NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Hesse Carriage Company Building

other name/site number N/A

2. Location

street & town 1700 Oak Street N/A not for publication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 02/06/07

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:)

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)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: manufacturing facility
COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls brick
roof asphalt
other stone

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.

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

c. 1903-1946

Significant Dates

c. 1903

1915

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Raney and Dumas, architects

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

☒ 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:

Group Hesse Company, Kansas City, Missouri

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Hesse Carriage Company Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

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

1 1/5 3/6/3/4/3/0 4/3/2/8/2/9/0
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 E. Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield

organization Architectural and Historical Research, LLC date August 7, 2006

street & number 1537 Belleview Avenue telephone 816.472.4154

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

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 Locust Group, LLC

street & number 4510 Belleview Avenue, Suite 300 telephone 816.753.9200

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64111

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.

Summary:
The Hesse Carriage Company Building, located at 1700 Oak Street, Jackson County, Missouri, was constructed in two phases: the western portion, a four-story brick unit had an original address of 315-321 E. 17th Street and appears to have been constructed c. 1903 as a four-story building.[1] The second unit to be built was the eastern portion, another four-story unit with its front or main façade facing Oak Street. It was originally built as a two-story building in 1915, with another two stories added in 1929.[2] The building is styled as a two-part Commercial Block, with a storefront on the east façade and the eastern half of the north façade. The shaft of the building, originally used for manufacturing and storage, is characterized by multipaned industrial sash windows at the main or the eastern portion of the facility and with paired windows at the upper floors of both units, now boarded up. The cornice is corbelled. Stone sills and stringcoursing contrast the brick façade of this utilitarian facility. In good condition, the Hesse Carriage Company Building has retained the majority of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Its character-defining physical features, exterior materials and interior spaces are representative of the period of historic significance.

Elaboration:
Although the Hesse Carriage Company Building was built in two phases, it is most practical to describe the physical properties of this facility as one unit. The main façade, divided into four bays by wide brick piers, faces east. The main entrance is canted at the northeast corner and features a single leaf man door flanked by storefront windows with transoms, currently boarded up. A single leaf man-door with transom, located at the far south bay, also has been boarded up. Although the original storefront windows have been covered with paneling, the original transoms set below stone coursing are exposed and in fair condition. Brick bulkheads are also extant and exposed. The industrial sash, multipaned, metal fenestration is extant at the second story and features continuous stone sills and stringcoursing. Paired fenestration, at the third and fourth stories, has been

[1] Files, Group Hesse, Kansas City, Missouri. Curiously, the building on 17th Street was illustrated in a 1909 Sanborn Map as three stories located to the west of three frame houses. The unit facing Oak Street was not illustrated at that time.
[2] According to building permits, the face of the Oak Street addition was set back fourteen feet in 1927 for the widening of Oak Street. The current dimensions of the building corroborate this fact.

boarded up.

The articulation of the east façade wraps to the east half of the north façade. At the first and second bays, moving east to west, the storefront windows are boarded up, while the multipaned transoms are exposed. An aluminum rolling overhead door is located at the third bay and at the fourth bay is another boarded-up storefront topped by a double row of multipaned transoms. At the fifth and seventh bays (articulation of the original unit), there are two additional overhead doors (aluminum and rolling), while the sixth bay features a storefront and single man-door that has been boarded up.

Metal industrial sash fenestration (styled like the second story units at the main facade) is located at the second story of the east half of the north façade. Beginning at the fifth bay, there is a multipaned, fixed, two-over-two unit, with the remaining bays non-original aluminum three-over-three units. The third and fourth story units are boarded-up, with the exception of the far west bay at the third story where there is a pair of non-original aluminum two-over-one units that are exposed.

Fenestration at the rear or west façade is original two-over-two industrial metal sash in fair condition. The units at the far north bay are paired. Some units have air conditioners or vents at the lower sash at the first and second stories, center bays. All fenestration features brick lug sills. Stone stringcoursing is located below the second and third stories of the northern portion of this façade. A wood paneled overhead door is located at the center bay of the first story and is in poor condition. A metal fire escape is located at the southern half of the rear façade; an aluminum drain is placed at the far south bay.

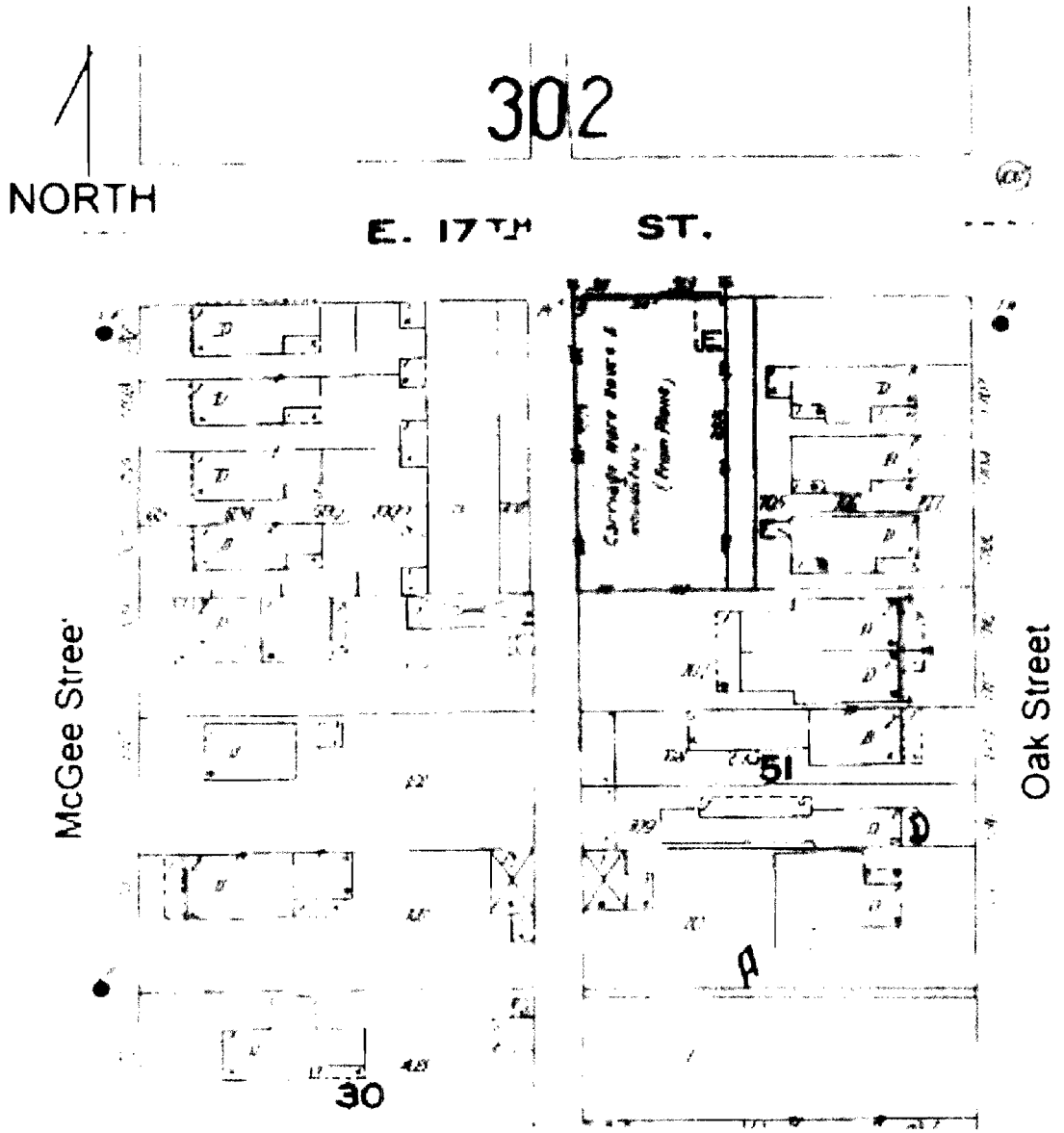
The south façade is partially obscured by the adjacent one-story concrete block building which shares a party wall. (This building is not part of the Hesse facility; The *Kansas City Star* maintains office space at this location.) At floors two through four, metal industrial sash fenestration matches that of the rear façade; all units

have brick lug sills.

The interior of Hesse Carriage Company building is open warehouse space with exposed beams and columns and concrete floors. The westernmost building displays wood columns, joists and beams, while the later building features steel beams and columns encased in plaster and wood joists.

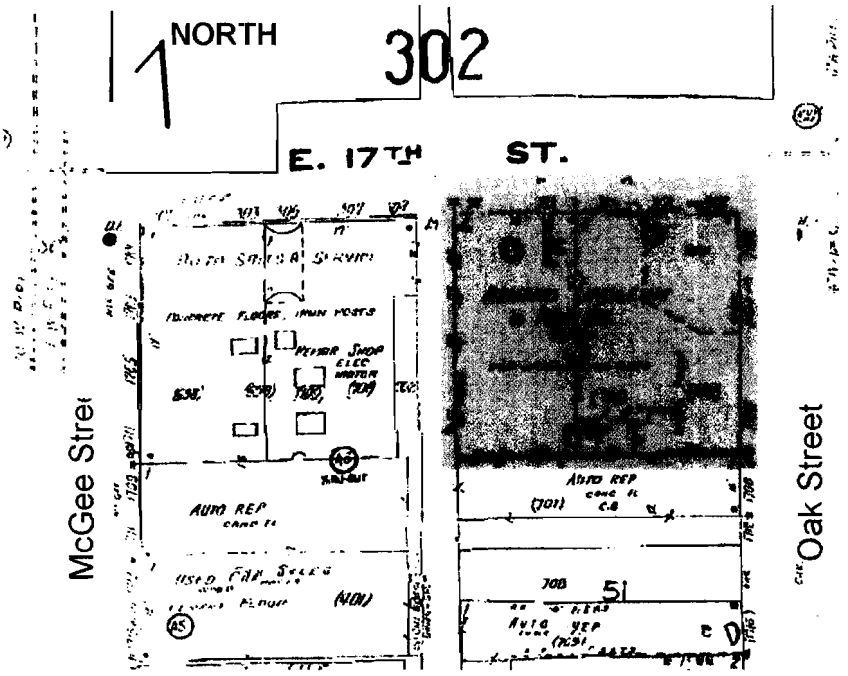
To the south of Hesse is a one-story concrete block building occupied by the *Kansas City Star*. Their new printing facility to the north was just completed. To the east and west are other one to three-story commercial properties dating from the first half of the 20th century. The Kansas City Star also occupies the one-story building placed directly to the west.

Currently, there are proposed plans for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Hesse Carriage Company Building. Future plans include rehabilitation of the exterior and interior spaces. 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.



Hesse Carriage Company Building, 311-313 E. 17th Street.

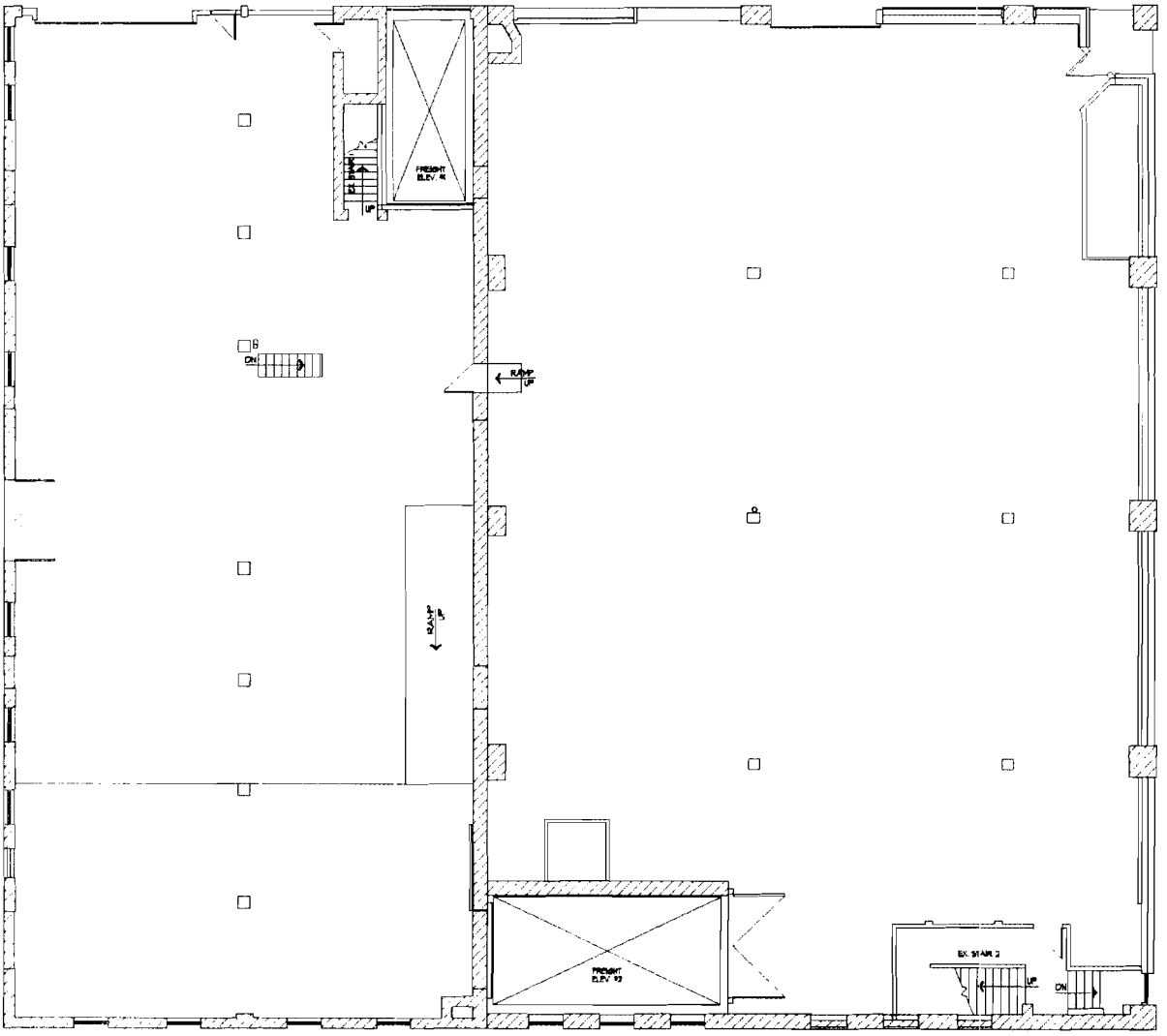
Source: *Sanborn Map Company*, 1909, Sheet 314



Hesse Carriage Company Building, 1700 Oak Street

Source: *Sanborn Map Company*, 1909, with 1950 overlay, Sheet 314

Renard Linoleum Company occupied the building after Hesse relocated



B9 1ST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

NORTH

HESSE CARRIAGE COMPANY BUILDING

Summary:

The Hesse Carriage Company, located at 1700 Oak Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with significance in the area of INDUSTRY. Hesse Carriage Company, at their Oak Street location in Kansas City, Missouri, became a national leader in the manufacturing of wagons, custom bodies for automobiles and trucks and the industry standard in beverage transportation. The company remained at 17th and Oak from 1903 until 1946. In 1991, the company was bought by a Canadian firm but still retains offices in Kansas City as Group Hesse.[3] In 1995 Hesse Corporation was listed in the *Kansas City Business Journal* as the oldest area-based business still in existence. Hesse Carriage Company found its success through their innovative customized body designs for wagons and later, automobiles and trucks, which allowed the firm to reinvent itself through each transitional phase of transportation between the Civil War and the 21st century.[4] The period of significance is 1903 through 1946, date of the construction of original portion of the nominated to the year that the company moved to a new location.

Elaboration:

According to company records and Sanborn Maps, the first building to be constructed was the western portion, dating to c. 1903. The eastern addition was constructed in two phases. On May 5, 1915, two building permits were issued to Otto H. Hesse for the construction of factory buildings on 17th Street between Grand Boulevard and Oak Streets in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The first permit listed at 1700-1706 Oak Street was for a "P" Factory 83' 3" x 105', two story brick and stone building with a tar and gravel roof. The second permit listed 315-321 East 17th Street giving identical information. Both permits were issued for $16,000 and named Raney and Dumas of the Rialto Building as architects. The owner on record was the William G. Hesse and Son Carriage Company of Leavenworth, Kansas. The structural steel contract was awarded to J. Goldberg and Son,

[3] Hesse (pronounced hess-ee).
[2]Interview with Dianna Brittingham, Office Manager/Archivist, Group Hesse, 6700 St. John Ave., Kansas City, Missouri. August 1, 2006.

located at 1737 Charlotte Street.[5]

Curiously, due to the widening of Oak Street, the Hesse Building was cut back fourteen feet at its Oak Street façade in 1927, reducing the width of the building to sixty-nine feet, matching the current dimensions of the building.[6] Two years later, two stories were added to the Oak Street addition, thereby matching the original plans as stated in *Western Contractor*.

Hesse Carriage Company Building, 315 E. 17th Street, c. 1903.
Courtesy: Group Hesse, Kansas City, Missouri

[2] *Western Contractor* Vol. 27 15 May 1915, 30.
[6] Building Permit No. 87202, Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri.

William G. Hesse, a German immigrant, settled in Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1857 where he founded William G. Hesse and Sons Manufacturing Company, a blacksmith shop that repaired wagon trains and prairie schooners as they passed through Leavenworth at the cross roads of the Santa Fe, California and Oregon Trails. Many of their first customers were moving westward during the gold rush days of 1849. One of their most popular products in the early years was the Hesse short-tongued, Ludlow spring wagon which was invented and patented by Otto Hesse. Around 1898, Otto Hesse and Joseph Falk bought the Grand Avenue Carriage Company at 1704-06 Grand Avenue and opened shop in the growing metropolis of Kansas City, Missouri. William G. Hesse continued to run the Leavenworth operation until his death.[7]

Hesse Carriage Company had been in business in Kansas City Missouri, for approximately three years before William G. Hesse, his son Otto and their partner, Joseph Falk, incorporated as the Hesse Carriage Company. Their logo, the Hesse name, has been in use since the company incorporated in 1903. The logo has appeared on the wheel hubs of wagons and carriages, then on automobiles as their line of manufactured items increased. Hesse Carriage Company grew due to their adaptability in the changing times as wagons gave way to the automobile. William G. Hesse died in 1907 and the Hesse Carriage Company grew under the leadership of his son Otto and his partner Joseph Falk Sr.[8]

Hesse and Falk began the operations at Oak and 17th Street as an extension of the Hesse Carriage Company in Leavenworth. Many of their wagons were used as fleet vehicles by industries offering delivery services such as milk, bread and produce delivery, ice wagons and other such companies. As the automobile entered the city, Hesse and Falk found that they could easily adapt their wagon bodies to fit automobile frames. The first Coca Cola delivery trucks in Kansas City were made by Hesse Carriage. They also began adapting their designs as interchangeable winter and summer bodies for automobile owners. A lucrative body repair shop developed from this expertise. However, the design of the cold storage aluminum bodies for beer and soft drink delivery would

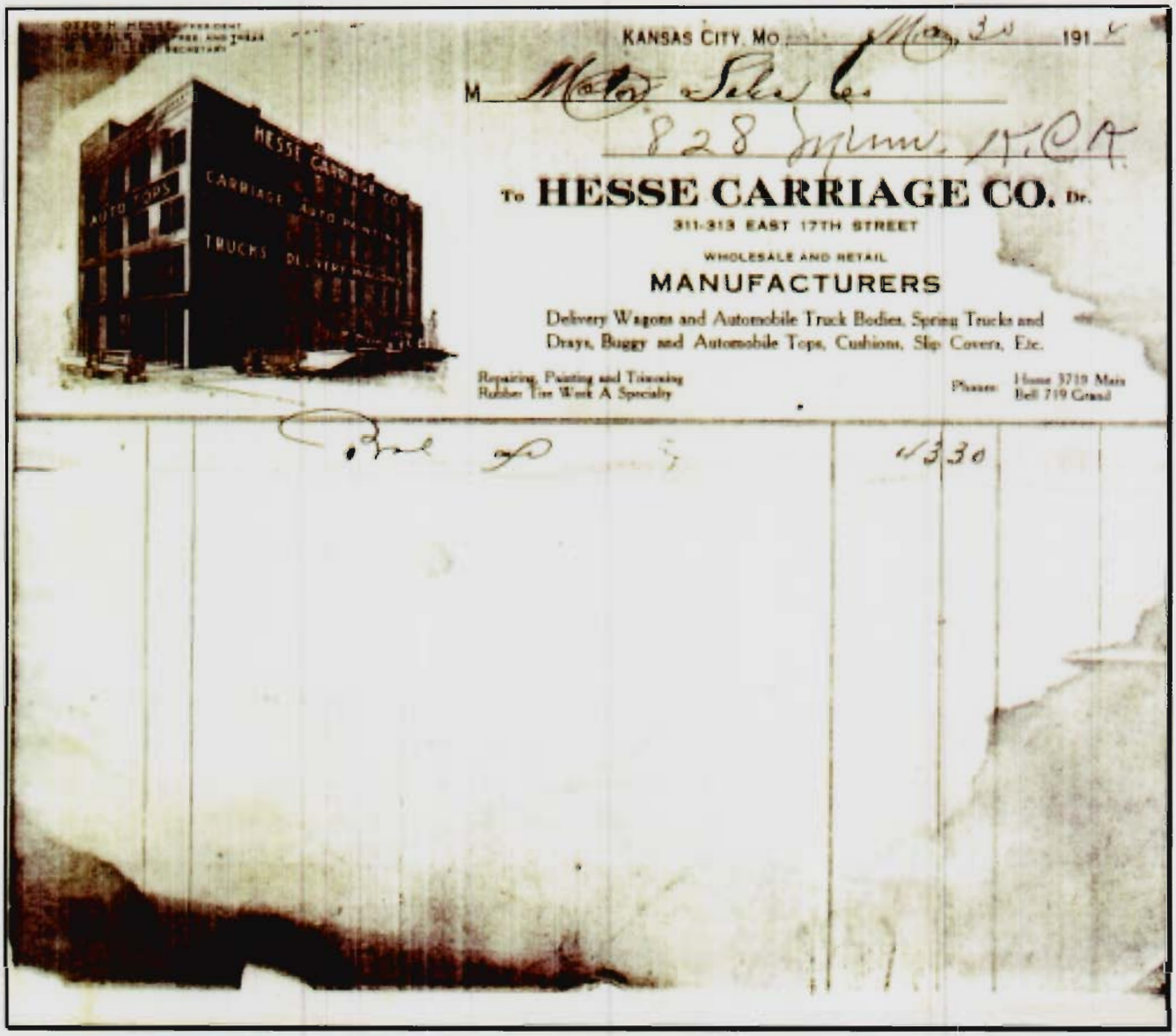
[7] "Work to Start on the Hesse Plant Unit," *The Kansas City Star* 26 June 1960, n.p.
[8] "Hesse, No. 880783" United States Patent and Trademark Office, Hesse Corporation archives. Hesse Corporation, 6700 St. John

become their main focus of production by the 1940s.

Dairy carriage manufactured by Hesse Carriage Company of Kansas City, Missouri. c. 1900.

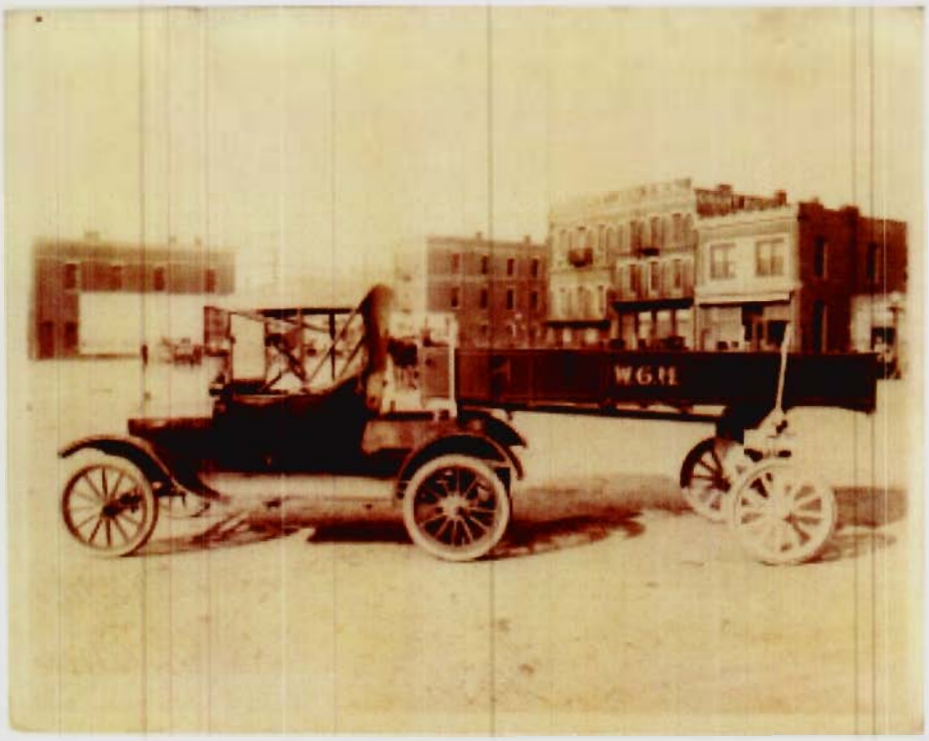
(Group Hesse archives, Kansas City, Missouri)

Ave., Kansas City, Missouri. Although the trademark was in use in 1903, it was not registered until November 18, 1969.



Hesse Carriage Company invoice dated May 15, 1914, illustrating the c.1903 building at 17th and Oak
(Group Hesse archives, Kansas City, Missouri)

Soon after the introduction of the automobile, Otto Hesse and Joe Falk broadened the focus of the business to include the sale of carriages and truck bodies. In Kansas City, after 1903, they added a lucrative body repair shop and custom body works shop as one of the first auto body manufacturers in the country.[9] In 1917 the company built van bodies that could be loaded and attached to the chassis of a standard Ford Model T. The body was bolted to the chassis and no modification was needed.[10] Their innovative methods also led to several patents that were developed while located at 17th and Oak, which will be covered later in this report.[11]



Automobile with attached trailer chassis, manufactured by Hesse Carriage Company of Kansas City, Missouri, c.1915-20.
(Group Hesse archives, Kansas City, Missouri)

[9] Frank W. Blackmar, Ed., "Otto H. Hesse" Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc. ... / with a supplementary volume devoted to selected personal history and reminiscence. (Standard Pub. Co.:Chicago, 1912). Transcribed by Carolyn Ward. Online: http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/1912
[10] "Hesse Carriage Co. Hesse Corporation," Coachbuilt: Online. Accessed July 15, 2006. www.coachbuilt.com/hesse/htm
[11] Group Hesse archives.

Interior of Hesse Carriage Company repair shop
Repair crew working on new auto springs
Courtesy: Group Hesse archives.

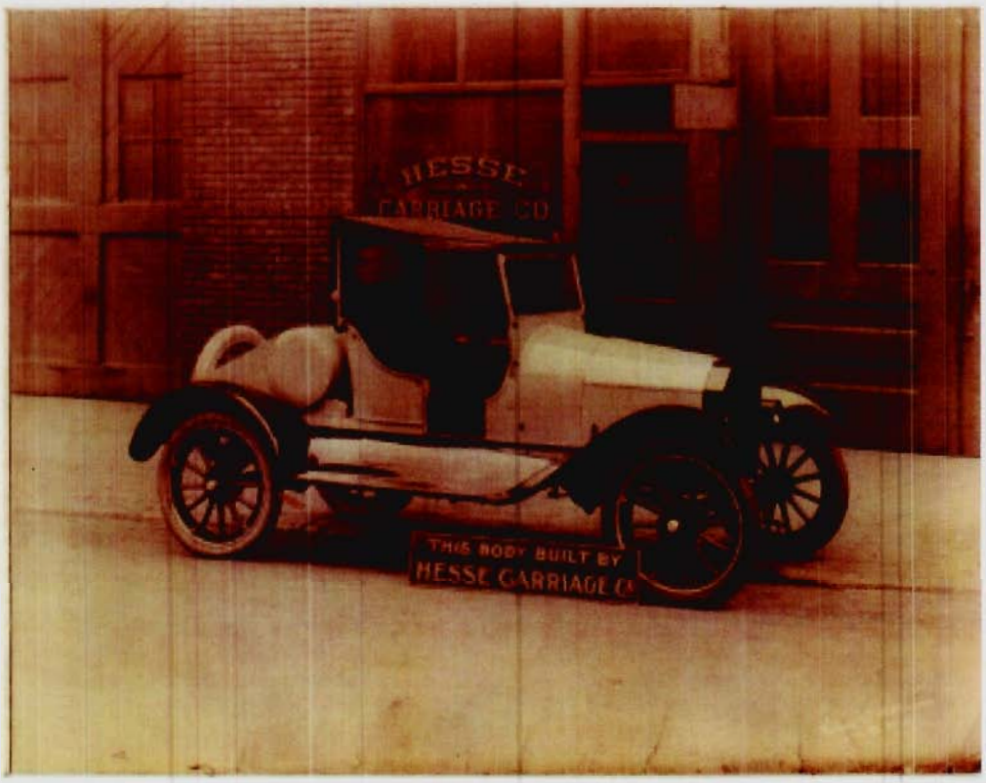
Hesse Carriage Company added auto and wreck repair to their corporate resume. One of the reasons for the building expansion at 17th and Oak was to handle the increasing need for repairing wrecked automobiles. The streets were still shared with the horse and buggy and many streets were ill equipped to handle the additional

traffic from the automobile. As a result there was a drastic increase in traffic accidents in Kansas City. Shop photos show the repairmen at Hesse Carriage Company working on vehicles. Photos were taken c.1925.[12]

Repairmen working on wrecked automobiles
Courtesy: Group Hesse Archives

[12] Group Hesse archives.

Top: Hesse sign advertising wreck repair
Bottom: damaged truck body
Courtesy: Group Hesse archives

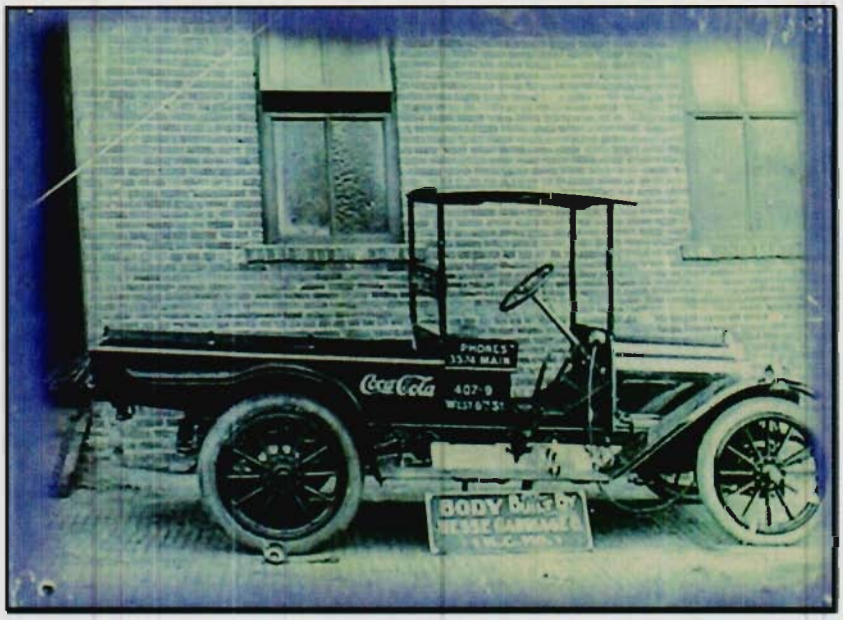


c. 1920 Automobile with Summer Top
Courtesy: Group Hesse Archives

In addition, the firm specialized in the early production and storage of 'winter bodies" and "summer bodies." With the early automobiles it was common practice among the wealthy who owned automobiles to adapt their cars to the climate. The fourth floor of the 1700 Oak building was used for the storage of the winter body during the summer months after which the summer body would be traded out for the winter body as the cooler weather approached.[13] However, the product that set Hesse apart from all other carriage and auto body manufactories was their special body designs for the soft drink industry.

[13] Dianna Brittingham, Interview.

Hesse Carriage designed and manufactured wagons that were customized to fill specific product needs during the decades of the early 20th century. Hesse wagons' hauled bread, produce, pianos, beer, and a wide variety of other products that required specialized designs for delivery purposes. As an example, the soft drink industry began making its impact on American culture during the 1880s and by the beginning of the 20th century, the industry was in need of specialized automotive delivery vehicles. The evolution from building prairie schooners to move entire households west of the Mississippi, to designing product specific automotive cargo transport was a natural fit for the Hesse Carriage Company.[14]



Coca Cola Delivery Truck c.1910
Courtesy: Group Hesse Archives

In 1910 the typical Hesse beverage truck was able to carry approximately 32 cases, which was considered a noteworthy achievement at the time. It was Hesse Carriage Company that designed the first Coca Cola delivery truck in Kansas City.[15] In 1908 Ford Motor Company began building the Model T or "Tin Lizzy." It was regarded as the best of the inexpensive early American automobiles and was perhaps the vehicle that "put

[14] Dianna Brittingham, interview.

America on wheels." It was highly regarded for its reliability and especially, its adaptability. At this time, Ford had a contract with Hesse Carriage Company in Kansas City to supply Ford with customized bodywork for their Model T.

Hesse's contract allowed them to transform the Model T in two ways. First automobile owners could bring their Model T to Hesse Carriage and trade out a winter body for a summer body on their automobile. Second, the Model T's adaptable use allowed Hesse to transform the automobile into a flat bed truck capable of pulling a trailer body as also designed by Hesse.

When Coca Cola in Kansas City needed a specialty vehicle to deliver their product, the beverage company purchased the inexpensive Model T from Ford who then contracted with Hesse Carriage Company to transform the vehicle into a delivery truck specially designed for the Coca Cola product line. This early cooperative effort between Ford and Hesse c.1908 led Hesse into the field of customized beverage trailer design that remains their specialty today.

During the 1930s, the firm began specializing in producing specialized trailer bodies for the beverage industry, which eventually became their major product line. In comparison to the 1910 Coca Cola truck, by the 1970s, a Hesse built trailer was transporting more than 2,000 beverage cases in one load.[16]

While Hesse's activity during WWII is not clear, after WWII, the company turned their attention back to beverage trucks and developed the industry standard in beverage transportation in quality and innovative designs. In 1964 a Hesse truck, with an all aluminum body, was displayed at the World's Fair.[17]

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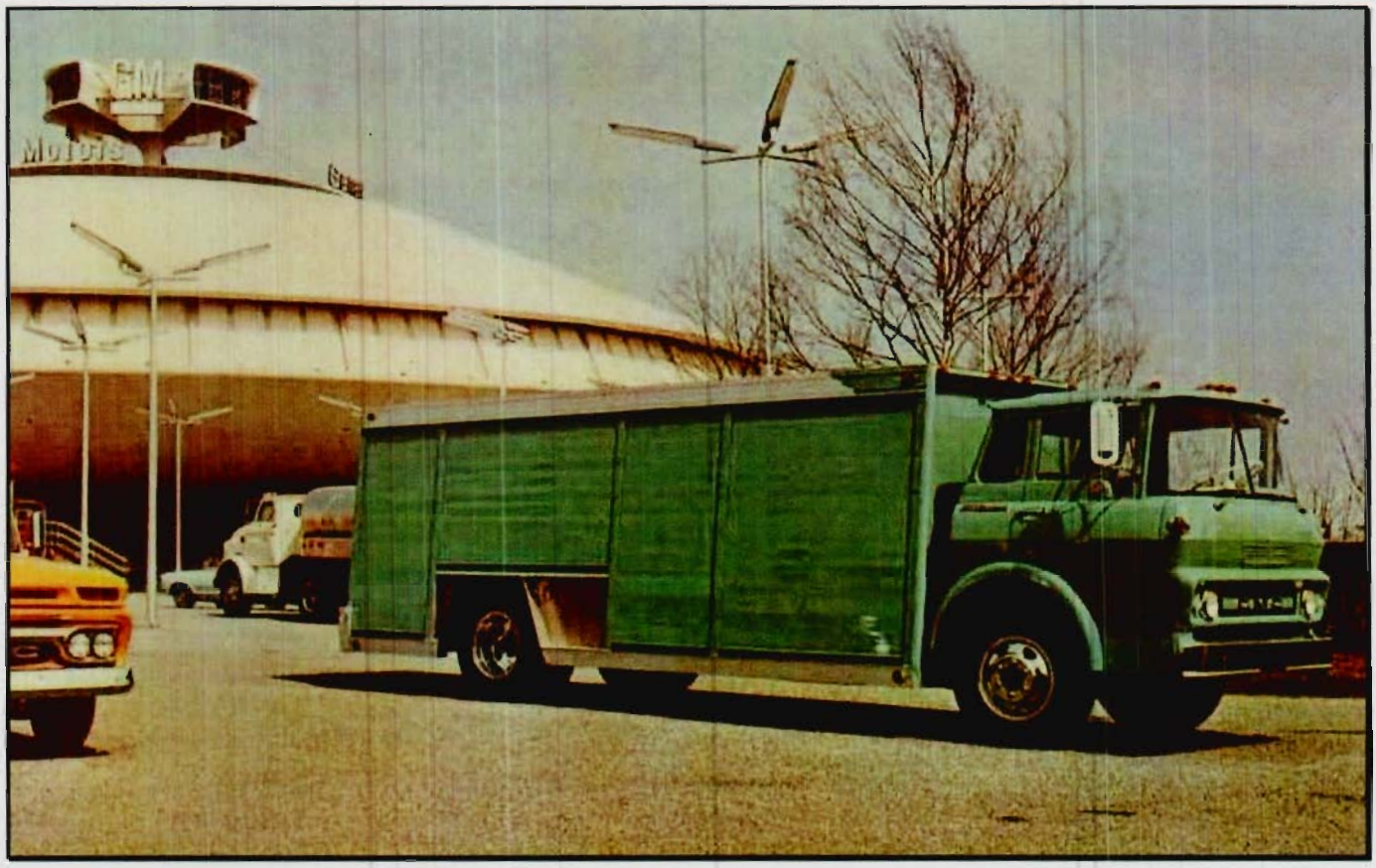
[15] Group Hesse archives.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.



Hesse all-aluminum truck body at the 1964 World's Fair Trade Show in front of the General Motors Corporation Building

Courtesy: Group Hesse archives

During World War II, their design expertise was utilized in supplying the United States Army and Navy with Fire Trucks.[18] Shortly after World War II, Hesse designed and manufactured 93 fire trucks that could be used in arctic areas, under a contract with the United States Army.

...the truck is designed to pump reliably at temperatures from 65 degrees below zero to 125 degrees

[18] Group Hesse, Online Accessed on March 30, 2006. http://grouphesse.com

above…the main problem is keeping the water from freezing in the 430-gallon pumping tank. To thwart the polar-freeze, a compact space heater mounted on the vehicle provides the warmth comparable to a home furnace."[19]

Courtesy: Group Hesse Archives

Patents developed at the Hesse Carriage Company

During the years that Otto Hesse and Joe Falk's ran the Hesse Carriage Company at 17th and Oak Street several patents were developed. While the actual number of patents is unknown, three were found in the personal records kept by the Falk family and remain in the archives of Hesse Corporation. These patents were developed by Joe Falk Jr. and his son, Charles T. Falk. The oldest patent found was issued in 1936 under Design No.

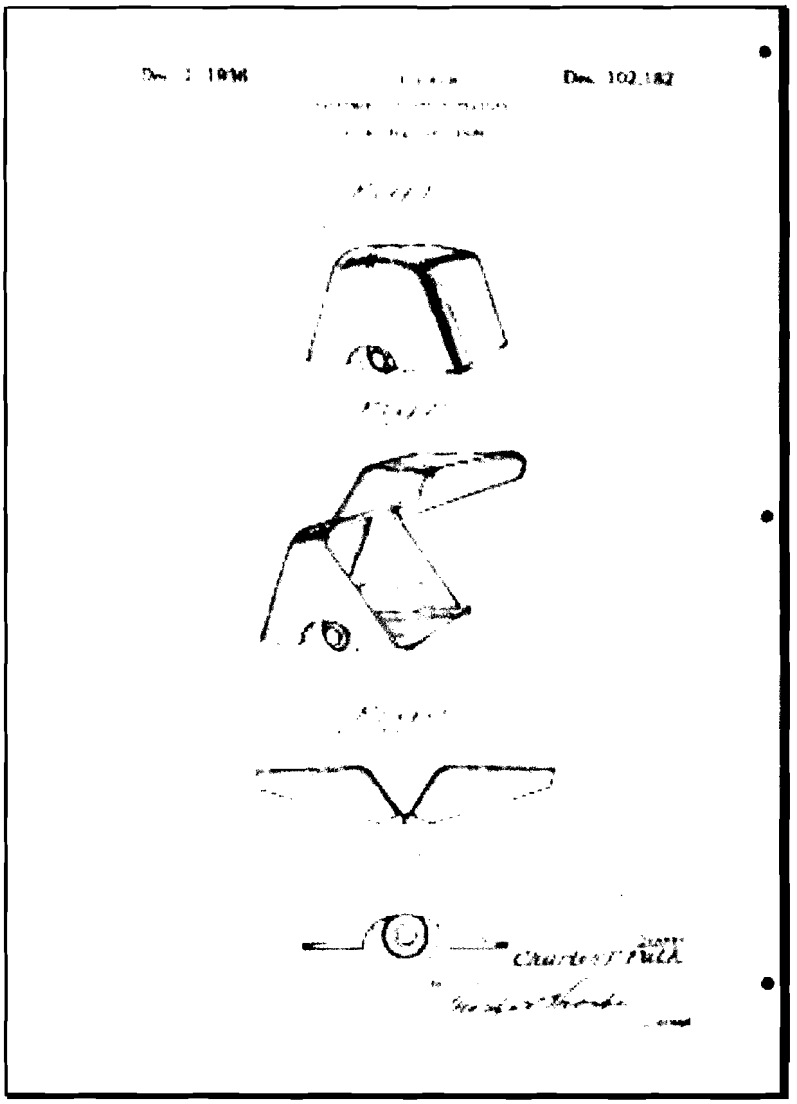
[19] Group Hesse Archives.

102182 for a Salesman's Display Trailer that was used for a short time by Hesse Carriage sales personnel in promoting the business.[20]

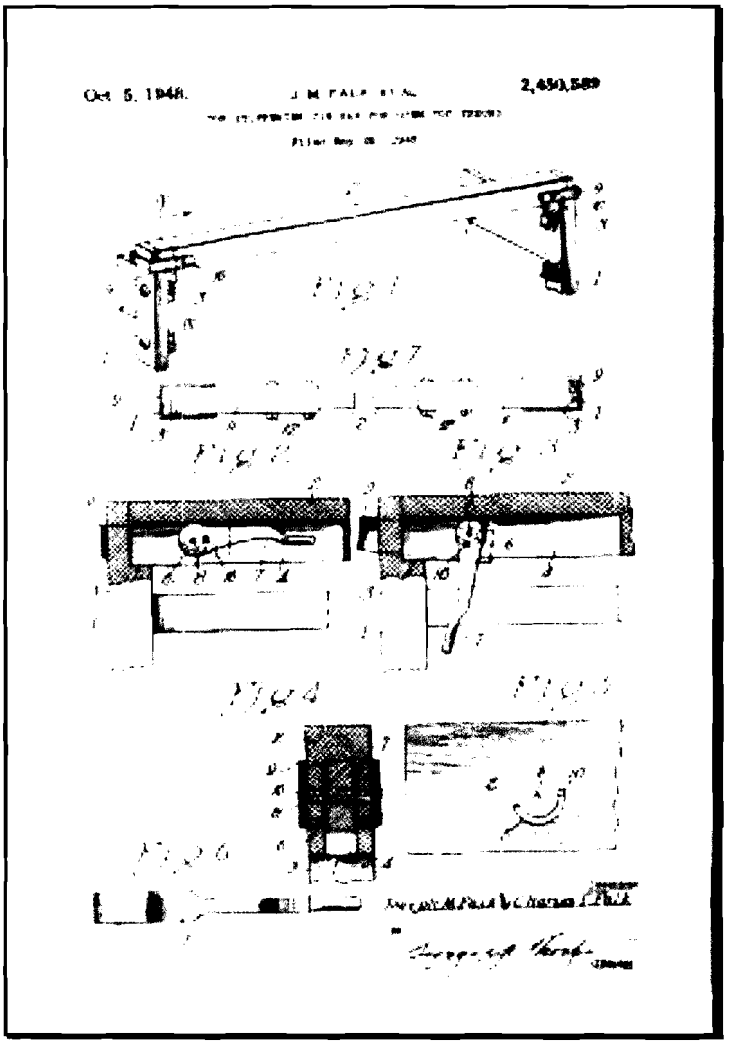
Patent No. 2,450,589 was issued to Joseph M. Falk and Charles T. Falk for the improvement of top stiffening tie bars used for open trucks. Although the date is given as October 5, 1948, the product was developed while the firm was still located at 17th and Oak. Likewise, Patent No. 2,454,438 was issued on November 32, 1948, also to Joseph and Charles for a holder and carrier for bottles.[21] These patents were introduced into the Hesse trailer bodies as manufactured for the transportation of cold beverages, including beer and other carbonated beverages. No information has been found to indicate that the patents were used by anyone other than Hesse Carriage.

Besides the building at 1700 Oak Street, Hesse occupied a building located at 1732 Oak Street, constructed in 1917. This building, due south of 1700 Oak Street, was the location of Hesse's expanding company and housed a portion of their truck and auto body business.

[20] Group Hesse archives.
[21] Ibid.

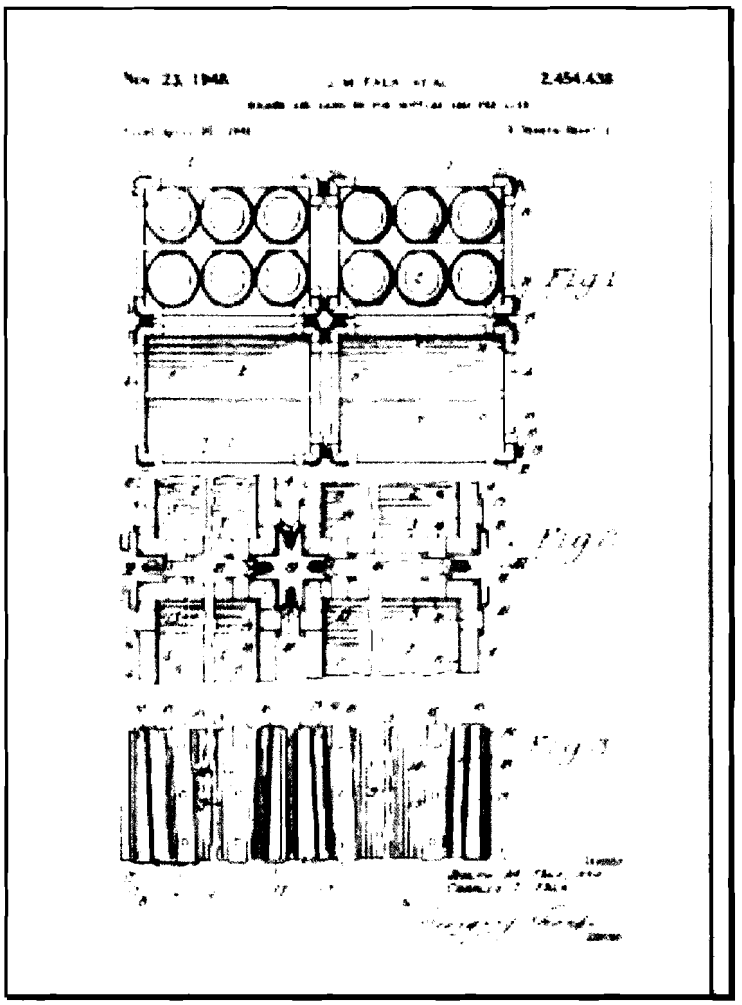


Patent for a Salesman's Display Trailer: Design 102,182; August 24, 1936



Top-stiffening tie-bars used for open trucks

Patent No. 2,454,438, May 28, 1945



Holder and carrier for bottles

Patent No. 2,450,589, April 30, 1945

Hesse Carriage Company Officers: 1857-1946

William G. Hesse was born in Prussia on July 5, 1838, and immigrated to the United States in 1853. He followed in his father's business, that of blacksmith and wagon maker. After working his way across the U.S. as a blacksmith, he settled in Leavenworth, Kansas in 1857. In Leavenworth he opened the second blacksmith and wagon repair shop in the city. His shop built and repaired the Prairie Schooners that began their journey west from Leavenworth along the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. By 1878 he had a second building and was the largest wagon shop in Leavenworth. In 1880, Hesse branched out to manufacture farm implements, wagons and carriages. William G. Hesse continued running his blacksmith shop in Leavenworth until his death on December 10, 1907. His son, Otto, took over the business and continued his father's legacy as a carriage manufacturer.[22]

Otto H. Hesse was the son of William. He was born in Leavenworth on October 10, 1865. He completed grammar school education after which he left school to work in his fathers shop. When in his late teens Otto worked in the office and frequently traveled to introduce their vehicles as far west as the Pacific coast and south to the Gulf of Mexico. One of their most popular products in the early years was the Hesse short-tongued, Ludlow spring wagon which was invented and patented by Otto Hesse. Hesse wagons and carriages built during the late 19th century can be found on the web as a favored antique collector's item.

Under Otto's guidance the firm transitioned between carriages and wagons to automobiles at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1898 Otto and Joseph Falk bought out the Grand Carriage Company at 1704 Grand to establish their business in the growing metropolis of Kansas City. In 1903 the two men decided to construct a four story building on the corner of 17th and Oak Street in Kansas City, Missouri. A four story and basement, mill constructed building was built entirely as a carriage, wagon and automobile business.[23]

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[22] Frank W. Blackmar, Ed., "Otto H. Hesse" Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc. ... / with a supplementary volume devoted to selected personal history and reminiscence. (Standard Pub. Co.:Chicago, 1912). Transcribed by Carolyn Ward. Online: http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/1912

[23] Ibid.

Joseph Falk, Sr. partnered with Otto Hesse c. 1900 when Hesse Carriage bought out Grand Carriage at 17th and Grand Avenue to open a new office in Kansas City. The Falk family has a long history with Hesse Carriage Company. Joseph Falk, Sr. was one of the original four partners.[24] Otto Hesse held the principal stock while Joseph Sr. was a lesser stockholder. During the 1930s the Falk family acquired all of Otto Hesse's stock. In 1957 Joseph Falk Sr. died at which time his son, Joe Falk Jr. became sole owner.

Joseph Falk Jr. became sole owner of Hesse Carriage in 1957. At some period during the 1930s, he had brought in his son Charles T. Falk as father and son implemented the design and research on several patents held by the Falk family. Under Joe Jr. the name of the company was changed to Hesse Corporation. In 1972, Joe Falk Jr. sold the company to Ray A. Maher but Falk was retained in his position as president. In 1991 the company was sold to Remcor, located in Montreal, Canada.[25]

Around 1946-47 Hesse temporarily moved into 1720 Cherry while their new building, on a ten-acre tract located at 6700 St. John's Avenue, was under construction. In 1948, Hesse Carriage moved to their new building. After Hesse Carriage moved to St. John Ave., the company changed its name to Hesse Corporation. The Hesse Carriage Company has always operated their corporate offices in Kansas City.[26]

In December 1972 local Kansas City businessman Ray A. Mayer bought Hesse Corporation as a division of Maher Enterprises. C.T. Falk, grandson of Joseph Falk, Sr. continued in his position as president with no other changes. It was business as usual.[27] In 1995 the *Kansas City Business Journal* listed the top 50 oldest area based businesses of Kansas City. Hesse Corporation was listed as the oldest firm in continuous existence in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Today Hesse Group is part of Remcor Corporation, a multi-national firm based

[24] W.K. Miller served as secretary. No biographical information is available for him.
[25] Hesse Archives.
[26] For a brief period in the 1970s, Hesse manufactured trailer bodies in a facility located in Dover, New Jersey.
[27] "Hesse Corp. is Sold to Ray Maher Enterprises," *The Mid-Continent Bottler Magazine* December 1972, n. p. Hesse archives.

near Montreal, Canada. Hesse Corporation is now known as Group Hesse.[28]

The archives for Hesse Carriage Company can be found in two locations: The Leavenworth Historic Society in Leavenworth Kansas and the corporate offices of Group Hesse located at 6700 St. John's Avenue, Kansas City Missouri.

[28] Group Hesse, Online.

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"Hesse Corp. Is Sold to Ray Maher Enterprises," *The Mid-Continent Bottler Magazine*, December 1972, n. p.

"History." *Group Hesse, Online.* Accessed on March 30, 2006. http://www.grouphesse.com

Western Contractor. Vol. 27. May 15, 1915, 30.

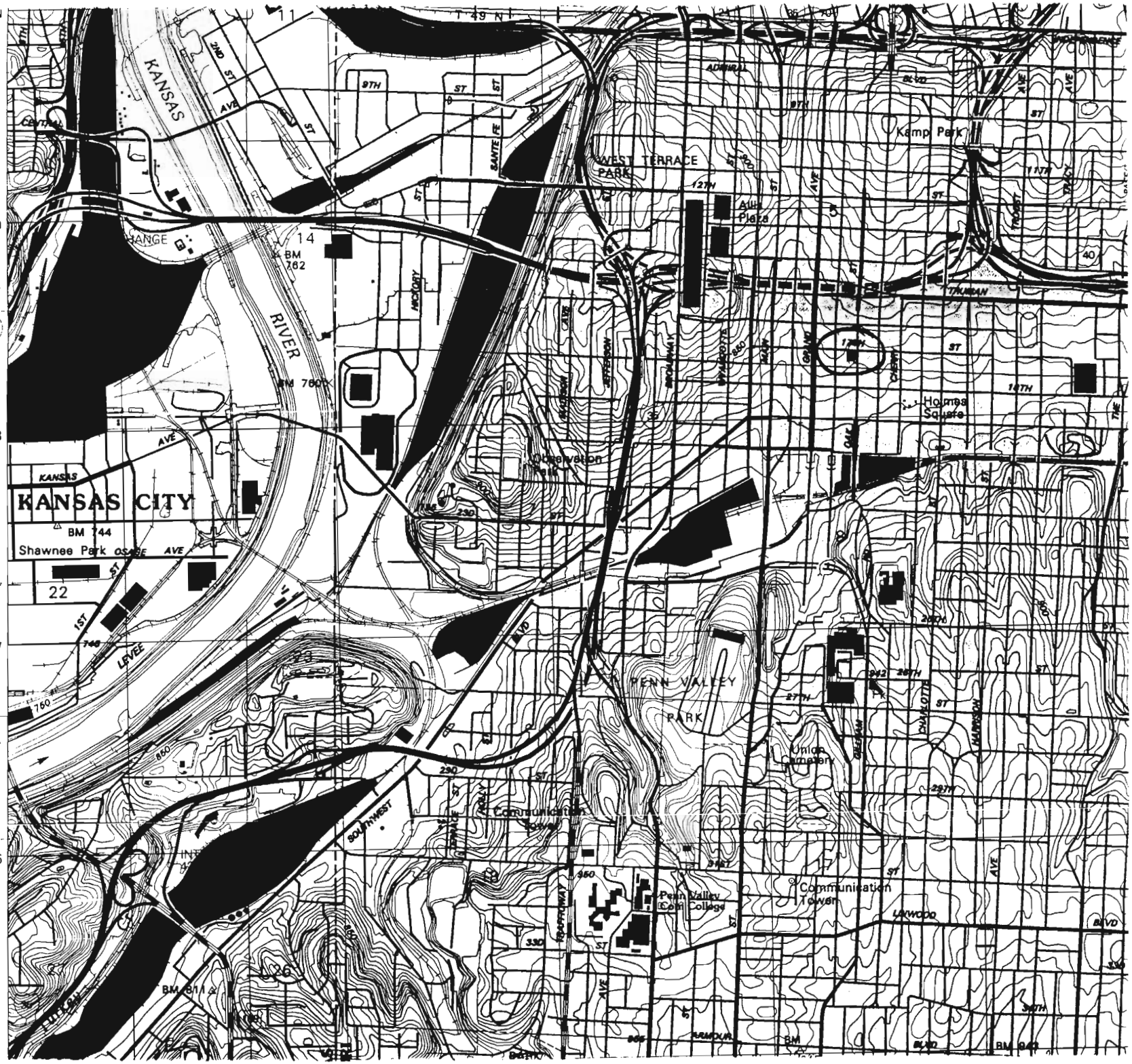
"Work to Start on the Hesse Plant Unit," *The Kansas City Star*, 26 June 1960, n.p.

Verbal Boundary Description:
Part of Lot 702 and all of lots 703, 704, and 706, and all that part of lot 707 not in Oak Street, Block 51, McGee's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri being described as follows: Beginning at a point at the intersection of the south right of way line of 17th Street and the west right of way line of Oak Street as now established, said point being 14.00 feet west, as measured along said south right of way line of 17th Street, from the northeast corner of said lot 707 as originally platted; thence SE along said west right of way line of Oak Street, a distance of 105 feet to a point on the south line of said Lot 707; thence NW along said south line, and along the south line of said lots 706, 705, 704, 703, and 702, a distance of 119.24 feet to a point on the east line of a 15.24 foot wide alley; thence NW along said east line, a distance of 105 feet to a point on the north line of Lot 702, said point also being on said south right of way line of 17th Street; thence SE along the south right-of-way line, said line also being the north line of said lots 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, and 707, a distance of 119.24 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:
The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Hesse Carriage Company Building. A separate building located at 1732 Oak Street, was later affiliated with the Hesse Company, but is not part of the nomination.

Key to Photographs:
Jeff Nichols, Photographer. July 2006. Negatives are archived at AHR, LLC, Kansas City, MO.

1. East (main) and north façades; view facing southwest
2. Detail of canted entrance; view facing west
3. East façade; view facing west
4. Detail of north façade; view facing south
5. Detail of north façade; view facing south
6. North and west facades; view facing east, southeast
7. South and east facades; view facing northwest
8. Detail of the first floor, western unit; view facing northwest
9. Detail of the second floor, eastern unit; view facing east


KANSAS
RIVER
KANSAS CITY
BM 744
Shawnee Park
LEVEE
BM 760
BM 811
BM 762
BM 941
WEST TERRACE PARK
Kamp Park
Alle Place
Holmes Square
Observation Tower
PENN VALLEY PARK
Union Cemetery
Communication Tower
Penn Valley Com College
Communication Tower
SANTE FE
HICKORY
JEFFERSON
BROADWAY
CHARLOTTE
MAIN
GRAND
OAK
GREEN
HARRISON
TRUMAN
LAWOOD
ARMOUR
SOUTHWEST
BLVD
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