neighborhood. This trend created a permanent physical foundation for modern Italian-American communities that are commonly referred to as Little Italy.

[5] John W. Briggs, *An Italian Passage* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1978), xv.
[6] Briggs, 69.

Kansas City's Italian Colony

As the nineteenth century came to a close, America experienced a massive influx of European immigrants. Unlike the waves of immigrants that came to the United States earlier in the century, who were primarily from western and northern Europe and mostly Protestant, the new immigrants were from southern and eastern Europe and were largely Catholic and Jewish. The largest single ethnic group hailed from Italy. Of the almost four million Italian immigrants who arrived in the United States during the three decades preceding the First World War, approximately three thousand ended up in Kansas City, Missouri.

At the turn of the twentieth century, America's largest cities swelled with Italian immigrants. However, via small, family-based migration chains, the majority of new Italian arrivals quickly dispersed into numerous small and medium-sized cities throughout the United States.[7] John W. Briggs' 1978 study, *An Italian Passage*, argues that it was in these smaller communities that Italian colonies grew to their fullest expression, specifically citing Kansas City, Missouri as a prime example.

Drawn to Kansas City's expanding role as a regional commercial hub and its growing railroad and meatpacking industries, the arrival of immigrants to Kansas City followed national patterns. Ethnic enclaves formed near industry, cheap housing, and transportation. By the end of the nineteenth century, distinct immigrant neighborhoods developed in the West Bottoms, McGee's Addition, and the North End districts of Kansas City.

Described as "racially complicated" by Theodore Brown and Lyle Dorsett in *A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, the North End district[8] was home to a diverse population including Irish, Italians, African-Americans, Russian and German Jews, and "native whites."[9] This neighborhood-sharing was inevitable in medium-sized cities like Kansas City that had lower percentages of foreign-born residents than the largest urban centers and, consequently, lower densities of each ethnic group. Although Kansas City's Italian residents comprised the largest immigrant population by 1920, they never exceeded 1 percent of the city's total population during the period between 1890 and 1930.[10]

Although Italians clustered to a greater degree than most immigrant groups, Italian communities were much more integrated than the common immigrant "ghetto." Ward population statistics show that Italians never dominated city wards and shared their streets and blocks with a variety of ethnic and minority groups. Kansas City's Italian immigrants settled primarily in the 5th Ward, where they only accounted for 13.4 percent of the ward's total population in 1920.[11] At the same time, ward population

[7] Briggs, 72.
[8] The North End district is generally bounded by the Missouri River, East 8th Street, Woodland Avenue, and Locust Street.
[9] Theodore A. Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, *Kansas City: A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Co., 1978), 45.
[10] Briggs, xv.
[11] Briggs, 103.

statistics confirm the cluster settlement pattern. In 1920, 66.7 percent of the foreign-born population of the 5th Ward was Italian. The next highest concentration of Italians in the city was in the 7th Ward, where they represented only 11 percent of the foreign-born population.

Colony Development Patterns

The dominant development pattern of Italian colonies in medium-sized cities like Kansas City was one of increasing growth and specialization. As the population grew and became more settled, the early phases of transience and simple community structure gave way to a more complex and complete range of cultural institutions and commercial enterprises.

Commercial Development

The initial phase of colony development was often characterized by a disproportionate number of single, transient men due to the fact that early Italian immigration was heavily influenced by canal, railroad, and other public works and development projects that attracted bands of unskilled laborers living in temporary quarters.[12] Excavation and foundation work generated by Kansas City's rapid expansion, specifically J. C. Nichols's development of the Country Club Plaza, initiated several migration chains of Italian immigrants to Kansas City.[13] As a railroad hub, Kansas City functioned as a home base for labor crews who arrived from points south and southwest and were transported to work sites on the rail companies' east-west lines.[14] Large numbers of Kansas City's early Italian immigrants arrived as bachelors on such crews from New Orleans, their point of entry, with the confessed intention of taking advantage of a good economy and returning home to Italy.[15]

As a result, the saloon and boarding house were often the first establishments around which Italian colonies formed.[16] These indispensable institutions served the earliest immigrants not only as temporary shelter, but also as recreational centers, meeting halls, and general social focal points. This was where recent arrivals learned of potential job opportunities and passed the time when jobs were few. Kansas City's North End district provided these establishments, as well as close proximity to industry, the City Market, and streetcar transportation.

In Kansas City, a period of transience and working in unskilled day labor was common in the early careers of Italian merchants and manufacturers. Interviews with early immigrants to Kansas City describe this pattern repeatedly: a railroad worker establishing a dairy business, a meatpacker starting a grocery store, a produce vendor opening a restaurant, a lamplighter starting a funeral home. Joe Vaccaro, a laborer, founded a bottling works and soda water manufacturing company. Upward social

[12] Briggs, 140.
[13] "Columbus Day Special Edition," *Il Messaggero*, 8 October 1986, p. 13. (Vertical File, Italians. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Newspaper Clipping.
[14] Sherry Lamb Schirmer and Richard D. McKinzie, *At the River's Bend: An Illustrated History of Kansas City, Independence and Jackson County* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1982), 68.
[15] Schirmer and McKinzie, 67.
[16] Briggs, 141.

and economic mobility within the working class was standard among all American population groups. Whereas other immigrant groups often took this financial opportunity to leave their neighborhood, within Italian immigrant communities the acquisition of property was typically a precursor to the establishment of a business and reinvestment within the colony. This pattern followed the cultural themes of self-improvement and education promoted by worker societies in Italy and in America.[17]

Upward mobility and investment enhanced the stability and permanence of the colony. At this point, husbands typically arranged for their wives and family members to join them in America and bachelors, like Joe Vaccaro, married. The growth of the colony combined with the constant flow of new arrivals increased the social complexity, the depth of the consumer base, and the demand for a wide variety of products and services. As a result, commercial and professional enterprises rapidly developed within the colonies. A 1913 Kansas City Board of Health study of Kansas City's urban neighborhoods reported that in the Italian district, "All ranks of life are represented in their colony and the people are able to carry on business transactions through their own banker and lawyer, to patronize their own physicians, druggists and merchants or shop-keepers, and to subscribe for papers printed in their own language."[18]

At the close of World War I, Italian colonies in America essentially solidified their economic and cultural foundations. The combined elements of discord throughout Europe, a strong American economy, and a newfound confidence that led to the unprecedented prosperity of the 1920s brought a realization to many immigrants of the depth of their commitment to the United States.[19] These conditions coincided with the maturation of Italian colonies, which exhibited new dimensions of growth during this period of heightened consumer confidence.

Retailing and wholesaling ventures became prevalent as growing colonies demanded specialized products and a familiar manner of merchandizing.[20] Among the most common retail businesses opened in Italian colonies during this development phase were groceries, meat markets, bakeries, fruit dealers, and other foodstuff merchants. Kansas City directories during the late 1910s and early 1920s list an average of thirty Italian-owned foodstuff retailers and wholesalers within a five-block radius of the Holy Rosary Catholic Church. Among them, Joe Vaccaro's soda water manufacturing and bottling company was the first established in the North End and the only one for almost a decade.[21]

Accompanying the sharp increase in the number of emerging Italian-owned commercial and professional businesses was the rapid growth of preexisting smaller enterprises that grew and often expanded to include regional wholesale trade and/or import operations. The growth and success of these commercial

[17] Briggs, 273.
[18] Kansas City Board of Health, *Social Prospectus of Kansas City, Missouri* (Kansas City, Missouri: Kansas City, Missouri Board of Public Welfare, August 1913), 49.
[19] Briggs, 151.
[20] Briggs, 165.
[21] Not until 1930 did a second carbonated beverage manufacturing company appear in the North Side District, when NuGrape Bottling Company opened at 501 Charlotte Street.

businesses resulted in the construction of buildings to house them. This was a period of remarkable growth, not only within the Italian colony, but also throughout Kansas City. The annual number of registered building permits peaked in 1923 at 5,831, a 65 percent increase from 1915.[22] Dozens of these were registered to the growing Italian commercial enterprises, including Joe Vaccaro's soda water manufacturing company. In Kansas City's North End neighborhood, several extant buildings represent this period of growth and maturation of the Italian community. Often baring the name of the merchant who built and/or commissioned the structure, these buildings effectively symbolized the permanence of the Italian-American community.[23] A visual testament, their sign panels read, "GIORGIO OTTAVIANO," "SAM NIGRO," "A. AFFRONTI," "J. LEONE & SONS," "A. MANGIRACINA," and "JOE VACCARO."

The national origins quota system established by the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act significantly curtailed growth within Italian-American colonies. Five years later, the onset of the Great Depression further stemmed their prosperity. Although commercial development continued, the meteoric growth gave way to an economic plateau. In spite of this, Kansas City's Italian neighborhood provided enough complexity and depth to ensure future sustainability.

Cultural and Social Development

Coinciding with commercial and professional development within the colony, Italian immigrants focused heavily on cultural and social investment almost immediately upon arrival in America. Social bonds and cultural stability were essential, central components of the Italian community-building pattern.

The largest Italian colonies in America were relatively homogeneous with sub-enclaves based on Italian regions of origin where historic regional distinctions and customs practiced in the Old World could be maintained. In smaller and medium-sized colonies, residents shared their distinctive regional traditions with only a small portion of the total Italian immigrant population within that community because local residents came from dozens of regions throughout Italy. Thus, the colony blended and perpetuated the common traditions, generating a new, more general Italian-American culture.[24]

Such was the case in Kansas City's Italian colony. Although a majority (approximately 65 percent) of Kansas City's Italian immigrants hailed from the Sicilian regions of Trapani and Termini Imerese, the composition of the local Italian colony included a wide variety of regional origins. Marriage registers dating from 1891 to 1915 from the colony's Holy Rosary Parish list 920 immigrants from 173 different Italian villages. Even the most "productive" village contributed only 8.4 percent of the total, with 78 individuals.[25]

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[22] Rick Montgomery and Shirl Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story* (Kansas City, Missouri: Kansas City Star Books, 1999), 200.
[23] Briggs, 167.
[24] Briggs, 94.
[25] Briggs, 75.

As the constant influx of new arrivals combined with the need to build social bonds, one of the first community institutions to take hold in an Italian enclave was the Roman Catholic parish. Initially worshipping in a vacant storeroom on East 5th Street, Kansas City's Italian immigrants established the Holy Rosary Catholic Church in 1895. The Holy Rosary Church served as the hub of Kansas City's Italian community, drawing residents together for baptisms, weddings, funerals, and the many feast days. The construction of the parish church provided not only worship space, but also spawned the Holy Rosary parochial school as well as numerous benefit and social organizations. Among them were the Holy Rosary Health Center and the Rosary Club, a women's organization that worked to solve social problems within the Italian community by sponsoring entertainment, providing parochial school textbooks, and supporting vocational schools. Such cultural investment generated spiritual stability and the associated social functions provided the "glue" to unite the colony.

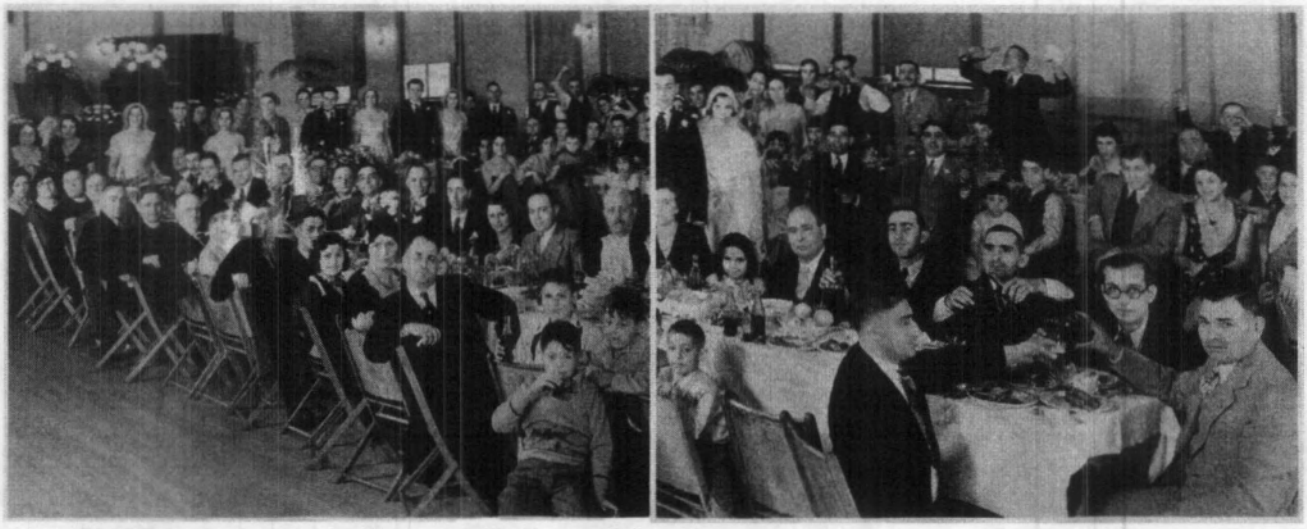
Following the establishment of the colony's parish church, the next social institution in the colony was usually at least one Italian language newspaper. Kansas City boasted three: *Stampa*, established in 1912, and *La Voce dell'Emigrante* and *Il Messaggero*, established in 1925. In addition to providing key information to community members and advertising space for Italian businesses, they provided a means of communication within the colony as well as with the greater Kansas City population.[26] *Il Messaggero* was self-described as, "The Best Advertising Medium Among the Italians."[27]

Accompanying these cultural investments was the establishment of numerous Italian social organizations and clubs. Their missions varied from benefit organizations that raised money for poor Italian neighbors to societies who fostered Americanization and strove to dispel negative Italian stereotypes. Among the first in Kansas City was Societa' Italo Americana Galileo Galilei, founded in 1898. Later organizations included Societa' Ragusa Americana, Society of Duca Abruzzi, Garibaldi Court Foresters of America, American Sons of Columbus, Kansas City Provident Club, Justice, Unity and Benevolent Club, Italian American Civic League, Italian Women's Activity Club, and United Italian-American Club, as well as the various Italian Catholic societies active in Kansas City.

Even after the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Kansas City's Italian colony remained socially cohesive. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Kansas City's Italian colony maintained a healthy pace of social expansion and major cultural investments continued to take place. During the late 1930s, approximately fifty Italian businesses, professionals, and clubs raised funds for a major remodeling of the Holy Rosary Church.[28] In 1940, the Italian community constructed the Don Bosco Community Center with all-volunteer labor working on evenings and weekends. The center boasted a gymnasium, a stage, activity rooms, a library, a kitchen, and locker and shower rooms.

[26] Briggs, 94.
[27] "Italian Young People in Our Public and Private Schools," *Il Messaggero,* 1 June 1935. (Vertical File, Italians. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Newspaper Clipping.
[28] "Holy Rosary – Remodeling," *Kansas City (MO) Journal*, 17 March 1935. (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

Despite these expansions, the various large events, receptions and banquets associated with the broad social structure of Kansas City's Italian community outgrew the available meeting and reception spaces located throughout the neighborhood. Holy Rosary School auditorium, Scalobini Hall, the Democratic Hall, and LaRocca Hall sufficed for small gatherings, regular organizational meetings, and showers, but were inadequate in size and amenities for larger gatherings. Vaccaro Hall, however, provided ample



Wedding reception at Vaccaro Hall, c.1936 Teresa Sebbeto Carrolla, personal collection

interior space, as well as ancillary rooms to facilitate these events. Amenities included a kitchen, a bar, dressing rooms, a cloakroom, and a storage room for chairs and tables, as well as a band stage with piano. There is no evidence that Joe Vaccaro advertised the space for rent, but as a popular Italian businessman in a tight-knit community, it didn't take long for word to spread and for the new available space to be booked.

Oral history interviews confirm that during this period, Vaccaro Hall became the largest and most active reception hall in the Italian immigrant community. Geneva (Leone) Mingrone, age 96, remembers that "Vaccaro Hall was busy all the time because most of the Italians all had their wedding [receptions] there…Everybody that got married went to Vaccaro Hall…we had the reception, we had the breakfast there…In the nighttime they had…wedding dancing.."[29] Minnie Tristanio's wedding reception took place in Vaccaro Hall in 1946 and her sister Anna Badami remembered, "Oh, yes, all big wedding [receptions were] at Vaccaro Hall…[it was] booked every week."[30] Conveniently located just one block from Holy Rosary Church, families prepared the traditional wedding breakfast and held the wedding reception and dinner in the hall. Vaccaro Hall was the hall for any reception, dance, birthday party, or

[29] Geneva (Leone) Mingrone, interview by author, 6 February 2003, Kansas City, MO, tape recording.
[30] Anna Badami, interview by author, 6 February 2003, Kansas City, MO, tape recording.

civic and/or fraternal organization election meeting or banquet.[31] Not associated with any particular organization or institution, Vaccaro Hall was a multi-purpose space serving the entire Italian community of Kansas City, Missouri.

Although some members of the colony moved eastward along Independence Avenue and along Benton and Gladstone boulevards during this period, the North End district remained central to the Italian community. In 1942, Father Donanzan, pastor of Holy Rosary Catholic Church said, "Through the years, some of the parishioners left their old neighborhood for newer locations, but all keep a special fondness for their church and cling to it for baptisms, weddings, funerals, and feast days."[32]

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, an increasing number of second-generation Italian-American families chose to relocate north of the Missouri River in the new residential developments of North Kansas City, Missouri. Additionally, the construction of the 6th Street Trafficway during the early 1950s uprooted many Italian families.[33] The pattern of Italian neighborhood growth specifically associated with the North End district began to decline. While remaining the cultural heart of Kansas City's Italian-American community, Italian-Americans began investing on a much broader scale throughout greater Kansas City.

Property History

Born in Italy and arriving in Kansas City as a bachelor in 1913, Joseph "Joe" Vaccaro lived in Kansas City's Italian neighborhood and worked as a laborer. Once financially able, in 1919, he established his own bottling business at 407 Campbell in the heart of the Italian neighborhood. Later that same year, he began construction on a two-part commercial block that still bares his name – "J. VACCARO BOTTLING WORKS CO." – at 815 East 5th Street. The Joseph Vaccaro Bottling Works Company soon expanded to include soda water manufacturing, and in 1921 construction began on the Joe Vaccaro Soda Water Manufacturing Company Building at 922 East 5th Street, one block to the east of the company's existing factory. By the end of 1921, a one-story, 23-by-100-foot, brick and stone, flat-roofed commercial building housed the Joe Vaccaro Soda Water Manufacturing Company. The 1921 Kansas City, Missouri City Directory indicates that Vaccaro maintained both the bottling works, managed by Claude Chittolino, and the soda water manufacturing company, with the help of Peter and B. Vaccaro, during that year.[34]

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[31] Teresa Sebbeto Carrolla, interview by author, 6 February 2003, Kansas City, MO, transcribed by author.

[32] "Holy Rosary – Golden Jubilee," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 18 November 1942. (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

[33] "Columbus Day Special Edition," *Il Messaggero*, 8 October 1986, p. 16. (Vertical File, Italians. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Newspaper Clipping.

[34] The relationship of these two individuals to Joe Vaccaro in unknown. Oral history interviews indicate one of them was a nephew.

Shortly thereafter, Vaccaro sold the bottling works and consolidated his efforts into the soda water manufacturing company. By March 1922, he received a building permit to expand the Vaccaro Building. This expansion tripled the width of the 1921 building and included the introduction of a second story across this entire width. This expansion is legible within the building, as the original west exterior wall of the 1921 structure and the original storefront fenestration are intact. Approximately $14,000 and a year later, the Vaccaro Building was complete with a new façade that effectively unified the two construction endeavors into one building.

The Joe Vaccaro Soda Water Manufacturing Company proceeded to become a successful local business. The entire process of producing Vaccaro's Soda was mechanized and occurred within the building — soda water mixing, bottle cleaning, filling, capping, and distribution. As such, the company never employed more than about five individuals at one time.[35] Vaccaro maintained two delivery trucks that distributed the various flavors of soda throughout the North End to local grocers and neighborhood corner stores. Company offices occupied the first-story storefront spaces and a 1939 Sanborn map shows a radio repair service occupying the west end commercial space.

Historic photos and building permits suggest that the existing penthouse was constructed in 1925. Oral history interviews indicate that Joe Vaccaro constructed the penthouse as a residence for himself and his new wife, but Mrs. Vaccaro "would have nothing of it."[36] There is no archival or physical evidence that it ever served as a residence.

During the mid-1930s, Vaccaro refurbished the second-story manufacturing/storage space and began renting it out for social events in 1936. He installed pressed-tin ceilings, plaster walls, a band platform, kitchen and restroom facilities, and a cloakroom. It was the largest reception hall in the neighborhood and the numerous cultural and social organizations within Kansas City's Italian community rapidly booked the space for special events.[37] Life-long, local residents confirmed that by the early 1940s, nearly every wedding party in the Italian community held their traditional wedding breakfast and dinner receptions in Vaccaro Hall. Upon Joe Vaccaro's death in 1948, with no children to inherit the business, the soda water manufacturing works ceased operations. Vaccaro Hall continued to function until 1949.

During the intervening years, US Chemical & Supply Company, Metro Service Fire Restoration Company, and Stower's Paint Company have occupied the Vaccaro Building. North Side Recreation occupied the second-story hall in 1950, which was later known as La Sala's Hall. The Vaccaro Building is currently vacant. The new owner of the Vaccaro Building, 5th and Harrison Redevelopment Corporation, proposes a mixed-use rehabilitation.

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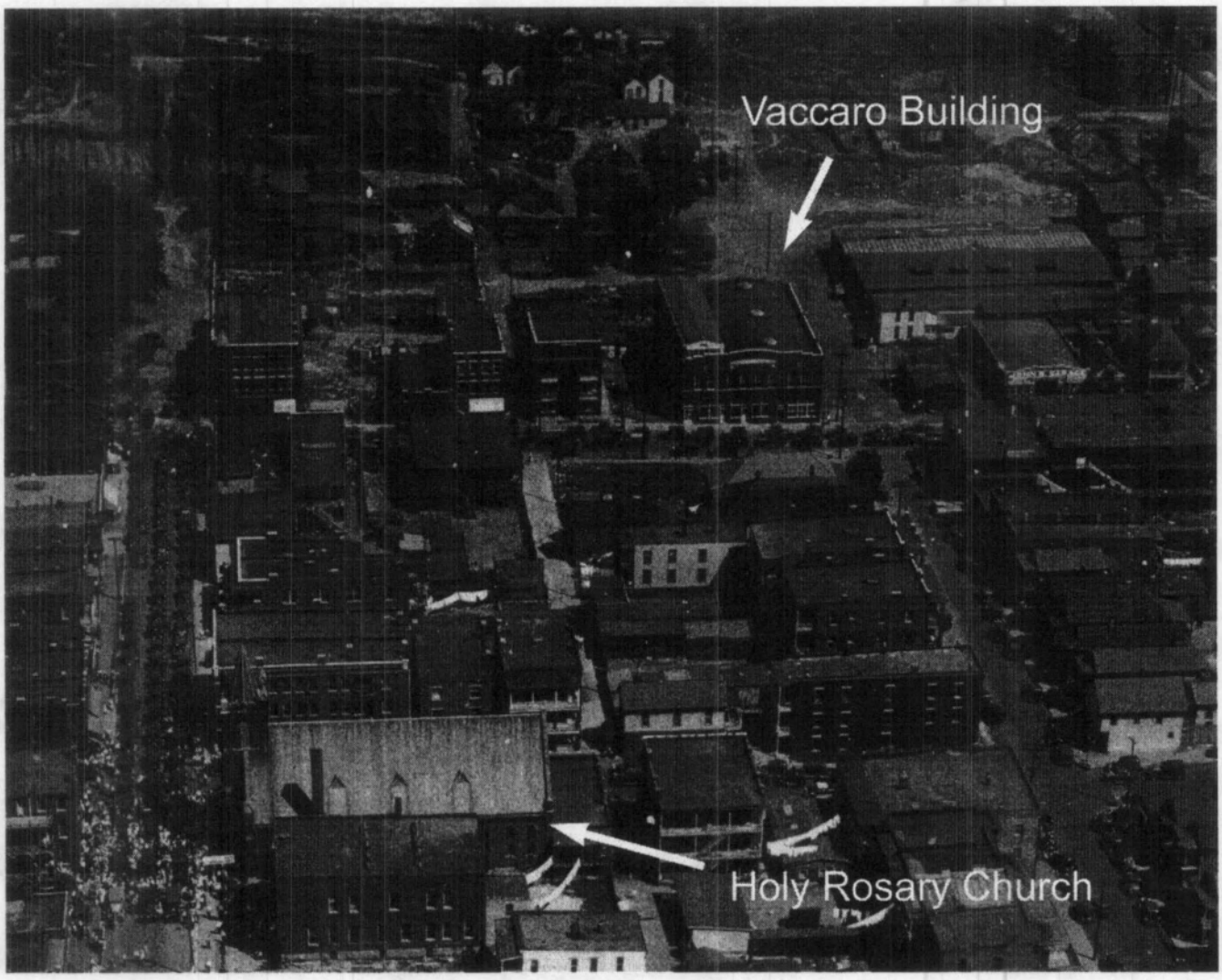
[35] Teresa Sebbeto Carrolla, interview by author, 6 February 2003, Kansas City, MO, transcribed by author.
[36] Teresa Sebbeto Carrolla, interview by author, 6 February 2003, Kansas City, MO, transcribed by author.
[37] Each oral history interview corroborated this statement.

Historic Photo Documentation



Vaccaro Building and vicinity c.1929, looking north

Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections, Zeldin Collection

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

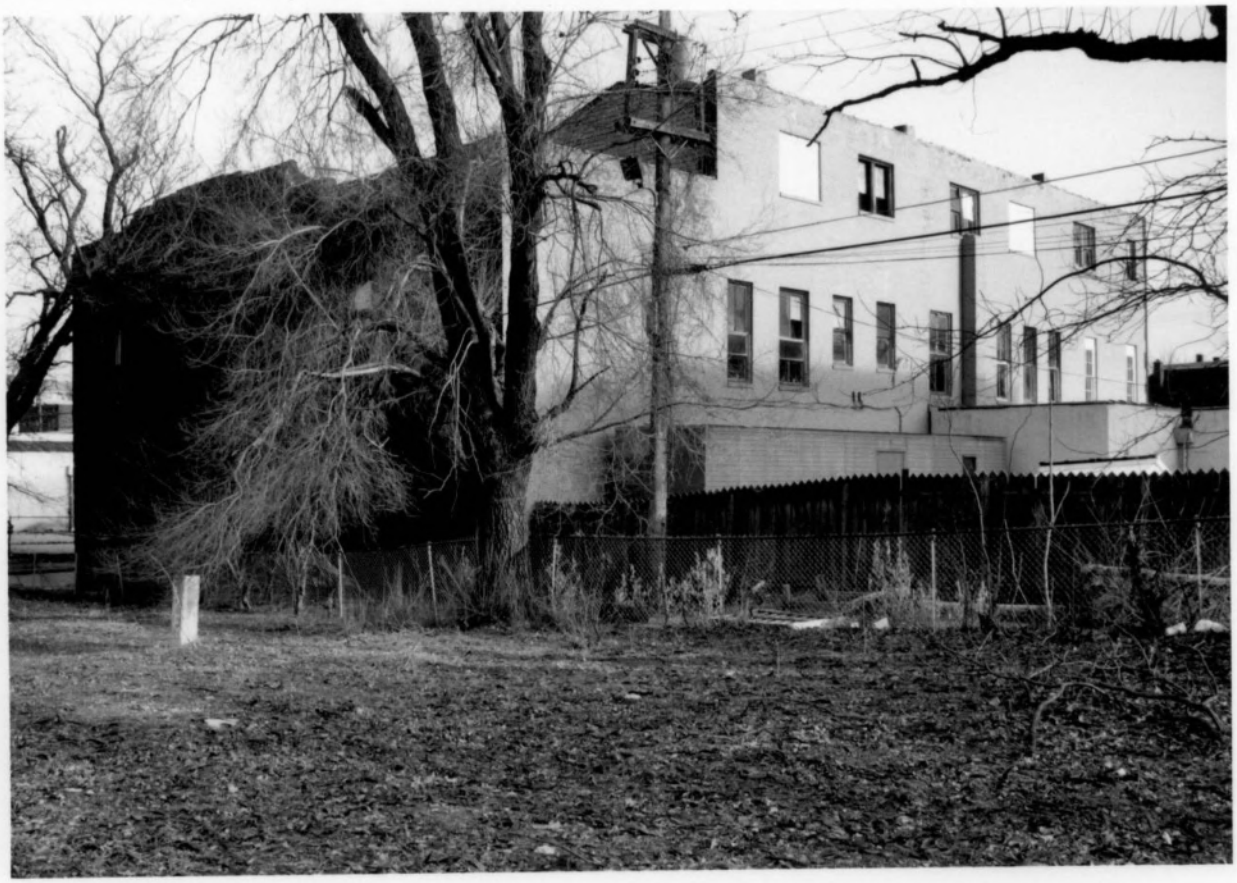
The East half of Lots 7 and 8, Block 69, East Kansas Addition, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Said premises being further described as the tract of land at the northwest corner of East 5th and Harrison streets in Kansas City, Missouri, extending a distance of 71 feet on East 5th Street westward from Harrison Street and 100 feet on Harrison Street northward from East 5th Street according to the recorded plat thereof.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for the Vaccaro Building includes the city lots on which it was erected and has historically been associated.

PHOTO LOG

Photographer: Dan Wayne, 5th and Harrison Redevelopment Corporation, Kansas City, Missouri
Date of Photographs: January 2003
Location of Original Negatives: 5th and Harrison Redevelopment Corporation
1410 East 39th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64111

Photograph Number	Camera View
1.	View NW, south and east façades
2.	View SW, east and north façades
3.	View SE, north and west façades
4.	View NE, west and south façades
5.	View NW, detail, south façade
6.	View E, interior, first-story storefront/office space
7.	View W, interior, first-story storefront/office space
8.	View SW, interior, first-story manufacturing space
9.	View SW, interior, first-story manufacturing space
10.	View NE, interior, first-story manufacturing space
11.	View NE, interior, second-story hall entrance stair
12.	View NW, interior, second-story hall
13.	View S, interior, second-story hall
14.	View SE, interior, second-story hall
15.	View NW, interior, penthouse

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