

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Buick Automobile Company Building

other name/site number N/A

2. Location

street & town 216 Admiral Boulevard N/A not for publication

city or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64105

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A Miles 03/17/04
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 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- 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:) _____

Buick Automobile Company Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

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

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty showroom

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Tudor Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls brick
roof asphalt
other terra cotta

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1907-1948

Significant Dates

1907

1934

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rea, Frank S., architect (1907-08)

Brown, George L., contractor (1907-08);

Bryant, T.D., contractor (c. 1934)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical 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:

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Buick Automobile Company Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 3/6/3/4/0/0 4/3/2/9/6/9/0
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cydney Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield

organization Architectural and Historical Research, LLC

date August 25, 2003

street & number P.O. Box 22551

telephone 816.363.0567

city or town Kansas City

state MO zip code 64113

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

name/title Del Hedgepath

street & number 5930 Ward Parkway

telephone 816.822.7788

city or town Kansas City

state MO zip code 64113

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

SUMMARY

The Buick Automobile Company Building, located at 216 Admiral Boulevard (originally 220 Admiral Boulevard), Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is a three-story brick building with elements of the Tudor Revival, constructed of cast-iron columns, steel girders and heavy timbered joists. The original facility was designed by prominent local architect Frank S. Rea in 1907 and constructed by George L. Brown in 1907-1908. Characterized by a wide, molded water table between the first and second story and prominent keystones at the storefront level (both south and east facades), the Buick Automobile Company building also features an exposed structural concrete grid at the west façade. In c. 1934, a three-story brick addition was constructed to the rear of the original unit by General Motors Company. T. D. Bryant was the general contractor. Morris Hoffman Construction Company constructed a two-story brick addition placed at the rear of the building in 1958.

Despite the alteration of the storefront level and replacement of the original fenestration at the south and west facades, the Buick Automobile Company Building still retains the majority of its historic features to convey its significance. Its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association has been retained. The 1958 addition is subsidiary to the original building.

ELABORATION

The main façade faces south and measures five bays wide. The centrally located entrance is slightly recessed and features a modified pointed arch surround with a modillioned keystone. The sides of the surround have been faced with marble. Recessed storefront fenestration set in modified pointed arches feature stone keystones. Tripartite windows with cast stone bases are modified from the original. The bulkheads flanking the main entrances are faced in ceramic tile. Upper story fenestration has been modified from the original with tripartite, aluminum-framed units. Stone lugsills are original. Prominent brick spandrels and piers divide the fenestration.

The fenestration of the south façade, which measures seven bays, wraps to the east façade and the first bay of the west façade. At the east façade, the basement is exposed and features non-original aluminum-framed fixed windows. A single-leaf, non-original man door is located at the far north bay of the east façade.

Multipaned metal industrial-sash fenestration with stone lug sills marks the south bays of the west façade. The far two north bays of the south façade display an exposed concrete structural grid. The basement windows of these two bays are fixed, multipaned. Contrasting

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
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stone stringcoursing embellishes the cornice line of the first through fourth bay (moving south to north). The north façade also displays an exposed concrete structural grid and industrial sash fenestration.

The two-story addition to the rear of the original unit features multipaned industrial sash windows at the east and west facades. Overhead doors are placed at the end bays of the east façade and at the far north bays of the west façade.

The original bracketed parapet, as seen in the attached 1925 photograph, was modified, quite possibly when the c. 1934 addition to the rear of the building was constructed. In 1961, the original wood windows were replaced with aluminum-framed units.

Future Plans

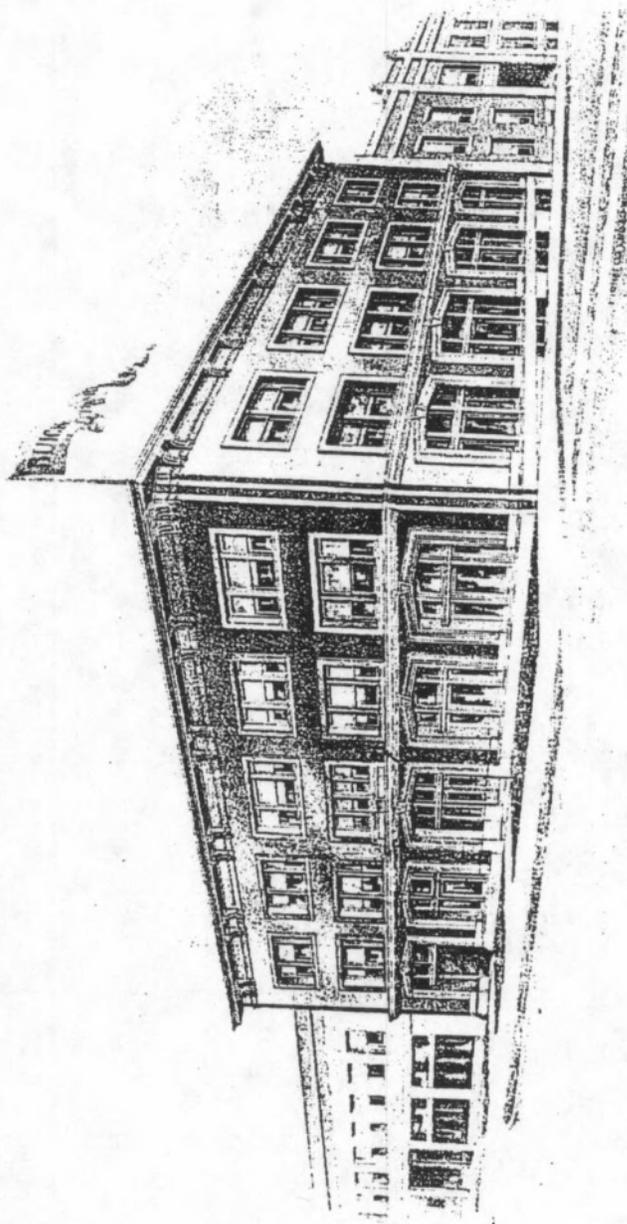
Currently, there are plans for the rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of the Buick Automobile Company Building. Future plans for the project will be prepared in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Once the proposed plans are completed, they will be submitted to the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service for review and compliance.

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Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri



The Home of the Buick Automobile Company, 1908.
(Source: *Annual Review of Kansas City Illustrated*, 1908.)

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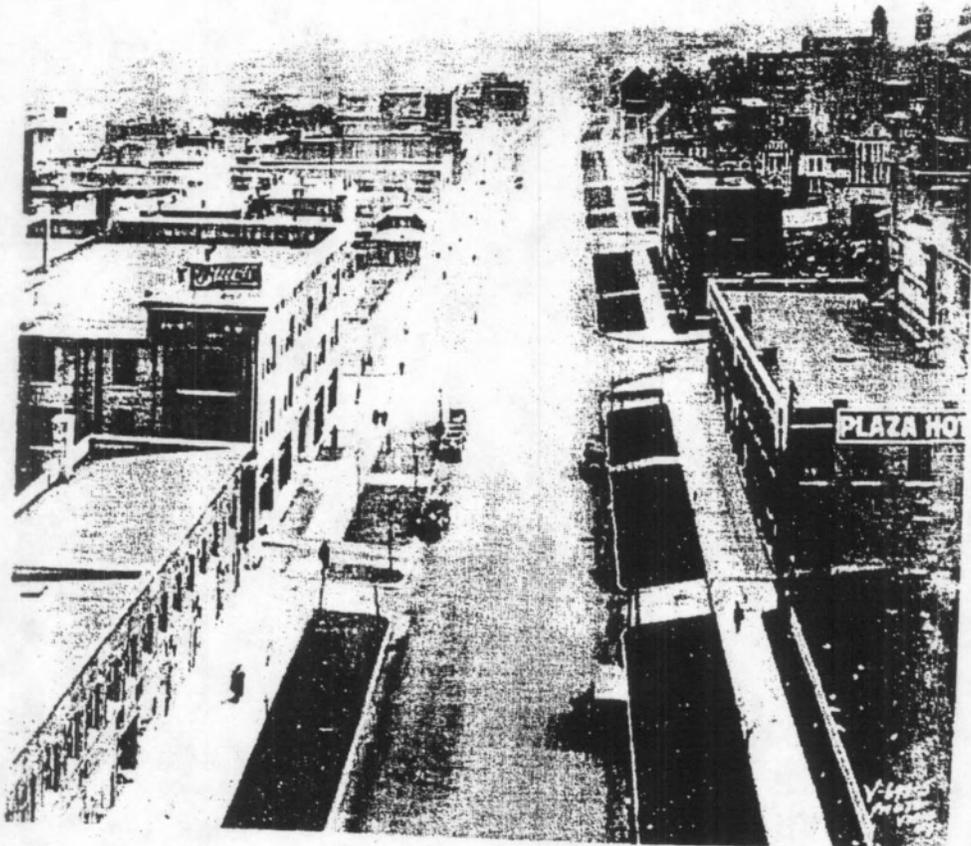
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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

1925 Looking East on Admiral

(Source: Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO)

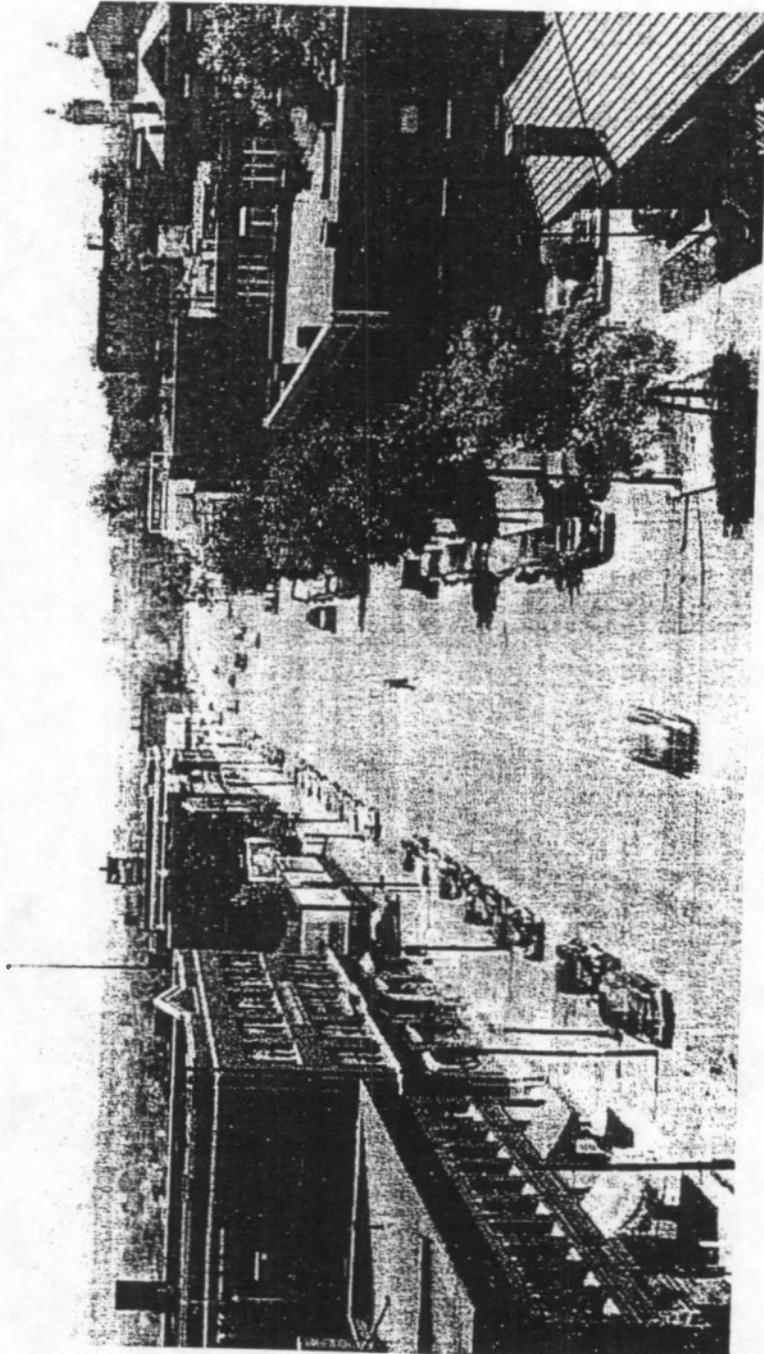


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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**



**1949 Looking East on Admiral
(Source: Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO)**

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

SUMMARY

The Buick Automobile Company Building, located at 216 Admiral Boulevard, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the following area: **COMMERCE:** Constructed in 1907-1908, The Buick Automobile Company Building was the first automotive company in Kansas City to build a dealership and warehouse specifically to show and store the Buick corporation's line of automobiles. This landmark building type illustrates, in Kansas City, the transition from the late 19th to early 20th century Main Street auto merchant first-generation storefront, to the salon-type showroom that coincided with the explosion of the automobile industry nationwide. At the time, Buick was one of only three of the major automobile companies in Kansas City.

The period of significance is 1907 from the date of construction through 1948, the year that the Buick dealership no longer occupied the building.

ELABORATION

Early Automotive Industry in the United States

As the popularity of the automobile increased in the United States at the turn-of-the century, wealthy Americans began to import cars from Europe. Although automobile development was initially largely experimental, many inventors began making vehicles for individual clients. Making one vehicle at a time was costly and time consuming, thus early entrepreneurs began looking at ways to increase the production of motorcars. The year 1897 is considered a landmark in automotive history when bicycle and wagon manufacturers were among the first to mass-produce the American automobile.¹

The Pope Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut, is noted as the birthplace of the automotive industry. Prior to 1897, Albert A. Pope's company was the largest bicycle manufacturing plant in the United States. Between 1895 and 1897, with the help of M.I.T. graduate Hiram Percy Maxim as chief engineer and Henry Souther, also from M.I.T., Pope's company produced 500 electric cars and 40 gasoline cars.²

Likewise, bicycle manufacturer, Alexander Winton of Cleveland, Ohio, was the sixth person to build an American gasoline automobile. Although his idea was not original, being the owner of a bicycle manufacturing business put Winton in the best position to undertake

¹ John B. Rae, *The American Automobile Industry* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 15.

² *Ibid.*

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commercial production. Mostly unknown today, Winton was the leading manufacturer of automobiles in the United States during the first two decades of automotive history. Winton's acclaim is that his was the first automobile sold off a production line rather than an experimental model.³ Unfortunately, his company was hit hard by the depression of 1920 and was dissolved by 1924.⁴

A logical move for wagon makers in 1900 was to convert to the horseless carriage. The Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company, South Bend, Indiana, was the world's largest horse drawn carriage manufacturer in the world. With the advent of the automobile, they stood to lose their financial stronghold. Instead, they proceeded to join the ranks of automobile manufacturers, and by 1898 they began marketing cars for other manufactures. By 1904 they began producing their own model.⁵

By 1910 electric and steam engines were being replaced by the gas-operated motor. Many automobile manufacturers failed during the first 15 years of automotive history in the United States. The successful companies that formed the base of the automotive industry during the first two decades of the twentieth century include Ford, Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Packard, Studebaker and Buick.⁶

The Buick Automobile Company

In 1899, when industrious American entrepreneurs were experimenting with the development of the horseless carriage, soon-to-be automotive mogul David D. Buick sold his plumbing supply business in Detroit, Michigan, in order to devote his time to developing a gas-powered engine. He ultimately planned to invest his money in producing an automobile using his own engine design. Buick partially built his first automobile by April 1901. He offered to sell the vehicle to Walter L. Marr. Instead, Buick, Marr and Eugene C. Richard formed a partnership in developing the "valve-in-head" engine, as described below:

The valve-in-head engine, unlike the "L-head" engine in general use at this time, was built with the valves directly over the pistons. The result was a more compact combustion chamber and a faster fuel burn rate, in general, a more efficient

³ *Ibid.*, 14-17.

⁴ John B. Rae, *American Automobile Manufacturers: The First Forty Years* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1959), 184-85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

⁶ Rae, *The American Automobile Industry*, 21.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

machine. The Buick engine was thus more powerful for its size than any other, and eventually the entire industry made use of its principle.⁷

The engine was patented under Richards name, and he was given initial credit for its development. However, Walter Marr was later identified as the chief engineer.⁸ Although the engine was the factor in the success of the Buick cars, Marr and Buick quarreled over who would take credit. Soon there after, Walter Marr dissolved his partnership with Buick to work on the first line of Oldsmobiles with Ransom E. Olds.

The problems between Buick and Marr illustrated that Buick was an undisciplined businessman, who eventually suffered from financial problems. When he incorporated in 1903, Buick lacked the expertise and funds to follow through with production. In order to gain financial support, Buick partnered with Maxwell and Briscoe (the precursor to the Chrysler Corporation), developers of the early Maxwell cars.⁹ Maxwell and Briscoe quickly lost patience and interest and sold their portion of Buick Motor Car Company to James H. Whiting, a wagon maker from Flint, Michigan. Whiting was also discouraged by Buick's lack of direction and sold his shares to William Crapo Durant.¹⁰

William C. Durant was a successful match for Buick. By November 1, 1904, William Durant had purchased controlling interest in the Buick Motor Car Company and began to build an empire.¹¹ Buick, more interested in developing and perfecting the automobile than running a successful business, became disillusioned. In 1906 David Buick left the company that bore his name. Buick's earlier financial issues left him in debt to the company. Durant wrote off the debt and reportedly gave Buick \$100,000 to invest as he saw fit. Buick's lack of judgment would eventually leave him penniless and his death in 1929 went largely unnoticed.¹² Although David D. Buick undeniably developed the first Buick automobile featuring the 'valve-in-head engine', it was William Durant that later consolidated into the General Motors Corporation on September

⁷ Lawrence R. Gustin, *Billy Durant: Creator of General Motors* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 58.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 57-59.

⁹ Rae, *The American Automobile Industry*, 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹¹ Rae, *American Automobile Manufacturers: The First Forty Years*, 19. Some sources state that Buick went on to open other businesses. His last is reported to have been a hamburger stand.

¹² Gustin, *Billy Durant*, 96.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
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10, 1908. Today, GM is considered to be the leading American automobile company in the world.¹³

Buick and Automobile Dealerships in Kansas City

The Day Automobile Company and E. P. Moriarity and Company were the first automobile dealers in Kansas City. The year was 1901.¹⁴ By 1904 E. P. Moriarity was still operating its business, but Day Automobile was no longer in existence. However, nine automobile dealers, including the first reference to two of the largest automobile manufactures of the twentieth century, Cadillac and Oldsmobile, were established by 1904.¹⁵ In 1905 Ford Motor Company entered the market in Kansas City and in 1906, less than two years after its incorporation, Buick opened their first automobile warehouse in Kansas City at 1318 E. 15th Street.

Twenty-four automobile dealers were doing business in Kansas City in 1906, including Buick, Cadillac, Ford, and REO.¹⁶ The twenty independently-owned car dealerships sold various makes and models. One of the independents was E. P. Moriarity who dealt in Steven-Duryea and Winton Touring cars and later sold Oldsmobiles for a short time. Other dealers (like Moriarity) also manufactured their own models.¹⁷

In Kansas City and around the country during the first decade of the 20th century, automobile sales and service operations took place in converted 19th century buildings. Carriage shops, bicycle shops, livery stables and blacksmith shops became the site of automobile retailers as well as manufacturers. As the automobile retail business expanded and manufacturing grew, the larger companies began opening satellite offices to show off their product lines as well as promote interest in expanding their territories.

In 1907, Buick Motor Company, Kansas City, moved to 1108 E. 15th, just prior to construction of their new showroom and warehouse at on the northwest corner of McGee and

¹³ By 1910 the well-known names that comprised the General Motors Corporation included Buick, Cadillac, Oldsmobile and Pontiac. Durant had hopes of adding Ford Motor Company to this list but Henry Ford would not agree to anything less than a cash transaction. Durant had already invested all of the corporation's cash assets into the previous acquisitions.

¹⁴ *Hoye's Kansas City Directory, 1901* (Kansas City: Hoye Directory Company, 1901), 1210.

¹⁵ *Hoye Directory, 1904*, 1356-57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* REO belonged to Ransom E. Olds and predates the Oldsmobile name.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* By 1911 over one hundred dealers were doing business in Kansas City. Of those dealers only Buick, Cadillac, Ford and Oldsmobile along and Maxwell-Briscoe which became the Chrysler Corporation, continue to manufacture automobiles today.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
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Admiral Boulevard that same year.¹⁸ At the time, Buick was one of only three major automobile companies in Kansas City. The other two were Cadillac and the Ford Motor Company. The new Buick Motor Company Building was among the first facilities in Kansas City to be designed specifically as an automobile warehouse and the first and only Buick dealer and distribution center in Kansas City until 1912.¹⁹ Frank S. Rea, a noted Kansas City architect, was responsible for the design of the new facility, constructed in 1908.²⁰

As originally designed, the three story building features cast iron columns, steel girders and heavy timbered joists.²¹ Repair shops were located in the basement and third story, a showroom/warehouse on the first floor and a garage on the second floor. A ramped floor on the west side of the building accommodated the auto entrance.²²

Richard H. Collins was sales manager of the Kansas City dealership from 1907. When the new facility was completed, Collins became president. His success in the Kansas City automotive market led to his promotion the following year. He later left Kansas City to become a vice-president of General Motors at their headquarters in Detroit in 1912.²³ In 1912, General Motors of Detroit, Michigan, acquired control of the Buick Automobile Company.

Sales distribution played a key role in the success story. In the early years, the manufacturing plants bought parts and assembled their vehicles on credit, then sold the product for cash to dealer agents.²⁴ A distributor could easily change his mind and chose to sell other product lines. Although the basic relationship between manufacturer and dealer was established early on, it wasn't until much later that the more stringent guidelines of franchise ownership were put into place. In the case of the Buick Motor Car Company, the early development of Buick-owned dealerships gave them the stability that most independent automobile dealers lacked. By the 1920s, Buick was a well-established and respected name and the number of independent Buick dealerships rose, as did sales.

¹⁸ *Hoye Directory*, 1906, 1514.

¹⁹ *Hoye's Kansas City Directory*, 1907 (Kansas City: Hoye's Publishing Company, 1907), 1568. The Buick Motor Company, the only car dealership in the immediate neighborhood, was owned by The Buick Automotive Company.

²⁰ "Condensed Construction News," *Western Contractor* 14 (13 May 1908), 6.

²¹ "Condensed Construction News," *Western Contractor* 14 (22 April 1908), 7.

²² Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Insurance Map of Kansas City, Missouri, 1909* (Pelham: New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), Plate 194.

²³ "Buick Won the Events," *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, 5 July 1912, 5. Internet Access: April 26, 2003, <http://winfield.50megs.com/Cowley/4Jul12.htm>

²⁴ John B. Rae, *The American Automobile* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 18.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
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Between 1908 and 1910, Durant acquired Cadillac Motors and in 1912, he promoted Collins to preside over the Cadillac Division of the General Motors Corporation.²⁵ After the General Motors Corporation (GM) acquired the Buick name in 1912 following the departure of Collins, the Buick Automobile Company continued operating under the leadership of J. Frank Martin, General Manager (1912-1925). In 1915, Buick Automobile Company was changed to the Buick Motor Company. By the mid-1930s, two other automotive divisions of GM, Pontiac and Oldsmobile, were jointly operated with the Buick Motor Company.²⁶ The building operated as a Buick dealership until 1948.²⁷

By 1915, Kansas City was the third largest automobile market in the United States. The Kansas City Buick Company was under the directorship of the parent company in Detroit. The five-year increase in automobile sales in Kansas City alone, between 1910 and 1915, was 442%.²⁸ The advent of the automobile brought about challenges in marketing a product that had a very limited clientele in 1900 yet tripled in the short span of just seven years.

The introduction of the automobile in the late 19th century was greeted not only with excitement but apprehension as well. In 1900 only 4,192 automobiles were produced in the United States; 1,500 were electric, 1,700 were steam operated while only 936 had gasoline engines. The early vehicles were individually manufactured and expensive. Ranging in price from \$3,000 to \$12,000 each, salaries for industrial and farm labor was only \$1.00 per ten-hour day. This made the horse the cheapest and most reliable form of transportation in the country.

Subsequently, a solution to the high price of automobile manufacturing occurred in 1906, when Henry Ford began using an assembly line approach to mass-produce his Model-T. Ford was able to increase his production from 1,599 autos in 1905 to 14,887 by 1907. The cost of automobiles was greatly affected by automation; by 1917 Ford was selling cars for less than \$600 a piece. Other auto manufactures quickly followed his lead.²⁹

²⁵ Rae. *American Automobile Manufacturers*, 178-80. By 1917, Richard Collins became the President of the Cadillac division of General Motors. When Durant left GM in 1918, Collins left with him and went on to establish his own automobile manufacturing company.

²⁶ *Gate's City Directory of Kansas City, Missouri* (Kansas City: Gate's Publishing Company, 1915- 1941).

²⁷ *Ibid.* Franchising did not occur until the late 1920s. By 1948 four businesses were located at 220 Admiral Boulevard: Marshall's U. S. Auto Supply and three clothing manufacturing companies. One of the manufactures, Frances Gee Garment Company, a uniform manufacturer, was listed at 220 Admiral from 1948 through 1990. In 1992 the building became vacant

²⁸ *The Kansas Citian* 4 (11 May 1915): 152-158. Buick Motor Company was a member of the KC Commercial Club in 1915.

²⁹ U.S. Department of Transportation, *America's Highways: 1776-1976* (Washington D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 54-56.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
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The automobile had one of the single most significant impacts on the commercial and industrial development of the western world and was instrumental in the development of the Good Roads Movement that was vital to the growth of Kansas City during the 1910s. Architecture also was affected by the advent of the automobile. Some buildings, used as livery stables for the horse and carriage industry, made way for the heavier horseless carriage. When mass production took hold of the automobile industry, new building designs were needed for a utilitarian approach to fit the space to the need of the trade.

Richard H. Collins

During his years as president of the Buick Automobile Company of Kansas City (1908-1912), Richard Collins was instrumental in the success of the local business.³⁰ Collins was an active member in the Kansas City Commercial Club, the precursor to the Chamber of Commerce and a promoter of the city's image. In 1908, in an article for the *Annual Review of Greater Kansas City*, Collins stated that:

Only through the use of an [A]utomobile can one be brought to a full appreciation of the "Fairy Land" in which we live. Other means of travel, will in time, acquaint you with the more prominent parks and boulevards in picturesque Kansas City and Jackson County, but like a continued story the pleasure would come in parts.³¹

Collins spearheaded an annual five-mile auto race for privately owned cars in Kansas City. Held from 1909 through 1912, these races took place at the Elms Ridge Club, formerly a horse track that had been closed in 1906. The races were open to any vehicle regardless of manufacturer. It was an endurance test, as well as a promising marketing tool to promote automobile ownership.³² The prize for the race was the R. H. Collins Trophy, a sterling silver winning cup named for its sponsor. The entries were not limited to Buick alone but open to all makes and models of automobiles of the day. The friendly competition between rival automobile styles made the races an interesting spectator sport, as well as a sales tool. On June 15, 1912,

³⁰ Collins was the general manager for the John Deere Plow Company prior to becoming president of Buick in Kansas City.

³¹ R. H. Collins, "Kansas City an Automobile Market," *Annual Review of Greater Kansas City Illustrated* (Kansas City: D. M. Bone Publishing, 1908), 108.

³² *Ibid.* The Elm Ridge Club race course had served as a short lived horse track from 1904 through 1906 at which time, horse racing was outlawed in Missouri. It was located one block east of The Paseo between 59th Street and 63rd Street. In 1912 it became the Blue Hills Country Club.

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coinciding with Collins departure from Kansas City to Detroit, the last race for the Collins Trophy was held at the Elm Ridge Club. Shortly thereafter, the club was sold and the track was turned into a golf course.³³

Frank S. Rea

To date, little is known about Frank S. Rea. What is known is that Rea was working in Kansas City as an architect during the 1890s. In 1898 Rea had an office in the Sheidley Building while he roomed at 1424 Cherry. In 1901, Rea was listed as a resident of 2825 Park Avenue, which was also the residence of Charles A. Smith, who he later joined in practice. Although both Rea and Smith were located 722 Dwight Building, they were listed as separate firms. Rea and Smith had collaborated as early as 1903 on the Faxon, Horton and Gallagher Drug Company at 720 Broadway but did not form a partnership until 1910 when Walter U. Lovitt also became a partner.³⁴

Another building designed by Frank Rea as a sole practitioner was the McCune Home for Boys in eastern Jackson County (1908). In several articles regarding the approval and construction of the McCune Home, Rea was identified as the "county architect."³⁵ By November 18, 1908, the cornerstone for the administration building was laid. In 1910, Rea designed plans for three more buildings on the McCune property.³⁶

The firm of Smith, Rea and Lovitt was active between 1910 and 1921, until the deaths of Walter Lovitt in 1920 and Frank Rea in 1921.³⁷ Some of the most notable commercial buildings designed by the firm of Smith, Rea and Lovitt include The Rialto Building, Dwight Building, and the Kansas City Club Building.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ George Ehrlich, *Kansas City Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990*, Revised Ed. (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 62.

³⁵ "McCune Home: Purchase of Winslow Rogers Farm," *The Kansas City Star*, 13 February 1908, n. p.

³⁶ "McCune Home," *The Kansas City Star* 25 July 1910, n. p.

³⁷ Sherry Piland, *Historic Kansas City Foundation Gazette*, 10 (January/February 1986): 4-5.

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

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**Buick Automobile Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri**

Verbal Boundary Description

McDaniel's Addition, Lots 7 - 10 Block 6 and E ½ of Vac Alley LYW and Adjacent, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Boundary Justification

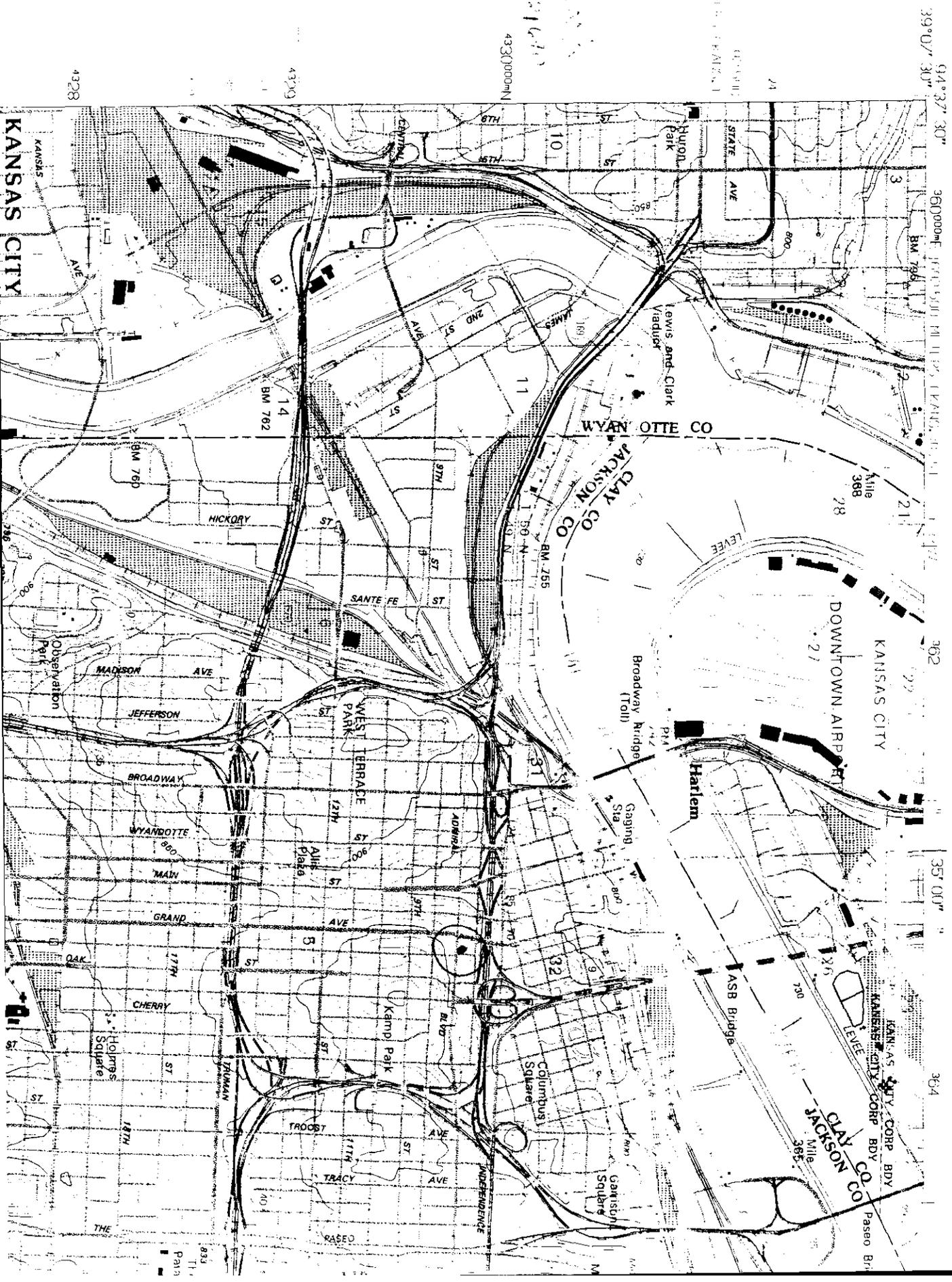
The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Buick Automobile Company Building, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Key to Photographs

Len Fohn, photographer; September 2003.
Negatives maintained by the nomination preparer.

1. Main or south façade; view facing north.
2. Main façade and east façades; view facing northwest.
3. Main façade and a portion of the west façade; view facing northeast.
4. East façade and a portion of the north façade; view facing southwest.
5. Portions of the north and west façades; view facing southeast.
6. Portion of the west façade; view facing east.
7. First floor; view facing northeast.
8. Second floor; view facing northeast.
9. Third floor; view facing southeast.
10. Third floor; view facing northwest.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



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