

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Fairgrounds Hotel

other names/site number Fairgrounds Park Place Apartments; Fairgrounds Manor

### 2. Location

street & number 3644 Natural Bridge Road [N/A] not for publication

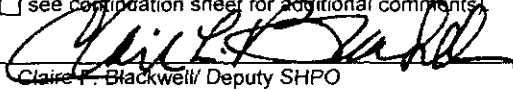
city or town St. Louis [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis [Independent City] code 510 zip code 63107

### 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)

Signature of certifying official/Title

  
Claire F. Blackwell/ Deputy SHPO

Date

3 June 02

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:

- 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Fairgrounds Hotel  
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri  
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 Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: hotel

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls STONE

TERRA COTTA

BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other METAL

Narrative Description

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

Fairgrounds Hotel  
Name of Property

St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri  
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

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)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1927-1952

Significant Dates

1941-1946

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: Craven, J.T.

Builder: Boaz-Kiel Construction Company

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: Institute for Sustainable Development

Fairgrounds Hotel  
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1][5]	[7][4][2][0][6][0]	[4][2][8][2][8][5][0]	2	[ ][ ]	[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]	[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	[ ][ ]	[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]	[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]	4	[ ][ ]	[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]	[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]
							<input type="checkbox"/> 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 Julie C. Doering

organization Institute for Sustainable Development date November 26, 2001

street & number 112 East High Street telephone (573) 634-5008

city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65101

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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 Fairgrounds Apartments L.L.C.

street & number 7730 Forsyth, Suite 300 telephone 314-862-5955

city or town Clayton state MO zip code 63105

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

### Narrative Description

#### Summary:

The Fairgrounds Hotel is located within a commercial and residential area immediately south of the intersection of Natural Bridge Road and North Spring Avenue, City Block 2394, in North St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri. The Fairgrounds Hotel, which is an eight-story, Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival commercial structure, is generally L-shaped and comprised of reinforced concrete, smooth cut stone, Carthage finish terra cotta, and matte brick.<sup>1</sup> The exterior of the building is simple in design with evenly spaced bays of two different sizes. The fifteen bays across the façade are in a pattern consisting of two large bays alternated by one small bay. The bay pattern is similar on the northwest elevation. Views of the southwest and southeast elevations reveal that the first floor does not rise in an L-shape like the floors above it but is rectangular in design. The building, which has a flat roof, stands detached on the corner lot. Since the time of its original construction, the building has undergone exterior and interior alterations. Exterior alterations include the addition of two enclosed fire escapes on the southeast and southwest elevations of the building and the removal of two large "Fairgrounds" signs from the roof. Despite these changes, historic integrity does remain, as the hotel's general characteristics such as size and style remain consistent with when the building was constructed. Throughout the years the Fairgrounds Hotel interior has been renovated multiple times for various uses, such as a nursing home and also subsidized housing. Historic integrity remains strongest on the first floor where most of the culturally historic activities that make the hotel a significant building took place. The lobby's original terrazzo floors have been restored, and a few common entryways are similar to their original appearance.<sup>2</sup> Interior alterations of floors two through eight have been extensive and historic integrity is minimal. It is noteworthy that the Fairgrounds Hotel is one of the sole surviving buildings reminiscent of the time when cultural activities flourished in the North St. Louis area.

#### Elaboration:

The Fairgrounds Hotel is situated in the midst of commercial and residential buildings in the Fairgrounds neighborhood of North St. Louis, Missouri. Located at 3644 Natural Bridge Road, it is at the corner of North Spring Avenue and faces Fairgrounds Park. Sanborn Maps showing the Fairgrounds Hotel location in relation to its surroundings are included as Continuation Sheets 3 and 4.

The Fairgrounds Hotel, a Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revival building, was designed by architect J.T. Craven and built by Boaz-Kiel Construction Company from 1927-1928. It is eight stories tall and built of reinforced concrete, smooth cut stone, terra cotta and matte brick. This L-shaped building is fairly simple in design, with the most detail found on its façade and northwest elevation (see Photo 1). In contrast, the southwest and southeast elevations are comprised mainly of brick and windows (see Photo 2).

The façade, which is the northeast side of the building, and the northwest elevation feature the style of tripartite division. The exterior of the first floor is typical of storefront design with smooth cut stone and

<sup>1</sup> "Work Begun on New \$1,000,000 Hotel," Greater St. Louis Magazine July 1927: 29.

<sup>2</sup> "Fairgrounds Park Place Apartments, St. Louis," Kohner News & Views Summer 2000, 15 Nov. 2001  
<[http://www.kohner.com/summer2k\\_page2.htm](http://www.kohner.com/summer2k_page2.htm)>.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

many large storefront windows and awnings that have been erected for the over 15,000 square feet of commercial space available. Centrally located on the façade is the building's main entrance, which now has 24-hour monitored intercom entry. Within the sixth bay of the northwest elevation is an historic hotel entrance (see Photo 3). A wheelchair ramp is now located along this elevation to the west of the historic entrance. The lower tripartite division is made between the first and second floors of the façade and northwest elevation. Decorative terra cotta shields flank each window while a smooth stone belt course spans the top and bottom of the shields and windows to form a distinct separation between the first floor and the fairly plain brick of the middle shaft (see Photo 4). The middle shaft extends from the third floor to the top of the seventh floor. Above the windows of the seventh floor, a modestly decorated belt course separates the middle shaft from the most highly decorated yet still fairly simple section of the building. The exterior of building's eighth floor features smooth stone quoins on either side of the large windows and at the building's corners. The roof features an additional belt course just below a simple parapet spanning the entire façade and northwest elevation.

The unornamented southwest elevation is adjacent to an alley. Extending from the original building on this elevation is one of two enclosed fire escapes added about 1968. The southeast elevation is adjacent to the building's gated parking lot that extends the length of the side and features electronic entry. This elevation contains the second enclosed fire escape. No other outstanding decorations or features are located on the structure itself. Two, large metal FAIRGROUNDS signs originally located on the roof and facing both the north and east are no longer present, but historic signage has been hung on the building's exterior at ground level. A photo of the former Fairgrounds Hotel is included as Continuation Sheet 5 and can be compared to present-day photos.

With regard to the building's interior, the lobby's original terrazzo floors have been restored, and a few common entryways are similar to their original appearance (see Photos 5 and 6). Floors two through eight now feature renovated and modernized one and two bedroom apartments, with a variety of 13 different floor plans. Included as Continuation Sheets 6 and 7 are floor plans for the first floor and representative upper floor.

### Alterations and Integrity Issues

While the addition of two enclosed fire escapes in 1968 occurred after the period of significance, they are located on the less visible elevations of the Fairgrounds Hotel and cannot be seen from the north corner of the building. The building's exterior maintains its original size and style characteristics that associate it with its period of significance, so the addition of the enclosed fire escapes does not significantly diminish its historic integrity. While the interior alterations must also be considered, the socializing and mingling of St. Louis society, which were the activities within the Fairgrounds Hotel directly related to its cultural significance, occurred in the hotel's large lobby area, which still is similar to its original appearance. Therefore, the alterations to the upper floors should not be considered an overwhelming hindrance to the Fairgrounds Hotel's ability to convey its historic associations or cultural significance to the city of St. Louis. It should be noted that the Fairgrounds Hotel is one of very few remaining structures associated with this period of significance in St. Louis culture.

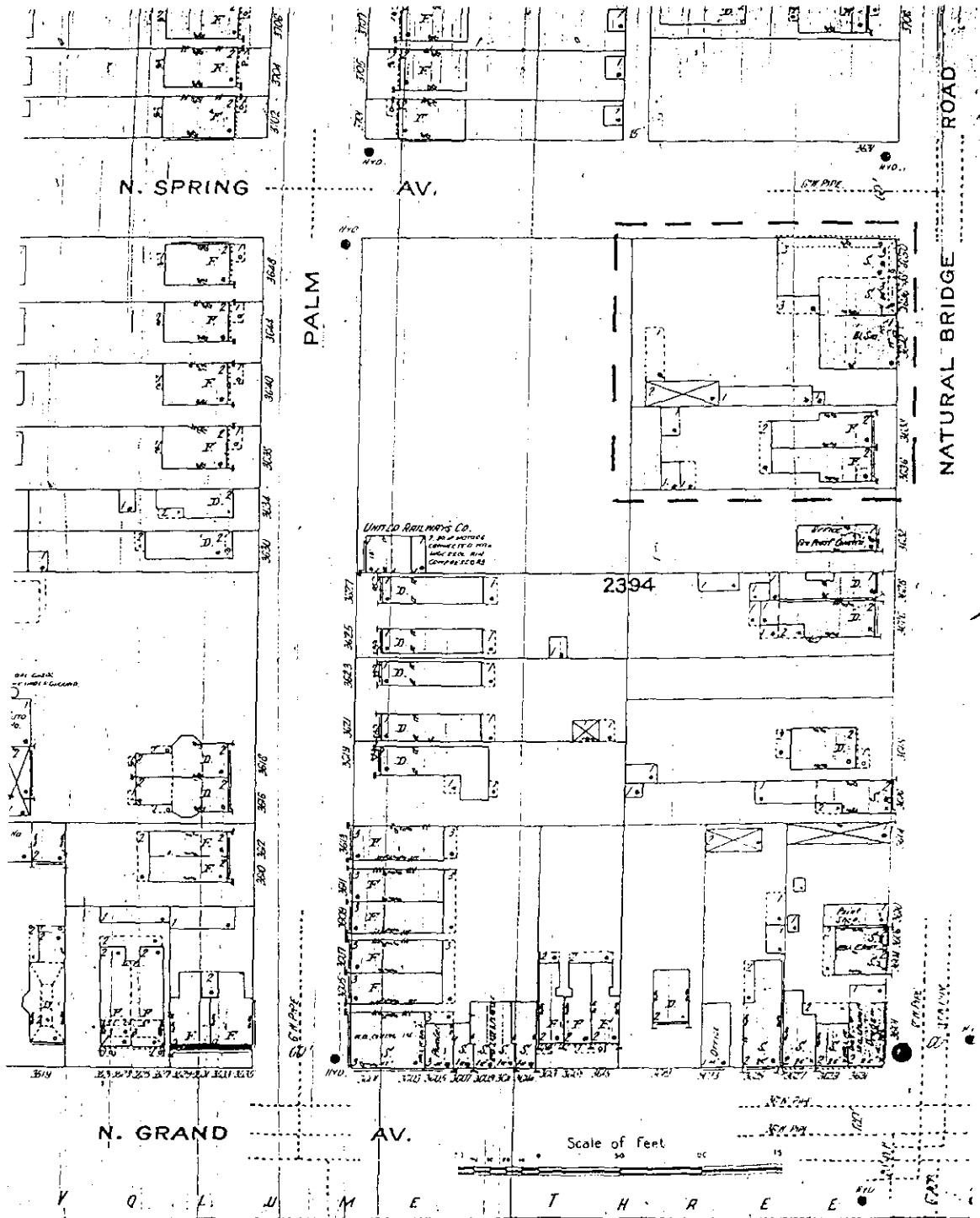
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Fairgrounds Hotel - 1909 Sanborn Map  
Source: St. Louis Public Library



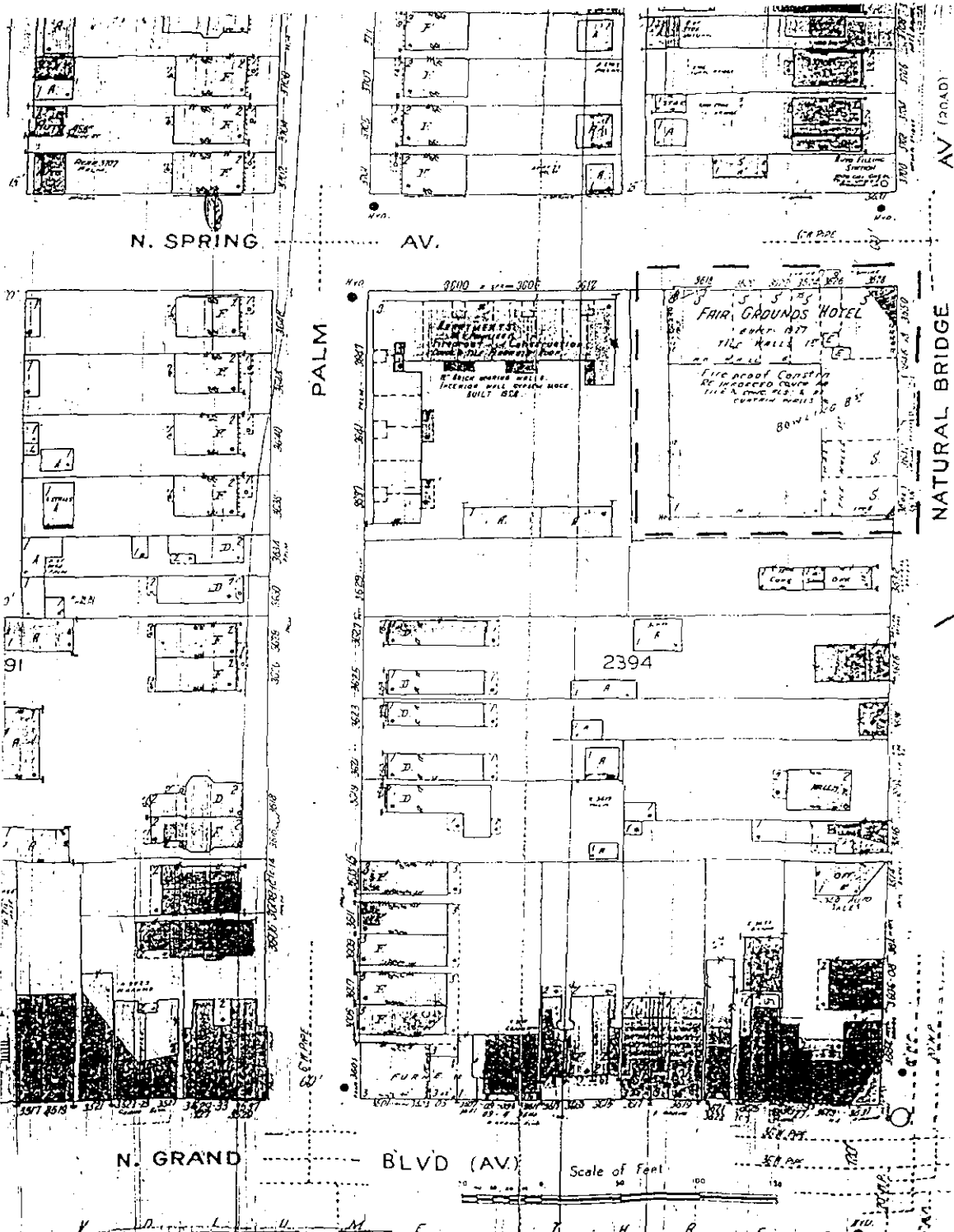
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Fairgrounds Hotel - Undated Sanborn Map (post-1927)  
Source: St. Louis Public Library





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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

The Former Fairgrounds Hotel



Source: Norbury L. Wayman, History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fairground (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Community Development Agency, [1981?]) 47.

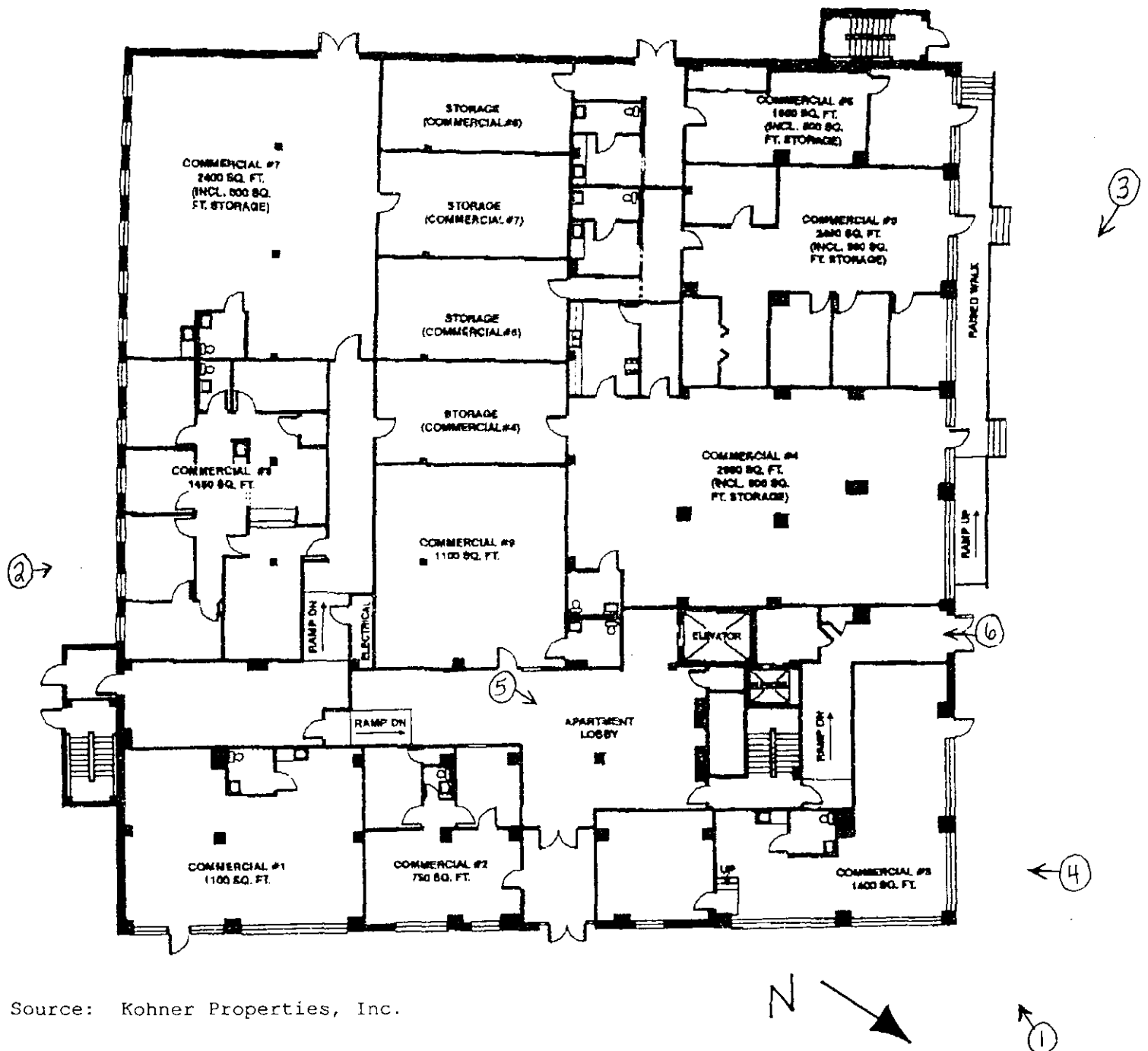
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Fairgrounds Hotel - First Story Floor Plan & Photo Key



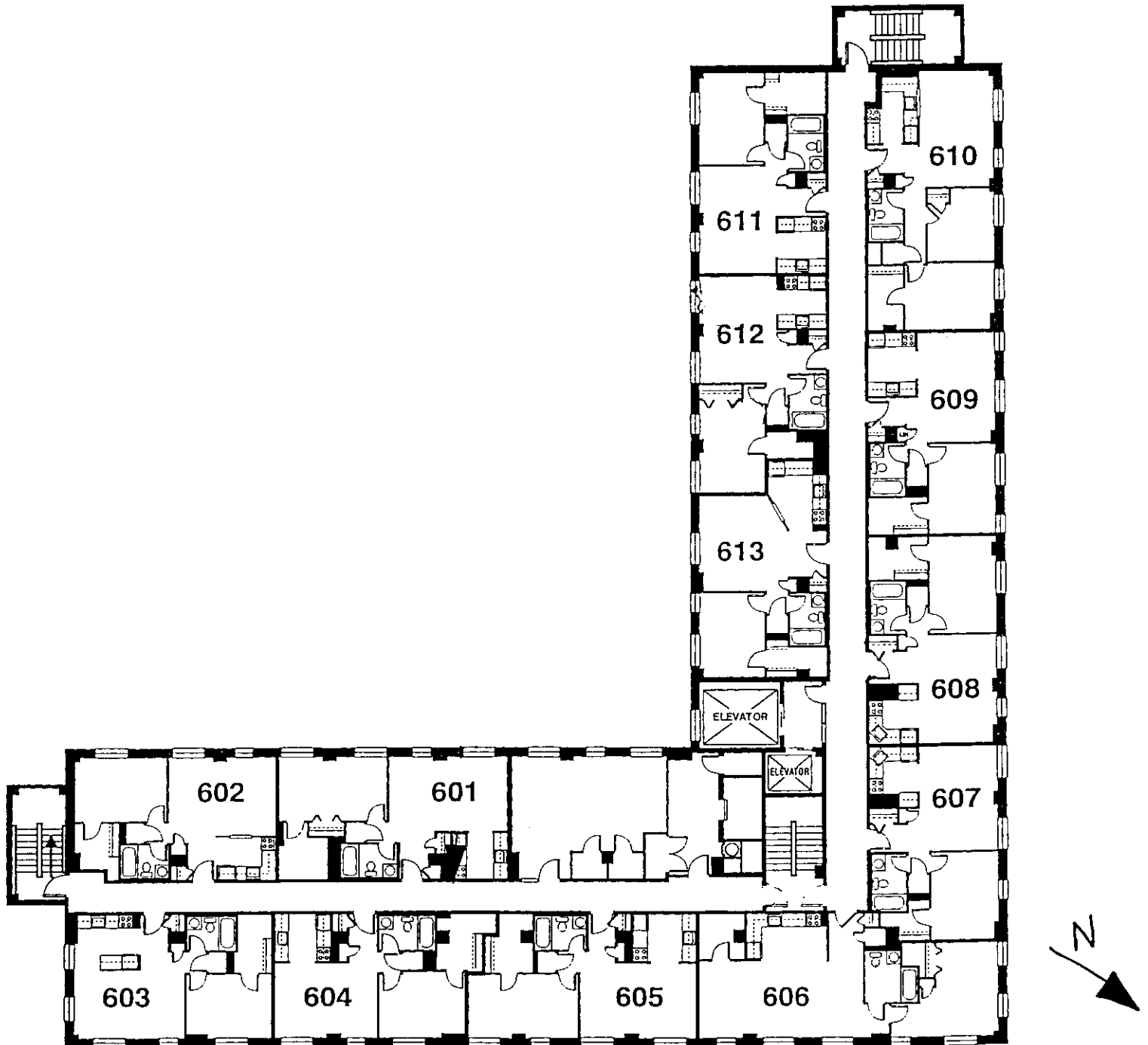
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Fairgrounds Hotel - Representative Floor Plan of Upper Stories



Source: Kohner Properties, Inc.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Summary:

The Fairgrounds Hotel in North St. Louis, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Commerce. The North St. Louis area was the center of recreation for St. Louis from the early to mid-1800s through the mid-1960s. Individuals came from all over the country to participate in various activities in and around present-day Fairgrounds Park and Fairgrounds Hotel. The St. Louis Fair, horse racing, cycle racing, and ball games were a few of the main attractions. As more people were drawn to the area, a need arose for suitable accommodations. Consequently, the Fairgrounds Hotel was built as a luxury hotel in 1927-1928. It quickly became one of the most popular hotels of its time and a main hotel in the North St. Louis area. Its locale and amenities encouraged the continued growth of cultural and business activities in the area, as it appealed to noteworthy individuals as well as everyday citizens drawn to the activities of North St. Louis. Being strategically located only four blocks north of Sportsman's Park enabled many well-known St. Louis Browns and Cardinals baseball players, including the legendary Stan Musial, to call the Fairgrounds Hotel their home. The Fairgrounds Hotel served as a common gathering place for baseball players, upstanding individuals of the community, and devoted fans to discuss the activities occurring around them. Nestled adjacent to Fairgrounds Park, the Fairgrounds Hotel was also witness to horse races and other activities offered at the park for the entertainment and recreation of the community. Commerce in North St. Louis flourished with the Fairgrounds Hotel offering accommodations for those drawn to the area and willing to spend money. The Fairgrounds Hotel, now named Fairgrounds Park Place Apartments, still remains in its original location as one of only two remaining physical connections reminiscent of the historic era that featured North St. Louis as the heart of recreational and cultural activities. In correlation to the arbitrary cutoff date for the period of significance being 50 years prior to the nomination year of a building to the National Register of Historic Places, the period of significance for the Fairgrounds Hotel has been limited to 1927-1952, even though it did continue to remain a significant building until 1966.

#### Elaboration:

The Fairgrounds Hotel was situated in the midst of a multitude of entertainment and recreational activities and events occurring in North St. Louis during its period of significance. No other area in St. Louis at that time offered as many choices for recreation or now has as much history associated with recreational activities of the past. Geographically, when the Fairgrounds Hotel was completed in 1928, it was in a prime location for easy transportation to and from other areas of St. Louis. Bus lines and streetcar lines ran right by or within a block of the hotel. Two high schools, Yeatman and Beaumont, were within walking distance, and anyone staying at the hotel could enjoy an afternoon at a ball game or play in the park across the street.<sup>3</sup> The Fairgrounds neighborhood was continuing to mature as the Fairgrounds Hotel became a prominent locale at which to live or congregate.

Beginning in the early to mid-1800s, Fairgrounds Park, across the street from the site of the future Fairgrounds Hotel, was developing into an area of attraction for individuals near and far. In 1855, the St.

<sup>3</sup> "North Side Hotel To Be 8 Stories High," St. Louis Globe-Democrat 8 July 1927, N. pag.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association was incorporated by a group of men, including Richard "Missouri Dick" Barrett and Norman Coleman.<sup>4</sup> Colonel John O'Fallon sold the Association 50 acres of land along Grand Avenue and Natural Bridge Plank Road (now Natural Bridge Road) for \$50,000. The Association's goal was to organize an annual agricultural and industrial fair to promote the industries and farmers of St. Louis.<sup>5</sup> Within the year the initial fairgrounds were established, including fountains, ponds, watering troughs, and the largest amphitheater in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Over 12,000 people could sit in the amphitheater, which featured horse shows, trotting races, and cattle judging, and 24,000 additional people enjoyed standing room. The first annual week-long St. Louis Fair began on October 13, 1856. Not only did the fair attract cattle breeders, show-horse owners, and farmers from as far away as the midsouth and midwest, it also drew thousands of the local general public to the North St. Louis area.<sup>7</sup> There were activities of interest for every type of person, and each year the St. Louis Fair became more extravagant. The St. Louis Fair has been called the "most successful promotion of St. Louis in the city's history."<sup>8</sup> It is notable that such a significant event in St. Louis history occurred only feet from the site of the Fairgrounds Hotel.

During early 1860, the decision was made to make the fairgrounds available to the public for rental during non-fair times.<sup>9</sup> This same year St. Louis began its love affair with baseball when Jere Fruin introduced the sport to the city.<sup>10</sup> The very first game was played at the fairgrounds on July 9, 1860, between the Cyclone and Morning Star teams. The addition of baseball games to the fairgrounds area added another recreational choice and only increased the popularity of this already booming section of town. During the Fair week, "Big Thursday" featured many special events and was designated as an official holiday for workers and children.<sup>11</sup> During the Fair of 1860, the Prince of Wales visited North St. Louis and attended the events to the delight of over 100,000 people.

During the Civil War, 1861-1865, fairs were not held and the fairgrounds area was utilized as Benton Barracks. Following the war, more attractions, such as bear pits, an Art Gallery, a Natural History museum, and Zoological Gardens, were added, and horse racing developed into the major emphasis of the Fair. The Jockey Club was organized in 1877, and this exclusive organization utilized 63 acres of Fairgrounds land for a first class racetrack and clubhouse.<sup>12</sup> Members of the Jockey Club included Rolla Wells, C.C. Maffitt, Charles Green, Edward Martin, J.D. Lucas, Charles Clark, and L.M. Rumsey.<sup>13</sup> The St. Louis Jockey Club soon gained popularity and notable races were held there. In 1886, the National Derby was moved from Hawthorne track in Chicago to the North St. Louis track.

As horse racing became more popular and the World's Fair of 1904 began to take shape, the St. Louis Fair of the past ceased to exist. The last Fair ran in 1902, and it included St. Louis's first automobile races.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Mary Bartley, St. Louis Lost (St. Louis, MO: Virginia Pub., 1994) 97.

<sup>5</sup> Bartley 97.

<sup>6</sup> Bartley 98.

<sup>7</sup> Bartley 98.

<sup>8</sup> Bartley 98.

<sup>9</sup> Bartley 99.

<sup>10</sup> Norbury L. Wayman, History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fairgrounds (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Community Development Agency, [1981]) 20.

<sup>11</sup> Bartley 99.

<sup>12</sup> Bartley 99-100.

<sup>13</sup> Bartley 100.

<sup>14</sup> Bartley 102.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

However, a shift was occurring in the popularity of certain activities. Betting on horses quickly became the focus of the time, and the Jockey Club closed and was torn down in 1905. In 1908, the St. Louis Fair complex, now 143 acres, was purchased by the City, renamed Fairgrounds Park, and opened to the public. Even though there were to be no more fairs, memories of this magical time in St. Louis history still linger. During the time of the St. Louis Fair's prominence, it was host to many notable guests, including Presidents Grant, Cleveland, and Harrison. All that remains of the old St. Louis Fair complex now is the bear pits structure located directly across the street from Fairgrounds Hotel (see Continuation Sheet 14 for a diagram of the old Fairgrounds and Photo 3 for a present-day view).<sup>15</sup>

In 1871, about the time the Jockey Club was taking shape, and after baseball had already been introduced to the city at the fairgrounds, the first ball field, Grand Avenue Ball Grounds, was built at the site of what is now Herbert Hoover Boy's Club at the corner of Dodier Street and Grand Avenue. It became known as St. Louis Ball Park in 1875, and featured grandstand seating for 800 people and a fenced field.<sup>16</sup> In 1876, St. Louis Ball Park was renamed Sportsman's Park, and the St. Louis Browns, who were charter members of the National League Club, called the ballpark home. After a brief history, the first Browns organization closed, and for a few years Sportsman's Park was used for other purposes, such as cycle racing and shooting meets.

Then, in 1882, a northside politician named Chris Von der Ahe became manager of Sportsman's Park, and he ran a ball team with the assistance of Sporting News co-founder Al Spink.<sup>17</sup> This team, also known as the Browns, participated in the American Association and was managed by the future founder of the Chicago White Sox, Charles Comiskey. The Browns were quite successful under this ownership and won four pennants in a row from 1885 to 1888.<sup>18</sup> Then, in 1892, after the American Association folded, Von der Ahe bought a franchise in the National League.<sup>19</sup> He relocated the team to a ball field at Natural Bridge and Vandeventer Avenues, and Sportsman's Park again became the home of other activities. Since this new location was right across from the fairgrounds, Von der Ahe could entice those individuals visiting Fairgrounds racetrack to stop by the ballpark. He even added an amusement park, threw parades, and set off fireworks to draw attention to the area. Unfortunately, Von der Ahe experienced some misfortune as he lost his position as president of the team and part of the ballpark was destroyed by fire in 1898. The new owners, the Robison brothers from Cleveland, brought their team to St. Louis and renamed the team the Cardinals. They also renamed the ballpark Robison Field. The Cardinals remained at Robison Field, on the corner of Vandeventer and Natural Bridge until 1920, when they began sharing Sportsman's Park with the St. Louis Browns. Beaumont High School is now located at the site of Robison Field.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time Von der Ahe's team was losing its momentum and switching its ownership and name, Sportsman's Park was transitioning again from a cycling track back to a ballpark. Baseball returned to Sportsman's Park for good in 1902, when the second St. Louis Browns team, a member of the new American League, began playing games there. The owner of the team was Robert Lee Hedges. Under

<sup>15</sup> Bartley 102.

<sup>16</sup> Wayman, History of St. Louis 20.

<sup>17</sup> Wayman, History of St. Louis 20.

<sup>18</sup> Wayman, History of St. Louis 22.

<sup>19</sup> Wayman, History of St. Louis 22.

<sup>20</sup> Robert E. Hannon, St. Louis: Its Neighborhoods and Neighbors, Landmarks and Milestones, (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association, 1986) 75.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

his management additions were added to Sportsman's Park bringing the seating capacity to 18,000. In 1920, the St. Louis Cardinals joined the Browns in calling Sportsman's Park their home field.<sup>21</sup> The Browns won the pennant in 1922, but were unsuccessful in a World Series attempt. To accommodate the public's growing interest in the sport of baseball, more modifications were made to the stadium in 1925, per owner Phil Ball's specifications. Ballpark capacity became 32,000, with double deck seating available.

For 34 seasons, the Browns and the Cardinals shared the ballpark and thus set a record for the most Major League baseball games hosted in one ballpark. In 1926, the Cardinals won their first pennant before hosting and winning their first World Series. Many records were set and broken in Sportsman's Park and some of the greatest ball players ever to play the game of baseball entertained St. Louis fans for over 40 years. Babe Ruth hit a record three home runs in one World Series game while at Sportsman's Park in 1926. On October 9, 1928, just as the Fairgrounds Hotel was completed, Babe Ruth duplicated that home run record by hitting three more home runs in one World Series game at Sportsman's Park. On August 21, 1931, Babe Ruth hit his 600th career home run at Sportsman's Park, and in 1944, the Cardinals and the Browns battled each other in the "trolley car series," with the Cardinals emerging victorious. Sportsman's Park was renamed Busch Stadium in 1953, when Anheuser-Busch purchased both the stadium and the Cardinals organization after the Browns team moved to Baltimore. In addition to many historic events that took place at Sportsman's Park, on April 23, 1954, Hank Aaron hit his very first home run at Sportsman's Park.<sup>22</sup>

While all these exciting events were occurring at Sportsman's Park, the Fairgrounds Hotel was completed only four blocks to the north in 1928. It was the main hotel located in the North St. Louis area to provide residency for the many individuals drawn to the cultural and recreational activities surrounding it. During its prime the hotel featured all the conveniences popular to members of St. Louis's elite. When it was first constructed, the Fairgrounds Hotel included 250 rooms, a large lobby, dining room, and assembly room, as well as a bowling alley and billiards room.<sup>23</sup> It also featured two elevators, mechanical ventilation, and a refrigerating plant.<sup>24</sup> The first floor served as a gathering place for anyone visiting the North St. Louis area, while floors two through eight provided apartment-style housing for individuals visiting more frequently or staying for longer periods of time. The Fairgrounds Hotel contributed to commerce in North St. Louis as it provided accommodations for ballplayers, fans, and businessmen across the nation who needed a place to stay or a conference room for meetings and conventions. The Fairgrounds Hotel encouraged more people to visit the area. Therefore, local businesses and shops saw an increase in sales.

One of the main draws to the Fairgrounds area during the Fairgrounds Hotel's period of significance was the history being made at Sportsman's Park. Many Hall of Famers and former greats played at Sportsman's Park during its 85 years as a ballpark. The Baseball Hall of Fame includes 33 players who wore a Cardinals uniform at some point in their career.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the World Series games played at Sportsman's Park in 1926, 1928, and 1944, other World Series games were played in 1930, 1931, 1934,

<sup>21</sup> Wayman, *History of St. Louis* 22.

<sup>22</sup> Josh Leventhal, *Take Me Out to the Ballpark: An Illustrated Tour of Baseball Parks Past and Present* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2000) 84-85.

<sup>23</sup> "Work Begun on New \$1,000,000 Hotel" 29.

<sup>24</sup> "Work Begun on New \$1,000,000 Hotel" 29.

<sup>25</sup> *The Cardinal Century: St. Louis Cardinals 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, spec. issue of *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (7 June 1992): 30-31.

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Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

1942, 1943, 1946, and 1964. While Sportsman's Park has been demolished and the Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club stands in its place, a plaque remains at the site bearing a memorial to the outstanding players who competed against each other on this field. This list of players includes Grover Alexander, Jim Bottomley, Ken Boyer, Lou Brock, Ty Cobb, Dizzy Dean, Frank Frisch, Lou Gehrig, Bob Gibson, Goose Goslin, Chuck Hafey, Jesse Haines, Rogers Hornsby, Marty Marion, Pepper Martin, Joe Medwick, Johnny Mize, Terry Moore, Stan Musial, Satchel Paige, Babe Ruth, Red Schoendienst, George Sisler, Bill Sherdel, Urban Shocker, Enos Slaughter, Johnny Tobin, Bobby Wallace, Bill White, and Ken Williams. With the completion of the Fairgrounds Hotel in 1928, its close proximity to the ballpark made it a convenient place for St. Louis Browns and Cardinals as well as visiting teams' players to stay. It is exciting to speculate that Lou Brock, Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, and Hank Aaron may have been among those outstanding individuals who stayed at the Fairgrounds Hotel. Unfortunately, minimal confirmation can be found detailing which baseball players stayed at the Fairgrounds Hotel. A newspaper article dated April 29, 1933, reported that a thief entered room 601 of the Fairgrounds Hotel and stole \$12 out of a man's pair of trousers. The occupant of the room was Charles (Gabby) Street, the Cardinal manager.<sup>26</sup>

The most well-documented and well-known resident of the Fairgrounds Hotel was Hall of Fame baseball player Stan Musial, who played for the Cardinals for 22 seasons. When he first came to the Cardinals in mid-September 1941, he and his wife made their home at the Fairgrounds Hotel. In his autobiography, Musial recalls only a few things from his first few glimpses of St. Louis when he joined the Cardinals. Among these are Sportsman's Park and the Fairgrounds Hotel. He recalls how many of the ballplayers, especially the single ones, lived there.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Stan Musial later recalled that the Fairgrounds Hotel was convenient and affordable for ballplayers and the Cardinals and Browns stayed there when they were not on road trips.<sup>28</sup>

Musial and his family lived at the Fairgrounds Hotel until the first week of June 1946, when they moved to southwest St. Louis. On the night of the move, Musial tells of an interesting event that occurred at the Fairgrounds Hotel. Two brothers, Jorge and Alfonso Pasquel, had been trying to lure many big league ball players to Mexico by offering them more money. One such player who had been lured south was Mickey Owen, formerly Brooklyn's catcher. Alfonso Pasquel and Owen arrived at the Fairgrounds Hotel to recruit Musial. According to Musial, they brought \$50,000 in cashier's checks as a bonus for signing a five-year \$125,000 contract. Compared to the \$13,500 he was currently earning, Musial was floored by the offer. He also declined it. However, he did not notify the press that night, so as he and his wife packed to move across town, reporters and "lounge lizards" in the Fairgrounds Hotel lobby speculated about whether or not he was moving to Mexico.<sup>29</sup>

Stan "The Man" Musial is one of the outstanding ball players of all time. He accomplished many outstanding feats throughout his career in baseball in St. Louis. While living at the Fairgrounds Hotel in 1943, Musial was the National League MVP. He led the league in batting average (.357); hits (220);

<sup>26</sup> "Street's Trousers Rifled of \$12 By Sneak Thief," [Fairgrounds Hotel Vertical File, St. Louis Mercantile Library at UMSL] 29 Apr. 1933: N. pag.

<sup>27</sup> Stan Musial, Stan Musial: "The Man's" Own Story as Told to Bob Broeg (Garden City, NY, 1964)

46.

<sup>28</sup> "Fairgrounds Hotel To Be Nursing Home" N. pag.

<sup>29</sup> Musial 90-91.



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doubles (48); triples (20); total bases (347); on-base average (.425) and slugging percentage (.562).<sup>30</sup> On May 2, 1954, Musial hit a record five home runs during a double-header match up with the Giants.<sup>31</sup> His significance to and influence over the sport of baseball is felt throughout the nation. He is one of the influential figures who helped make baseball "America's favorite past-time." St. Louis is definitely a baseball city, and Musial recalls that in its time, the Fairgrounds Hotel provided a great arena for players to talk baseball and for fans to try to meet their baseball icons.<sup>32</sup> At that time there was no other place for both players and fans to gather, and even though the Fairgrounds Hotel is now Fairgrounds Park Place Apartments, it is still nostalgic of the great times that were shared there.

The Fairgrounds Hotel served as a luxury hotel and remained a significant building until 1966, when Sportsman's Park, by then renamed Busch Stadium, was relocated to downtown St. Louis and the Sportsman's Park site was demolished. Without the multitude of ball players and fans attracted to the area and with the slow decline of other activities in the neighborhood, there was no longer a demand for the Fairgrounds Hotel.

North St. Louis offered a flurry of recreational attractions to both the residents of the area and also individuals across the country for almost one hundred years. The Fairgrounds Hotel, with the bear pits structure visible across the street, is the only real reminder of this historic time in St. Louis culture. The rich history associated with the hotel's occupants and the activities of the North St. Louis area surrounding the building are what make the Fairgrounds Hotel significant to the cultural history of St. Louis. It was a main gathering place for people of all backgrounds who shared a love of the cultural and recreational activities in North St. Louis. The Fairgrounds Hotel is an important and significant symbol of those activities that once flourished in and around the Fairgrounds neighborhood. As a result, it is important that the Fairgrounds Hotel be recognized as a symbol of the activities that flourished in the North St. Louis area during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>30</sup> "St. Louis Cardinals History," St. Louis Cardinals Online 2001, 15 Nov. 2001  
<[http://cardinals.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/stl/history/stl\\_history\\_timeline.jsp](http://cardinals.mlb.com/NASApp/mlb/stl/history/stl_history_timeline.jsp)>.

<sup>31</sup> Leventhal 84-85.

<sup>32</sup> Musial 295.

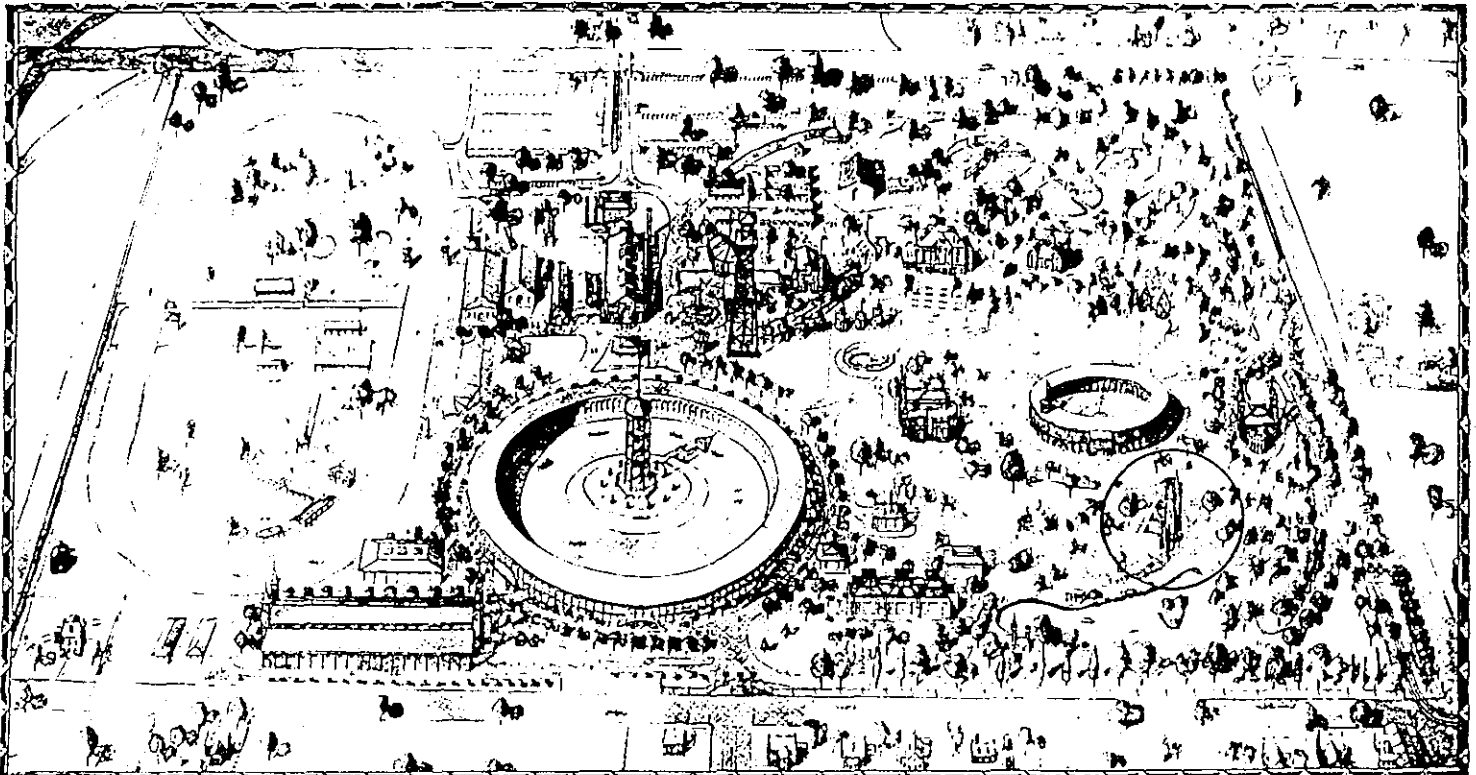
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**Fairgrounds Hotel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri**

The Bear Pits Structure located directly across Natural Bridge Road



**THE OLD ST. LOUIS FAIRGROUNDS**

AT GRAND AVENUE & NATURAL BRIDGE ROAD — AS IT APPEARED IN 1876  
OPERATED BY THE ST. LOUIS AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL FAIR ASSOCIATION

**LEGEND**

AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT	AMPHITHEATRE	AMERICA OFFICE	ANNEX TO ART HALL	ANTelope HOUSE	FAIRGROUNDS CARS GATE
ART HALL	TELEGRAPH OFFICE	JOURNAL OFFICE	CARNIVORA HOUSE	BEER PARK	FAIRGROUNDS LINE GATE
MECHANICAL HALL	EXCELSIOR STOVE WORKS	FLORAL DEPARTMENT	BOATHOUSE & GALLERY	MONKEY HOUSE	FAIRGROUNDS QUARTERS
TABLES RACING HORSES	WICK & WRIGHT STOVES	GALLINARIUM	AVIARY	WATER TOWER	FAIRGROUNDS
TABLES HORSE SHOE	ELEVATOR	POULTRY DEPARTMENT	SCOURREL HOUSE	GEAR HOUSE	FAIRGROUNDS
TABLES FARM HOUSES	TYNNE'S OFFICE	TEXTILE HALL	SUMMER HOUSE	WATER TOWER	FAIRGROUNDS
TABLES FOR CATTLE	ANZIEGER OFFICE	FRUITS & VEGETABLES	SUPERINTENDENT'S RESIDENCE	WOLVES HOUSE	FAIRGROUNDS
TABLES HELP BENS	WILSE-DEMOCRAT OFFICE	HOUSE OF PUBLIC COMFORT	PHEASANT HOUSE	HARDY'S HOUSE	FAIRGROUNDS
EXHIBITION STAND	DISPATCH OFFICE	PRESIDENT'S OFFICE	ELEPHANT HOUSE	COW HOUSE	FAIRGROUNDS
SECRETARY'S OFFICE	REPUBLICAN OFFICE	ART HALL	CAMEL & BUFFALO PADDOCK	SEA LIONS POOL	FAIRGROUNDS

Source: Norbury L. Wayman, *A Pictorial History of St. Louis* ([St. Louis]: Norbury L. Wayman, 1968) N. pag.

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### Verbal Boundary Description

All of Lot 4, Part of Lots 5 and 16 and all of Lots 17, 18, 19, and 20 in Block 7 of Lindell's Addition and in  
City Block 2394 of the City of St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, as recorded in the City of St. Louis  
Records.

### Boundary Justification

This is the legal described boundary for the entire parcel historically associated with the location of the  
hotel.

### Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Fairgrounds Hotel

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

Julie C. Doering

November 2001

Negatives on file with Julie C. Doering, Institute for Sustainable Development, 112 East High Street,  
Jefferson City, MO

### Photo Descriptions:

1. North corner, facing south from Fairgrounds Park across the street, view of main entrance to hotel  
located on northeast façade
2. Southeast elevation, facing northwest, view of gated parking lot and enclosed fire escape

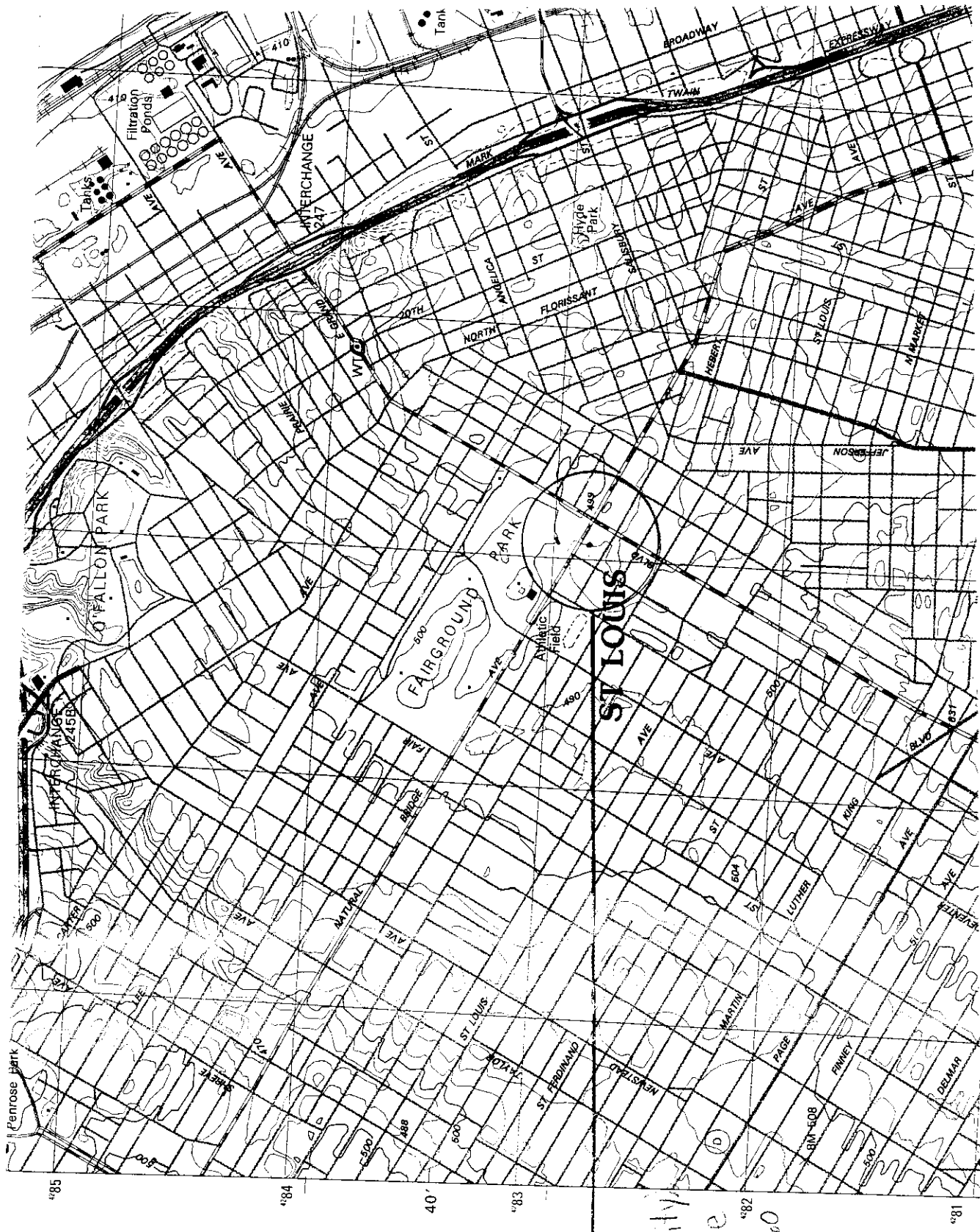
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3. Northwest elevation, facing east across Spring Avenue, view of historic double door entrance to the left of the handicap ramp and bear pits structure from historic St. Louis Fair in background behind stop sign
4. Northwest elevation, facing southeast, view of ornamental terra cotta banding, shield detail, and brick work
5. First floor, facing north, view of the main lobby with restored terrazzo floors and letterbox on wall in background
6. First floor, facing southeast, view of the lobby and side entrance of historic double door entrance on Spring Avenue seen in Photo #3



Fairgrounds  
 Hotel  
 ST. LOUIS, MO  
 (Independent City)  
 UTM Reference  
 15H482850/112060