

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Miller Building

other name/site number: N/A

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2. Location

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street & number: 2 East Franklin Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Liberty

vicinity: N/A

state: MO

county: Clay

code: 047

zip code: 64068

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri"



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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Late Victorian  
Other: Early Commercial Block

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Brick roof Asphalt  
walls Brick other Cast Iron  
Stucco

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: Commerce  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1868 - 1942

Significant Dates : 1868

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.



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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Miller Building Page 1  
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**SUMMARY:** The Miller Building is located at 2 East Franklin in Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. The building was constructed in 1868, and features many Victorian commercial details on a Two-Part Commercial Block property type, as defined in the Multiple Property Submission "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri". It is on the northeast corner of the intersection of North Main and East Franklin streets. It is a two-story, rectangular brick building with a flat roof. The Victorian features found on the building include the decorative brick cornice line, hooded window surrounds, and an intact storefront with cast-iron columns. Not only does the Miller Building retain its integrity of location, setting, and association, but the rare (for Liberty) unaltered storefront constitutes a high degree of integrity in design, materials, workmanship, and feeling as well.

**ELABORATION:** The Miller Building was constructed in 1868 by "Uncle Bob" Miller, and remains today virtually unaltered from that period. It is on the northeast corner of North Main and East Franklin streets, and after escaping a fire on the block in the 1950's, remains one of the few intact historic structures on the north side of the square. Its design features are typical of the earlier Victorian embellishments added to the Two-Part Commercial Block property type. The brick exterior has been painted with a slightly textured paint, but the original cladding remains clear.

The front (south) facade is divided into three bays. The nearly unaltered storefront features four cast iron columns spaced evenly across the front. The slender central columns frame a centrally located recessed entry, while wider columns enframe the building's edges. The door is wood framed with fifteen glass lights. The transom area immediately above the doorway has been closed, and the uppermost transom has two fixed pane windows covered with metal bars. The side windows in the recessed entry have a panelled wood bulkhead, display windows, and glass transoms above. Flanking the recessed entry are two large display windows with wood panelled bulkheads below. The signboard area above has been closed down.

The second story of the front facade has three equally spaced tall, narrow windows. These wood windows are six-over-six, double-hung sash, with projecting sills and molded triangular pediments above. Immediately above the windows are recessed rectangular panels in the brick. The west elevation, which is five bays long, has identical fenestration surrounds. The first story has two openings on the north end, one of which has been

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Miller Building

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closed down. Iron steps lead to a central door on the second story, which is flanked by two windows identical to those on the front facade. A decorative cornice band is the same on both the west and south elevations. It consists of a wide band punctuated by an arched, corbelled brick pattern, and topped with a dentil pattern of bricks.

The Miller Building is now occupied by an antique business on the ground floor and basement level. To accomodate the new business and increase usable floor space, the owners have removed all interior wall partitions on the ground floor. In addition, plaster was removed from the east and west walls, revealing the raw brick finish. Non-historic acoustical tile panels now cover the ceiling.

The upstairs continues to be used for residential purposes. The two apartments were remodelled in 1991. In both units, the exterior plaster walls were stripped to brick and a clear breathable finish was applied.



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**SUMMARY:** The Miller Building is significant under Criterion A in the area of COMMERCE, and under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. In the area of COMMERCE, it is representative of the commercial expansion and growth in Liberty after the Civil War through the 1930's. It is the second oldest commercial building on the square and has housed a number of enterprises vital to the economic health of Liberty over the years. In the area of ARCHITECTURE, it is a virtually unaltered example of the early Two-Part Commercial Block property type (see MPS "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri"). Not only does it retain the typical cornice line elaboration and second story fenestration patterns, it has one of the few sets of cast iron columns left on Liberty's square.

**ELABORATION:** The Miller Building was constructed by "Uncle Bob" Miller in 1868, and remains today as the oldest example of a Two-Part Commercial Block property type, which were built after the Civil War in Liberty. Although not as elaborate as some of the Two-Part Commercial Block buildings constructed in Liberty later during the 1880's, it nonetheless represents a departure from the restrained, classically influenced style of architecture which was predominate prior to the Civil War (see 104 East Franklin). The division of the facade into two distinct zones is also typical of this form of commercial building, new to Liberty at its time of construction.

The Miller Building is also representative of a typical commercial building on the square, which housed a variety of businesses throughout its long years of service. A closer examination of the types of enterprises and their length of residency, however, reveals the overall basic stability of commerce in Liberty. This is typical of the economics of business located on the square in Liberty (see historic context "The Courthouse Square in Liberty: Commercial and Governmental Center of Clay County, 1858-1942", in the MPS "Historic Resources of Liberty, Clay County, Missouri") Two of the businesses housed at 2 East Franklin were there for nearly half a century each.

Robert Hugh Miller came to Liberty in 1846, and founded that same year the Liberty Tribune. He remained as editor until 1886, and for many years used the second story as his office (Portrait and Biographical Records, 1893; Liberty Tribune, 16 September 1937). At the time of its founding, it was one of the few newspapers west of the Mississippi River which was regularly published. (DAR, 1922). However, the Miller Building was used primarily for commercial purposes. Shortly after it was built, Nathaus's

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Miller Building

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clothing store opened there, and remained through 1883 (Sanborn Map, 1883). This business was followed by a hardware store owned by John Lincoln (Liberty Tribune, 16 September 1937).

In 1894, a boots and shoe store occupied the building. It was vacant for a short period right around the turn of the century, but was soon occupied by a grocery store (Sanborn Maps, 1894, 1899, 1906). L.T. Dorsett's Grocery was located at 2 East Franklin for many years. Dorsett started his business in Liberty in 1879, and conducted a grocery store which also handled Queensware and glassware (Woodson, 1920).

In addition to the commercial enterprises housed in the first floor, the Masonic Lodge used the second story between 1870 and 1886 (Liberty Tribune, 10 February 1955). After that period, the second floor was used for offices (Sanborn Maps, 1889, 1894). Bernard Fightmaster bought the building from Dorsett in 1937 (Liberty Tribune, 16 September 1937), and the Fightmaster Plumbing Company remained in the building for several decades.

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Miller Building

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander Doniphan Chapter, D.A.R. Clay County Missouri Centennial Souvenir, 1822-1922. Liberty, MO.: Liberty Tribune, 1922.

Jackson, Don M., and Wymore, Jack B. The Heritage of Liberty. Liberty, MO.: R.C. Printing Services, 1976.

Liberty Tribune. 16 September 1937, 10 February 1955.

Portrait and Biographical Records: Clay, Ray, Carroll, Linn Counties. 1893.

Sanborn Map for Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1883, 1889, 1894, 1899, 1906, 1913.

Woodson, W.H. History of Clay County, Missouri. Topeka: Historical Publishing Company, 1920.

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National Park Service

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10

Miller Building

Page 1

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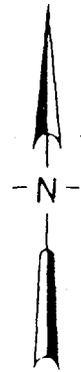
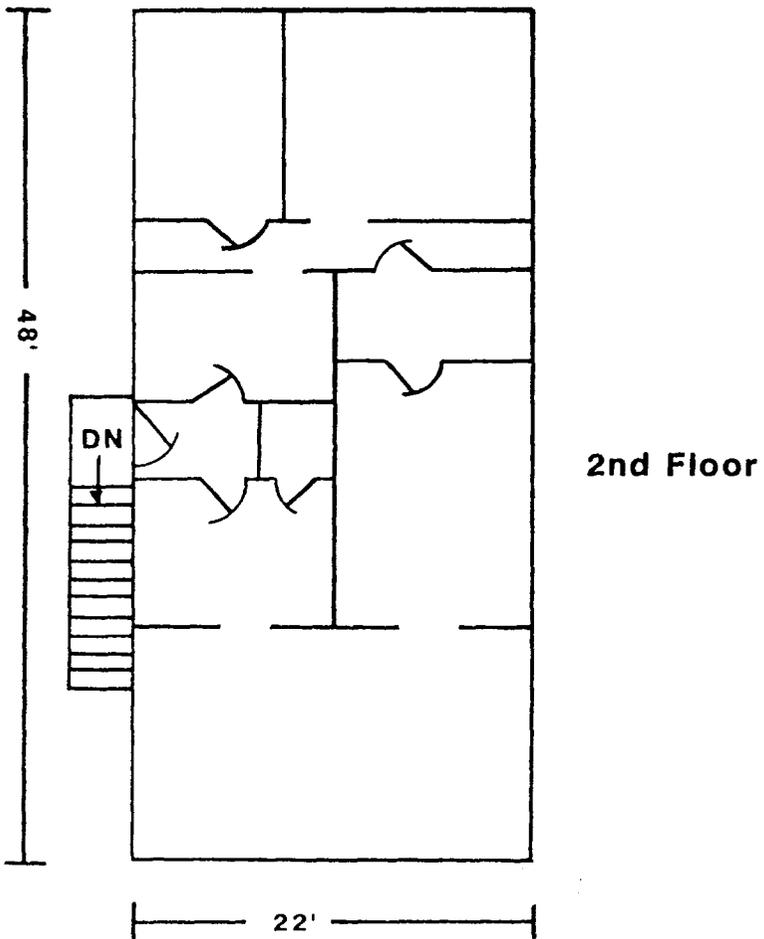
**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The west 22' feet of the south 101' feet of Lot 83, Original Town of Liberty, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of East Franklin and North Main streets, proceed north 101' along the right-of-way of North Main; then proceed east 22'; then proceed east 22'; then proceed south 101'; then proceed west 22' along the right-of-way of East Franklin to the point of beginning.

**Verbal Boundary Justification:**

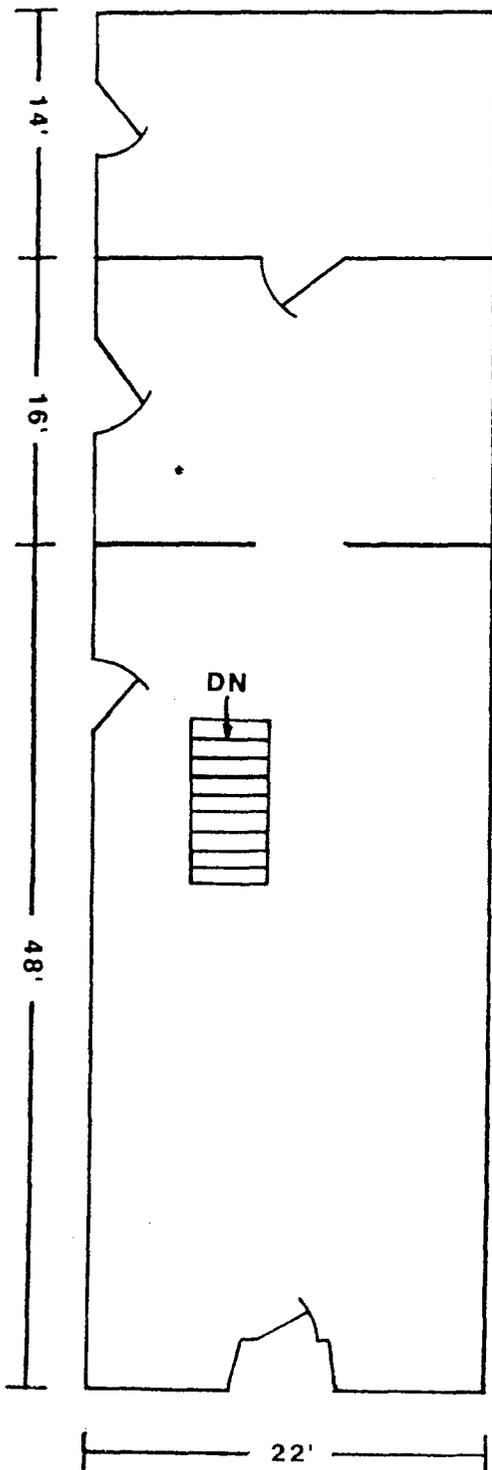
The boundary includes all that portion of the city lot which has historically been associated with the property.

# MILLER BUILDING

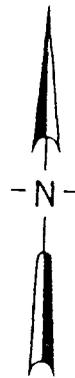


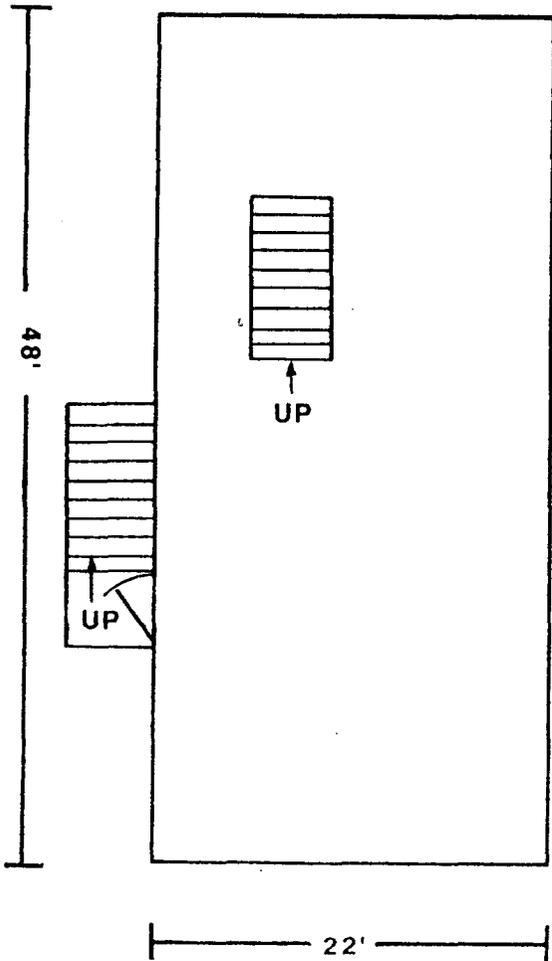
Liberty, Clay County, Missouri

Scale:  $\frac{3}{32}'' = 1'$   
(approx)

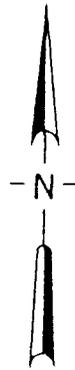


1st Floor





**Basement**



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Section number Photographs Miller Building Page 1  
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The following information is the same for all photographs listed below:

LOCATION OF SITE: Miller Building at 2 East Franklin Street, Liberty, MO  
NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER: Bob Askren  
DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH: 19 December 1991  
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE: State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, MO

List of Photographs

1. Southwest elevation of building, showing exterior metal staircase.
2. South elevation.
3. Main (south) entry, showing detail of applied historic signage on glass sidelight.
4. Interior of building, looking north towards the back (from just inside the front door).

212 E. FRANKLIN ST.  
LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
UTM 18TUE81/08778/11710

SOUTH LIBERTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
2 S. MAIN ST., 10 E. KANSAS ST., 1-17 E. KANSAS ST.  
LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
UTM 18TUE81/08778/11710

LIBERTY QUADRANGLE  
MISSOURI  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

7162 IV SW (KEARNEY)  
25' 22" 30" 39' 15"

25' 22" MI. TO U.S. 69  
RICHMOND 31 MI.  
EXCELSIOR SPRINGS 13 MI.

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS 14 MI. 7162 IV SW (KEARNEY SW)  
0.2 MI. TO U.S. BYP 71



LIBERTY QUADRANGLE MISSOURI 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

510 950

950

LIBERTY DISTRICT

LIBERTY DISTRICT

950

7162 IV SW (KEARNEY)

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS 14 MI. 7162 IV SW (KEARNEY SW)

25' 22" MI. TO U.S. 69  
RICHMOND 31 MI.  
EXCELSIOR SPRINGS 13 MI.

7162 IV SW (KEARNEY)  
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LIBERTY QUADRANGLE  
MISSOURI  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

212 E. FRANKLIN ST.  
LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
UTM 18TUE81/08778/11710

SOUTH LIBERTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
2 S. MAIN ST., 10 E. KANSAS ST., 1-17 E. KANSAS ST.  
LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
UTM 18TUE81/08778/11710

510 950

950

LIBERTY DISTRICT

LIBERTY DISTRICT

950

7162 IV SW (KEARNEY)

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS 14 MI. 7162 IV SW (KEARNEY SW)

25' 22" MI. TO U.S. 69  
RICHMOND 31 MI.  
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7162 IV SW (KEARNEY)  
25' 22" 30" 39' 15"

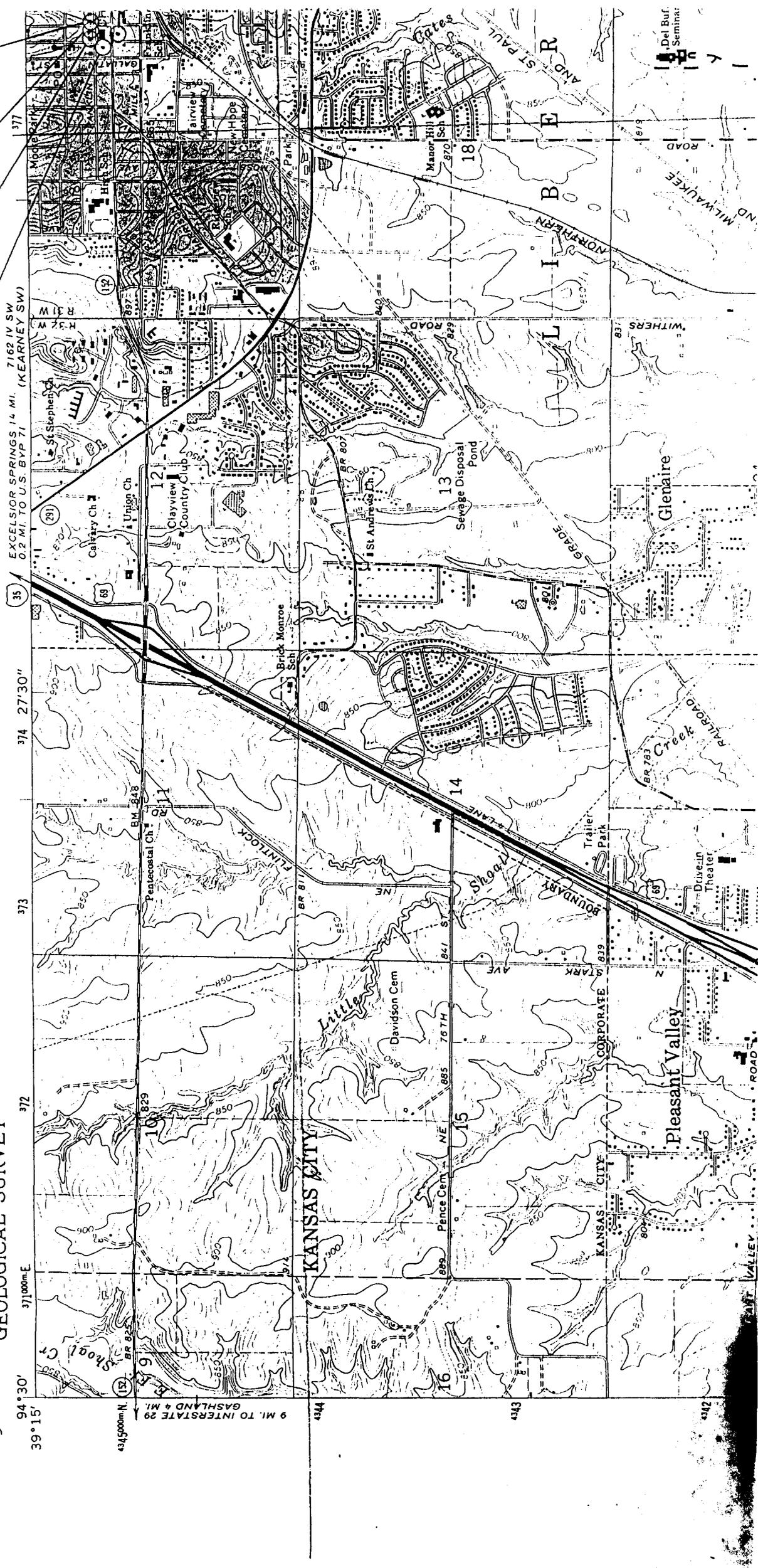
LIBERTY QUADRANGLE  
MISSOURI  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

100' LIBERTY CLASSIFIED  
 LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
 UTM 15/27510/434885  
 CLAY 104  
 66

WEST LIBERTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 18-16 N MAIN ST, LIBERTY, CLAY COUNTY, MISSOURI  
 UTM 15/277420/4344885

UNITED STATES  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

7062 / SE  
 (NASHUA)



Del Buf. Seminar







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Mon. 10:00 - 5:00  
Tue. 10:00 - 5:00  
Wed. 10:00 - 5:00  
Thu. 10:00 - 5:00  
Fri. 10:00 - 5:00  
Sat. 10:00 - 5:00  
Sun. 10:00 - 5:00

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ANTIQUE MARKET

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