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 Buchanan County Infirmary

other name/site number Buchanan County Poor Farm; Green Acres

2. Location

street & town 3500 North Village Drive N/A not for publication

city or town Saint Joseph N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Buchanan code 021 zip code 64506

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 DEC 15, 2008

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:)

Buchanan County Infirmary
Name of Property

Buchanan County, MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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)

DOMESTIC: Institutional Housing

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof TILE
other STONE

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

[x] 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)

Social History

Period of Significance

1919-1953

Significant Dates

1919

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Meier, Rudolph

Arnhold, Ray

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:

St. Joseph Public Library

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

Buchanan County Infirmary
Name of Property

Buchanan County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.78 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	394960	4409050
2	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
3	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
4	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property.)
Please see Continuation Sheet.

Property Tax No. N/A

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
Please see Continuation Sheet.

☒See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Principal and Kristen Ottesen, Associate

organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date December 2007

street & number 215 W. 18th Street, Suite 150 telephone 816-472-4950

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

12. 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)

13. Owner

name/title Green Acres Redevelopment Company, LLC

street & number c/o Evans Realty, 606 S. Woodbine telephone 816-233-1119

city or town St. Joseph state MO zip code 64507

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.

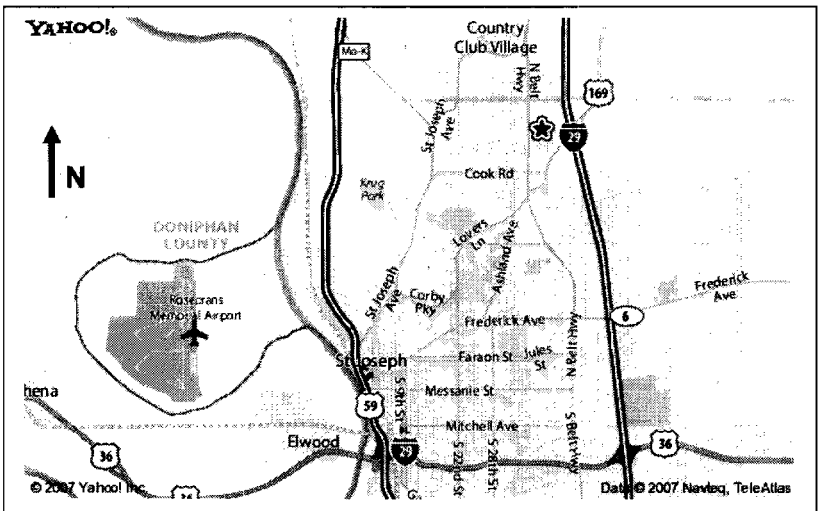
SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT

The Buchanan County Infirmary is located at 3500 North Village Drive (formerly 5215 Green Acres Road) in St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri. The Infirmary is the last surviving structure of the Buchanan County Poor Farm, which originally occupied nearly two hundred acres of land in Washington Township, northeast of downtown St. Joseph. Constructed in 1919, the Infirmary is a two-story, F-shaped building with a "fireproof" concrete structure, brick walls, and a cross-hip roof clad with red ceramic tiles. Executed in the Classical Revival style, the Infirmary has three, two-story pedimented porticos that symmetrically divide the long primary façade. Although new commercial development has partially compromised its integrity of setting, the Buchanan County Infirmary retains all of its character-defining stylistic features (form, plan, space, structure, and style) and its historic exterior materials, as well as its original interior layout. Together these elements clearly communicate information about the Infirmary's historic function and its period of construction.

ELABORATION

LOCATION AND SETTING

The Buchanan County Infirmary is the last surviving structure of the Buchanan County Poor Farm. It occupies a 2.78 acre parcel approximately four miles northeast of downtown St. Joseph, near the Andrew County line. Originally a 200-acre parcel, much of the historically open poor farm land surrounding the Infirmary has been sold in recent years for commercial development. New roads and big box retail stores have been constructed to the north, south, and west of the Infirmary. Behind the building, several acres of undeveloped grassy land roll away to the east.



Location of Buchanan County Infirmary.

In spite of the encroaching development, the Infirmary retains feelings of its original rural setting. The Infirmary sits apart from the new developments, rising above them on a hill. Mature trees (deciduous and evergreen), a grassy lawn, and the remnants of flower beds surround the building and further define the nominated property. A

gravel driveway winds up the hill from the west, passes in front of the building and continues back down the hill to the east.

EXTERIOR

The Buchanan County Infirmary sits atop a hill with its primary elevation facing southwest. A primary, two-story wing extends to the rear (northeast) from the south end of the main block, and a secondary wing extends northeast from the rear elevation of the main block to form the F-shaped plan. An interior light well, open to the ground, is at the junction of the secondary wing and the main block. Surrounding the light well, the secondary wing is two stories. It becomes one story beyond the light well.

A reinforced concrete foundation supports the building's solid masonry walls. Floors and decks are also reinforced concrete. Dark red brick clads the exterior walls on all elevations, and red clay tile covers the cross-hipped roof. Circular dormer vents rise through the roof. On the front roof slope, three vents flank each side of the central porch. Three additional vents rise through the roof between the cross gables on the southeast elevation. The one-story rear block has a flat roof with a built-up membrane surface.

A limestone cornice tops the red brick walls on the front and side elevations. A cast stone cornice tops the red brick walls on the rear elevations. Its light color mimics the appearance of limestone, carrying the same design motif to the rear elevations in a more frugal material.

The exterior appearance and ornamentation of the Buchanan County Infirmary reflect the Classical Revival architectural style. The most significant character-defining elements are the three, two-story porches that dominate the main façade. The central porch has four full-height concrete Doric columns that support a projecting, pedimented roof. Dentils ornament the wood entablature and pediment, and an oculus window punctuates the pediment. The first-story porch has a full three-bay width, but the second-story porch spans only the central bay. The two identical porches at either end of the façade have hipped roofs, each supported by four full-height square brick posts with square limestone capitals. Dentils ornament the limestone entablatures of these porches. Both the first- and second-story floors span the full width of the porches. Iron railings with narrow, square pickets encircle all three porches on both levels. At the front of each second-story porch, the railing incorporates an oval bulls-eye pattern.

In lieu of porches, the secondary (southeast) façade has two cross-gabled pediments that mark the three outer bays at each end of the façade. Four engaged brick pilasters rise from the first story to the limestone entablature. Dentils ornament the entablature and the limestone trim of the pediment, and a limestone-framed oculus window pierces its center.

The regular rhythm of fenestration defines bays on all building facades. The main block is twenty-five bays long and three bays wide. The two-story porches span three bays at the ends and at the center of the main (northwest) façade. The primary wing is fourteen bays long and three bays wide. The secondary wing is ten bays long and four bays wide. All of the original window openings have limestone sills. First floor windows have soldier brick headers. A continuous rowlock course spans the heads of the second floor windows. Non-historic aluminum or vinyl double-hung sashes configured with one-over-one lights fill the original window openings.

Entrances to the building have experienced more alterations than the windows. The main entrance is centered in the primary (southwest) façade. A pair of non-historic, aluminum-framed full-length glazed doors fills the opening. On the exterior, plywood covers the historic leaded glass sidelights that flank the opening. A second set of doors flanked the main entry in the outer bays of beneath the portico. These openings retain brick headers with articulated keystones, although the doors have been removed and the openings partially filled with vinyl siding and windows. Beneath the porticos, additional doorways access first- and second-story porches at each end of the front façade. These openings retain pairs of eight-light wood French doors spanned by a five-light transom. Non-historic metal doors fill first floor entrances on the secondary (northwest, southeast, and rear) elevations.

INTERIOR

The Infirmary retains its original interior configuration, although no historic finishes remain. The main block and primary wing have double-loaded corridors flanked by small patient/resident rooms. A single, large shared bathroom served the residents of each corridor. The rear block contains the dining room and the kitchen on the first floor and additional patient/resident rooms on the second floor. There are offices on the first floor of the main block near the main entrance, and reception or meeting rooms facing the porches at the ends of the first and second floors. The original design included a caretaker's apartment on the front side of the second floor with access to the second-story porch at the center of the main wing.

In the secondary wing, two corridors extending from the main corridor surround the light well and connect to the rear block. On the first floor they lead to the dining room and kitchen. On the second floor they lead to additional patient/resident rooms, which are located off of a single-loaded corridor adjacent to the light well. A stairwell in the northeast corner leads from the first floor to the basement (there is no second floor at this location). A small stairwell in the corridor at the southeast side of the light well rises from the basement to the second floor.

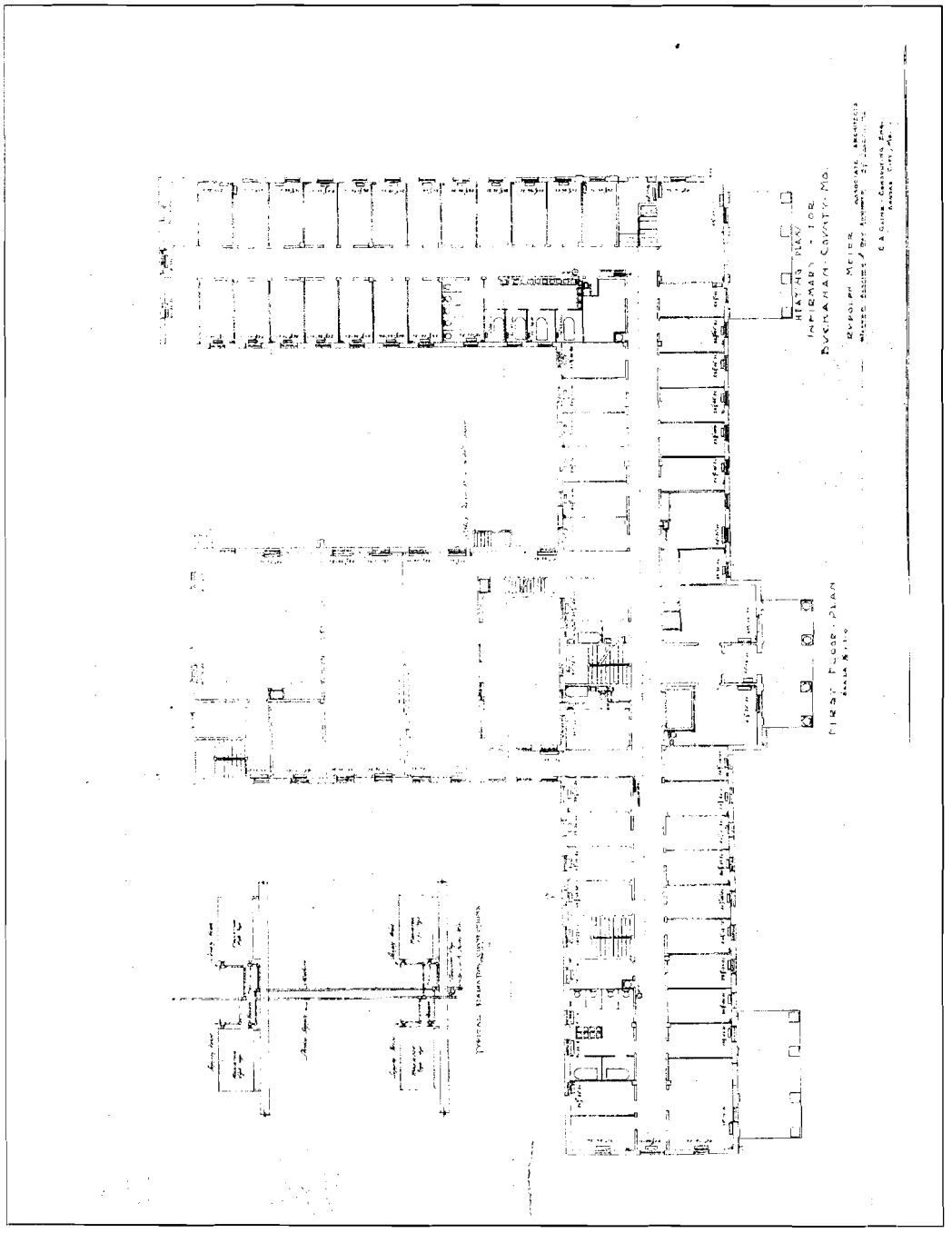
The basement spans the area below the main block and the secondary wing. Below the main block are storage rooms arranged along a corridor. The basement of the secondary wing contains the boiler room and a meeting room.

No distinctive historic finishes remain. Plaster walls and ceilings are painted, and wallpaper covers some walls. The dining room and kitchen ceilings have non-historic dropped grid ceilings with lay-in panels. Composition tile covers most of the concrete floors in the corridors, although in some locations the concrete is painted. In the patient/resident rooms, composition tile or carpet covers the floors. Archival research documents that the building's finishes were substantially refurbished c. 1953 and again c. 1970.

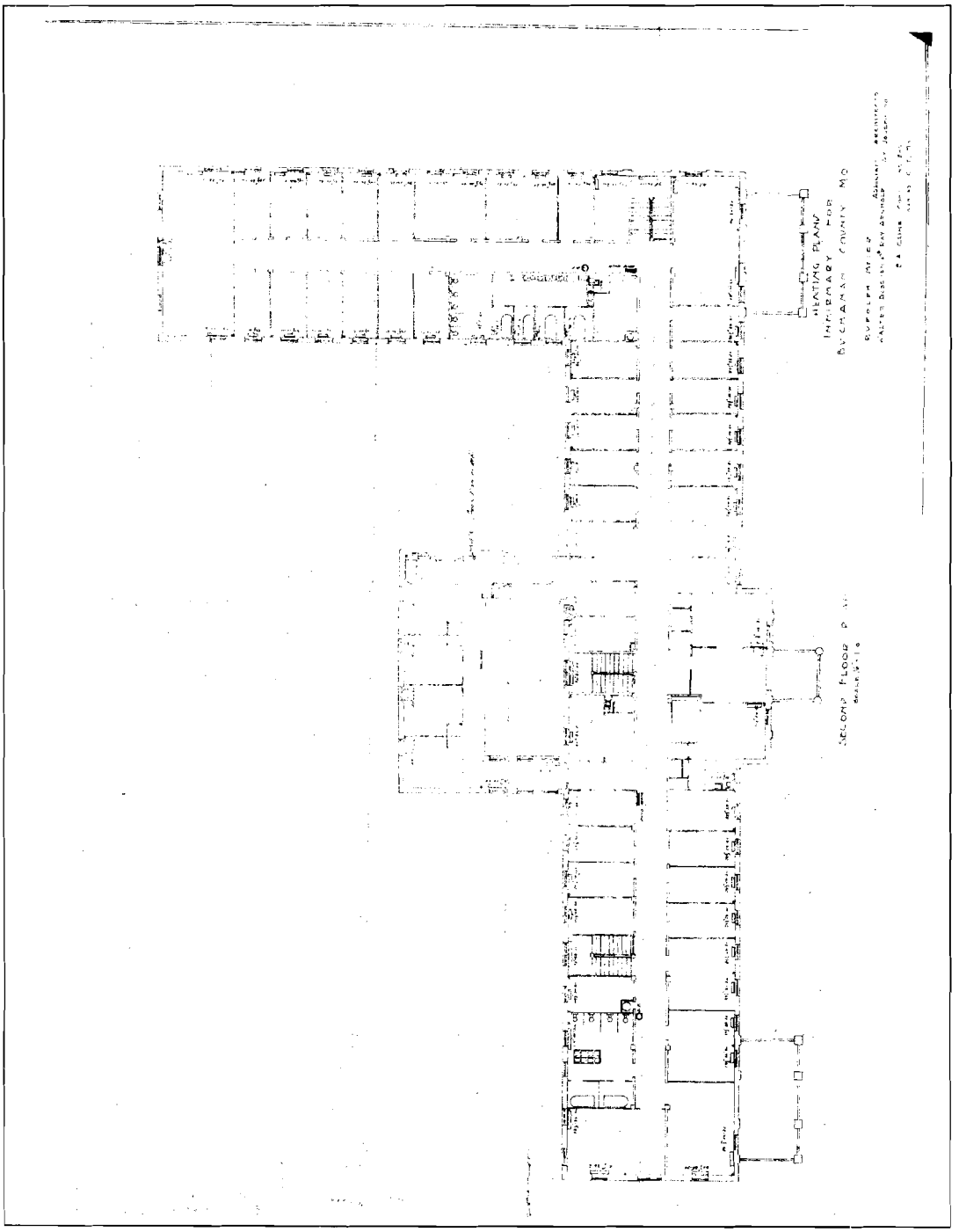
INTEGRITY

The majority of features that define the Classical Revival architecture and institutional function of the Buchanan County Infirmary remain intact. On the exterior, these include the F-shaped plan that allowed ample natural light and ventilation to reach the interior of the building, the symmetrical facades, the classically-detailed two-story porches on the front elevation, and the classical pediments above the central porch and on the side elevation. The loss of other structures as well as acreage that historically comprised the Buchanan County Poor Farm has impacted the Infirmary's integrity of setting, and interior renovations have slightly weakened the building's integrity in the areas of materials and workmanship. These losses do not diminish the ability of the property to communicate feelings about and associations with its historic context.

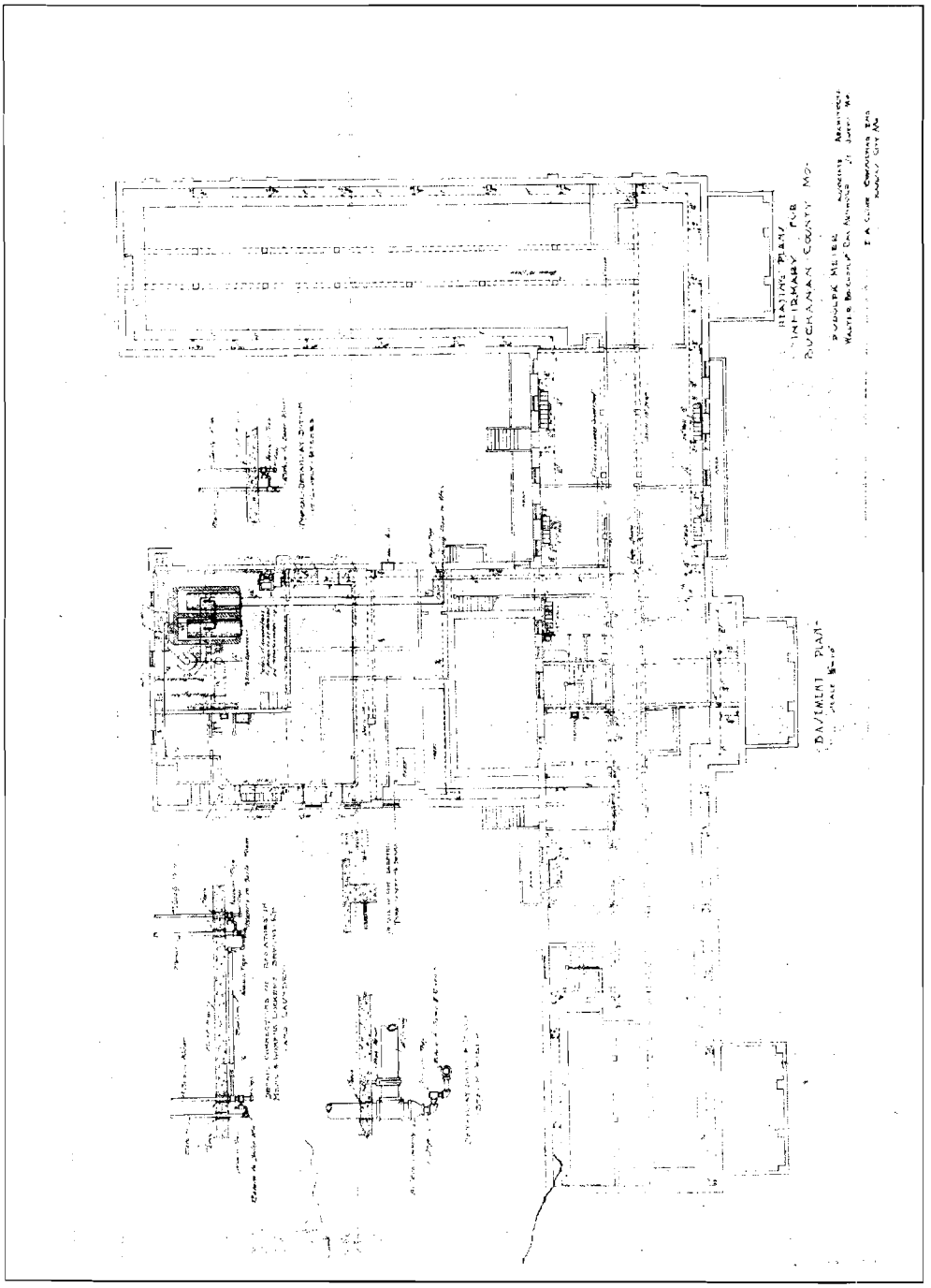
BUCHANAN COUNTY INFIRMARY, FIRST FLOOR PLAN



BUCHANAN COUNTY INFIRMARY, SECOND FLOOR PLAN



BUCHANAN COUNTY INFIRMARY, BASEMENT PLAN



ARCHITECT/BUILDER (CONT.)
Boschen, Walter
Lehr Construction Company

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Buchanan County Infirmary, 3500 North Village Drive (formerly 5215 Green Acres Road), St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion A for the area of SOCIAL HISTORY. Erected in 1919, it is an excellent and rare example of a poor farm residential building constructed in the early twentieth century, and it is the last surviving structure from the former Buchanan County Poor Farm. Built as an Infirmary, it illustrates a change in function that occurred at poor farms across the country during this period. Following an era of social reforms, poor farms evolved into community-sponsored nursing homes or hospitals after children, criminals, and the mentally ill were removed from the poorhouse, leaving only elderly and ill indigents. Typical of institutional buildings erected during this period, the F-shaped plan provided the building with natural light and ventilation. It accommodated men and women in separate wings (each with a double-loaded corridor flanked by small patient rooms and shared restrooms) and had a central dining area. The period of significance for the Buchanan County Infirmary begins with its construction in 1919 and ends in 1953 when the county ceased to operate the poor farm.

ELABORATION

HISTORY OF THE POOR FARM IN THE UNITED STATES

America's history of caring for the poor through public institutions is rooted in seventeenth century England where Queen Elizabeth I enacted the Poor Law in 1601. This law imposed a compulsory tax to support the country's poor, based on the belief that caring for the poor was a local, public responsibility; that care should be provided to those who had no one to look after them; and that children should be cared for and nurtured. The American colonists brought the guiding principles of the Poor Law to the New World.[1]

The first poorhouse, or alms house, in America was established in Boston in 1660, although it was one of very few such buildings erected prior to the nineteenth century. Methods of dealing with indigent populations more typically included outdoor relief (providing handouts of cash or provisions to those in need while they continued to live in their own homes), auctioning the poor to farmers as labor, or abandonment. Many Americans believed

[1] Harry C. Evans, *The American Poor Farm and Its Inmates*, [Des Moines, Iowa], 1926, page 1. Published by the Loyal Order of the Moose, Mooseheart, IL; the Brotherhood of American Yeomen, Des Moines, IA; the Maccabees, Detroit, MI; the Supreme Tribe of Ben Hur, Crawfordsville, IN; and the American Insurance Union, Columbus, OH.

that handouts to the poor promoted idleness, alcoholism, and dependence, while auctioning them as indentured labor seemed cruel. Reformers aspired to establish poorhouses and farms, where all able residents would work, idleness would be prohibited, and children would be educated.[2] Poorhouses would also reduce the amount of outdoor relief being paid by the states. By 1850, it was increasingly common to find state-sponsored and privately-funded institutions of all types to house and care for those on the fringes of society, such as the mentally ill, juvenile delinquents, unwed mothers, criminals, and the physically handicapped.[3] In this vein, the poorhouse and the poor farm became the preferred vehicle to house and care for the poor. Nineteenth century Americans idealistically expected these institutions to reform, rehabilitate, and educate their residents.[4]

Unfortunately, these goals were not realistic. Poorhouses were often filthy, overcrowded, and disease-ridden places filled with desperate and degraded individuals. In addition to the indigent, poorhouses became dumping grounds for people who needed other types of care, such as criminals and the mentally ill. Although they were free to come and go at will, poorhouse residents were called "inmates," a term that clearly reveals their perception by the general public.

Poorhouse facilities were generally run under a contract system, with each county awarding contracts for indigent care to the lowest bidder. The recipient of the contract lived on the property and received a stipend to oversee the operations and to care for the residents. The residents provided labor to the farmer, and the county provided clothing, bedding, and medical services to the residents.[5] The overseer or superintendent was often an uneducated farmer, just a step ahead of the residents in social standing.[6] Good records were rare. Doctors who cared for residents were poorly paid and carried heavy workloads, resulting in rampant illness and neglect.

Throughout the United States, many counties established poor farms in rural areas to house those who had nowhere else to go. Poor farms managed by experienced farmers were sometimes more successful than their urban counterparts, the poorhouse. The residents had constructive work, and the harvests provided much of their food. The poor farm was often considered less repressive than the urban poorhouse. Americans generally perceived an agricultural society as promoting a strong work ethic, and the unskilled work enabled all residents to participate.[7] However, during the summer when farm work was abundant, many male residents left the poor farm to work elsewhere. In the winter, when outside work ended, they returned to the poor farm, undermining its

[2] Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A social History of Welfare in America*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers,) 1986, page 22.
[3] Katz, page 11
[4] Ibid, page 11
[5] Evans, page 16.
[6] Ibid, page 7
[7] Wagner, page 5.

operation.[8] Even under the most promising circumstances, poor farms were not always successful.

Efforts to improve the quality of indigent care date to the early 1830s when reformer Dorthea Dix called for the removal of the mentally ill from poorhouses. By the late nineteenth century, the American public was becoming increasingly aware of the adverse conditions prevalent in poorhouses and was less enthralled with this Dickensian approach to caring for the less fortunate. *Harper's Weekly* magazine published an article titled "Over the Hill to the Poorhouse," which publicized poorhouse conditions. In the same year, Will Carleton wrote a song with the same title addressing the stigma of the poorhouse.[9] By 1875, poorhouse regulations were becoming a state responsibility. New laws prohibited children, the mentally ill, and others with special needs from residing in the poorhouse, placing them instead in institutions established specifically for their care.[10] During the 1910s, mother's pensions housed fit mothers with their children.[11] The 1935 Social Security Act established social welfare programs, such as workman's compensation, unemployment benefits and social security, which provided alternate relief for those who might otherwise seek residency at the poorhouse. As the children, mentally ill and able-bodied adults left the poorhouse, the elderly and physically disabled were generally left behind.

This evolution of the poorhouse population transformed the institution itself into a nursing home or residential care facility. Concurrently, the key poorhouse staff positions, such as superintendents and physicians, became increasingly specialized and professional, which facilitated the transition from poorhouses to hospitals and nursing homes in the early and mid-twentieth century. Reflecting this change, by the 1920s states and counties began renaming their institutions as "infirmaries" or "hospitals."[12] The nominated Buchanan County Infirmary building, added to the county poor farm complex in 1919, illustrates the sensibilities of this period of indigent care.

THE BUCHANAN COUNTY POOR FARM[13]

Buchanan County was organized in December of 1838. Early settlers came from neighboring counties, as well as Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia.[14] The town of St. Joseph, founded as a trading post on the Missouri River by Joseph Robidoux, became the county seat in 1846. Beginning in 1848, the

[8] Katz, page 32.
[9] Wagner, page 10.
[10] Linda Crannell, "History of 19th Century American Poorhouses," *The Poorhouse Story* website, www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm; Internet, accessed 2 August 2007.
[11] Wagner, page 10.
[12] Evans, page 5.
[13] Unless noted otherwise, the history of the Buchanan County Poor Farm from 1850 to 1881 is taken from *History of Buchanan County Missouri, Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, Etc,* (St. Joseph: Steam Printing Company, 1881), reprint, (Cape Girardeau: Ramfre Reprint, 1974). St. Joseph (Missouri) Public Library.
[14] Walter Williams. *A History of Northwest Missouri: Volume I*, (Chicago & New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1915,) page 335.

Gold Rush brought westward travelers to St. Joseph, the head of the California trail, spurring an initial period of growth.[15] Construction of numerous railroad lines starting around 1855[16] and the city's proximity to boat traffic on the Missouri River also fueled growth, and the city prospered until the Civil War.

Economic growth and local prosperity stagnated during the war, although St. Joseph quickly rebounded with the return of peace. Rail connections and access to river commerce attracted numerous new industries, and St. Joseph experienced a second period of tremendous growth during the late nineteenth century.[17]

Prior to 1850, Buchanan County did not have provisions to house its poor and indigent citizens. Residents in need simply petitioned the county for outdoor relief and were granted a certain sum of money per month. Sometime after 1850, the county began to house indigent citizens on private farms to avoid the cost of purchasing and maintaining its own property. The first Buchanan County farmer to participate in this program was E. Richardson, who received between one dollar and five dollars per day for each person he housed. A few years later, the county accepted bids and issued contracts for housing the poor. Judge C. Roberts won the first contract with a bid of $80 per person per year.

In March 1857, Buchanan County purchased 140 acres located about two miles southwest of Sparta (the county seat until it was moved to St. Joseph) for the purpose of creating a county-run poor farm. The county appointed John Peter to head the operation and to be resident caretaker for a stipend of $75-$80 per person per year. Various individuals held the superintendent position over the next ten years. In 1868, Superintendent Isham Wood purchased the farm from the county. The residents were moved into St. Joseph under the care of the Superintendent of the Poor and County Physician (one position), who received compensation of fifty cents per day per person. This stipend covered all expenses except for food, which was provided by the superintendent.

Buchanan County reestablished a county poor farm in 1871 with the purchase of nearly two hundred acres from Martin and Matilda S. Hughes for $11,000. Located about four miles northeast of downtown St. Joseph, the purchase included stock, agricultural implements, grain, and other farm equipment, as well as a partially completed building. County Commissioners appropriated an additional sum of $1,000 to complete the Gothic Revival-style building. Hughes had intended the building to be a theater, anticipating that the Savannah Railroad (an interurban line that was later abandoned) would build a depot near his property. When the railroad constructed the depot in Jamestown, a mile from Hughes' land, Hughes sold his property to the county. The first

[15] "St. Joseph History," City of St. Joseph website, www.ci.st-joseph.mo.us/history/history.cfm; Internet; accessed 3 August 2007.)
[16] Walter Williams, editor, *A History of Northwest Missouri, Volume I*, (Chicago & New York: The Lewis Publishing Company,) 1915, page 366.
[17] "St. Joseph History," City of St. Joseph website, www.ci.st-joseph.mo.us/history/history.cfm (accessed August 3, 2007.)

indigent residents moved to the farm on September 1, 1871.

In 1873, a frame building was constructed on the poor farm property to house up to forty Buchanan County citizens who were patients at the overcrowded State Lunatic Asylum at Fulton, Missouri. These patients remained at the poor farm until State Lunatic Asylum Number 2 was constructed in St. Joseph in January 1874. When State Lunatic Asylum Number 2 suffered a devastating fire four years later in 1878, approximately twenty patients returned to live at the poor farm. The overcrowded conditions convinced the county to erect an asylum for the insane on the poor farm grounds that could accommodate approximately 150 patients. The building, completed in March of 1881, was a two-story brick structure approximately forty feet by eighty feet. The facility became known as the County Poor Farm and County Lunatic Asylum.

There is little written history of the Buchanan County Poor Farm after 1881. A review of Sanborn fire insurance maps suggests that the original Gothic Revival poor farm house may have become the superintendent's house by 1897. This building was rectangular in plan, two stories high and had small porches on the west and south sides, as well as a larger porch on the east side. The main building (possibly the asylum constructed in 1881) was southeast of the superintendent's house. Numerous outbuildings included a one-story structure with an attached cellar, a morgue, a two-story wash house, a smoke house, a buggy shed, a wagon shed, an ice house, a tool house, a chicken shed, a hay shed, and a barn. The property also had five cisterns.

By 1911, the Sanborn map shows that the main building had been expanded with the construction of an enlarged front porch and an addition on the rear (east). North of the main building were the superintendent's house and an array of outbuildings, including an ironing room, a two-story wash house, a smoke house, a wagon shed, a cellar and a hayshed. Alterations to the superintendent's house included removing the west and south porches, building a new porch on the north, and elongating the east porch to stretch the length of the house.

The nominated building was erected in 1919. This date is confirmed by the cornerstone as well as the 1949 Sanborn map. The circumstances surrounding its construction are unknown. Based on the 1949 Sanborn map, it appears that the main building, constructed in 1881, was demolished. The new Infirmary was built south of the previous (1881) main building. The superintendent's house remained extant in 1949, as were an ironing room, a wash house, a smoke house, and a cellar. The property also included a new barn and three new automobile garages. The 1955 Sanborn map generally shows these same buildings. It notes that the superintendent's house was vacant and dilapidated.

Review of archival records produced little information about the individuals who were sent to the Buchanan

County Infirmary.[18] They were generally not newsmakers; nor were they prominent figures in business or commerce. Entries in county records committed individuals to the Infirmary without explanation. Some individuals were sent to the Infirmary repeatedly, such as Mary Yethers on 24 May 1919 and 1 November 1920. The residents held jobs such as laborer, seamstress, shoemaker and nurse.[19]

The 1930 federal census provides the most-detailed snapshot of the residents, or "inmates" as the census called them, living at the poor farm that year. The census referred to the institution as the Buchanan County Home for Paupers. In 1930, the property was home to 126 "inmates" along with 15 staff members and their relatives. Staff included the Head Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, a nurse, a cook, an assistant cook, a night watchman, and two laborers. The census recorded that none of the 115 men or 11 women in residence had attended school, although more than two-thirds were able to read and write. The average age was 70, although the most common age was 80. The youngest resident was 37 and the oldest was 103. Only two individuals were married while the rest were widowed, single or divorced. Nine residents were "negroes." The population also included 16 immigrants. Most were German and Irish, although there was one person each from France, Norway, and Scotland. Mary Yethers, an 84-year-old widow born in New York, was once again a resident in 1930.[20]

In 1953 the Buchanan County Poor Farm became Green Acres, a retirement home run by a nonprofit board that leased the property from the county. Green Acres provided a bucolic setting for the area's elderly residents with its sweeping fields and pastures. As it did when it was a poor farm, the facility grew much of its own produce, raised its own livestock, and produced its own milk. However, a 1957 recommendation from the State Board of Health to serve only pasteurized milk halted dairy production.[21] Since Green Acres was a nonprofit operation, they accepted numerous donations of building materials and volunteer labor to undertake improvements. The residents' monthly rent covered room and board, including meals and laundry.

Green Acres usually operated near capacity. The board of directors proposed expanding the facility to increase capacity from 81 to 200 residents in 1962 and offered to buy some of the property from the county to develop a senior housing complex in 1970.[22] Neither of these efforts came to fruition, and no additional buildings were constructed. Green Acres operated as a retirement home until it closed in February 2003.[23]

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[18] Reports from the state Eleemosynary Board for 1921-1945 did not yield any useful information regarding the individuals sent to the Buchanan County Infirmary.
[19] Names attained from Buchanan County Records, Books 41-45, 1919-1925. Occupations gathered from St. Joseph City Directories
[20] Department of Commerce – Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930.* Washington Township, Buchanan County. Missouri, 1930. Page 119, Sheet 1A, 1B; Page 120, Sheet 2A.
[21] NP, 3-6-57
[22] Ibid, 11-10-70
[23] Ibid, 12-28-03

Since 2003, most of the land that encompassed the Buchanan County Poor Farm has been sold to developers. Big box retail stores and movie theaters, parking lots, and access roads have been constructed to the north, south, and west of the Infirmary. A parcel of rolling fields is still extant behind the Infirmary to the east.

ARCHITECTS OF THE BUCHANAN COUNTY INFIRMARY[24]

The cornerstone of the Buchanan County Infirmary identifies the design as a collaboration between architects Walter Boschen-Ray Arnhold and Rudolph Meier. Nothing is known about the life of Ray Arnhold, but Walter Boschen and Rudolph Meier were both well-known designers in St. Joseph.

Walter Boschen

Walter Boschen was born in New Haven, Connecticut in 1881. His grandfather was a German count, and his father was a German immigrant to America. Boschen received architectural training at the University of Pennsylvania and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, France. After returning to the United States, he worked for the Indianapolis architecture firm Foltz and Parker inspecting YMCA buildings in New York. He also designed a YMCA. building in Indianapolis and the Atlanta Terminal Railroad Station.

Boschen moved to St. Joseph in 1908, where he entered into partnership with E.J. Eckel. Although he designed many buildings and enjoyed a successful partnership with Eckel, he ended the relationship in 1910 when he received an offer to practice in New York.

Boschen's departure was foiled by Milton Tootle, chairman of the First Presbyterian Church Building Committee. Tootle convinced Boschen to stay in St. Joseph to oversee the completion of the new church Boschen had designed and an offer of additional work at Tootle's estate. Boschen never left St. Joseph and enjoyed a prolific career, designing many buildings before he closed his office in 1955. Over the course of his 45-year career in St. Joseph, Boschen designed about thirty residences as well as churches, hospitals, schools, hotels, apartments, commercial buildings, and county buildings.

Walter Boschen died in 1959 at a St. Joseph nursing home.

Rudolph Meier

Rudolph Meier was born in Kansas in 1883. His father, Alfred Meier, was a Swiss-born architect who worked in

[24] Unless otherwise noted, biographical information about the building architects is from Toni M. Prawl, *Historic Architects of Saint Joseph, Missouri,* a report presented to the City of St. Joseph, Missouri Community Development, Zoning and Planning Department and the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1989. St. Joseph (Missouri) Public Library.

both St. Joseph and Atchison, Kansas after arriving in the United States in 1869. Around 1908, Rudolph joined his father as a draftsman, creating the architectural firm Meier & Meier. The firm practiced until 1922.[25] Rudolph Meier does not appear in the city directory after 1922, but the directories list his younger brother, Eugene Meier, also an architect, through 1939. The Meiers (together or separately) designed several notable buildings in St. Joseph, Missouri, including Noyes Hospital, the Lincoln Building, and North High School. They also designed Memorial Hall in Independence, Kansas in 1923 as the "Meier Brothers."[26]

LEHR CONSTRUCTION COMPANY – BUILDERS OF THE BUCHANAN COUNTY INFIRMARY

James Wesley Lehr founded the Lehr Construction Company in 1890. Born in Bremen, Indiana in 1855, Lehr became a carpenter and moved to Kansas in 1875. A few years later, he moved to Bethany, Missouri where he opened a furniture factory. When fire destroyed the factory in 1886, Lehr moved to St. Joseph, working for a local construction company before starting his own business in 1889. Lehr Construction Company remains a family-owned business in 2007.[27]

Lehr Construction Company has played a significant role in the growth of St. Joseph. They have constructed many notable buildings in and around the community, including factories, mills, packing plants, hospitals, churches, and schools. In addition to the Buchanan County Infirmary, some of their better-known projects include the Goetz Brewery, St. Joseph City Hall, the St. Joseph YWCA, the Christian Science Church, Everett School, Washington School, Blair School, the Goetz Brewery, and the Chase Candy Company.[28]

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[25] Shelly White and Penelope Kress, National Register of Historic Places Draft National Register Nomination *Everett School, Buchanan County, Missouri.*

[26] Elizabeth Rosin and Kristen Ottesen, National Register of Historic Places National Register Nomination *Memorial Hall, Montgomery County, Kansas.* Listed 10 June 2005.

[27] White and Kress.

[28] Ibid; Lehr Construction Company, *Lehr Construction Company* website, www.lehrconstruction.com.history/html; Internet; accessed 3 July 2007.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 3B, a part of Lot 3, North Village Manor Subdivision, as recorded in Plat Book 10 at Page 80 in the Office of the Buchanan County Recorder of Deeds.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the nominated property includes the entire parcel of land presently associated with the Buchanan County Infirmary.

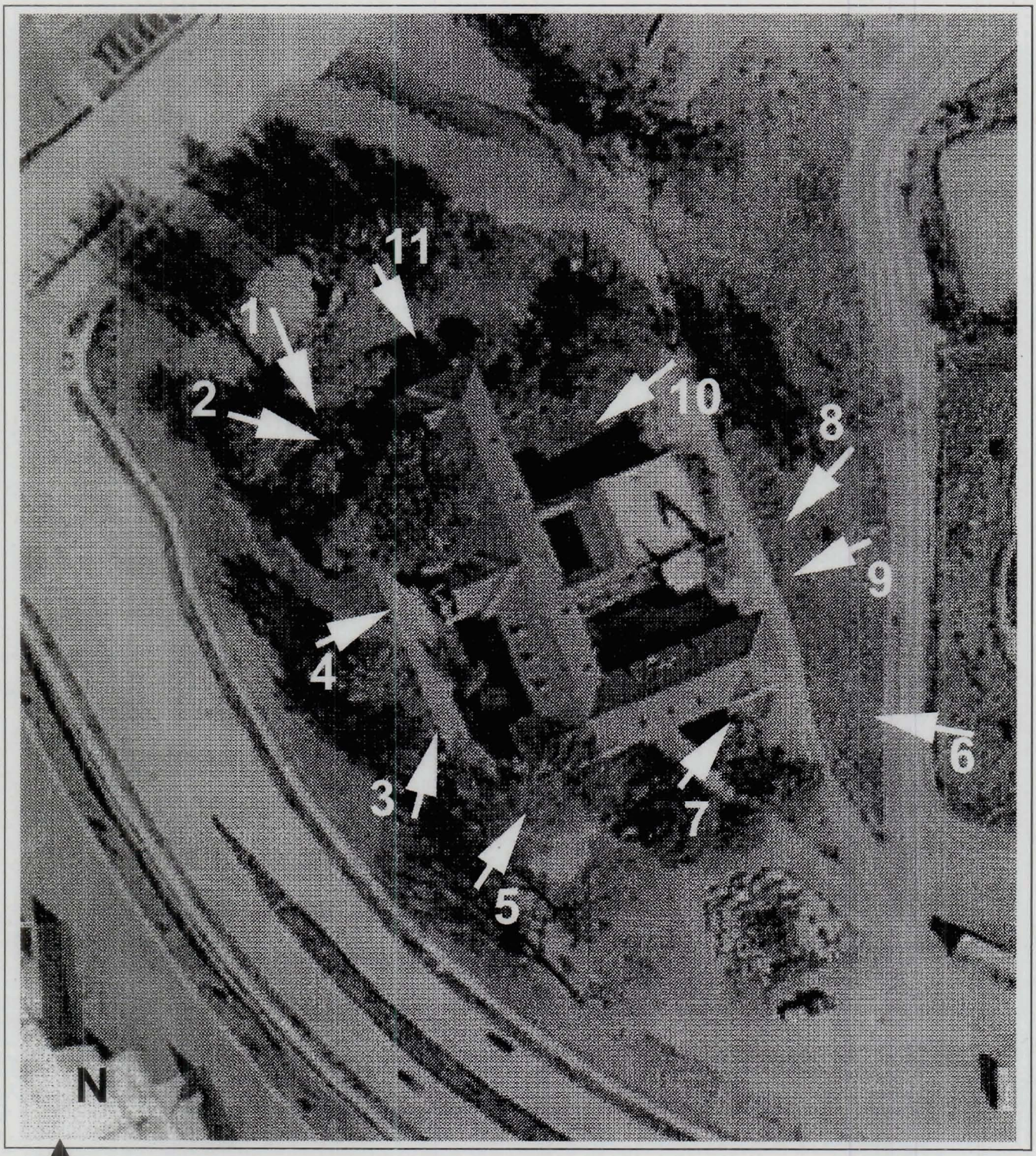
PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Photographer: Brad Finch
F-Stop Photography
Kansas City, Missouri

Date of Photographs: July 2007

Location of Original Photographs: Digital images submitted with nomination

Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
1.	View down drive across front of building	SE
2.	Front elevation	E
3.	Front elevation	NW
4.	Front elevation	NW
5.	Side (southeast) elevation	N
6.	View from field behind the building	NW
7.	View to field from side (southeast) of building	NE
8.	Rear elevation	SW
9.	Rear elevation	SW
10.	Rear elevation	SW
11.	Side (northwest) elevation	SE
12.	Portico on front, central porch	N
13.	Portico on side porch	NE
14.	Doors at side porch (typical)	NE
15.	Pediment on side (southeast) elevation	NW
16.	Central hallway inside main entrance	NE
17.	Main staircase	SE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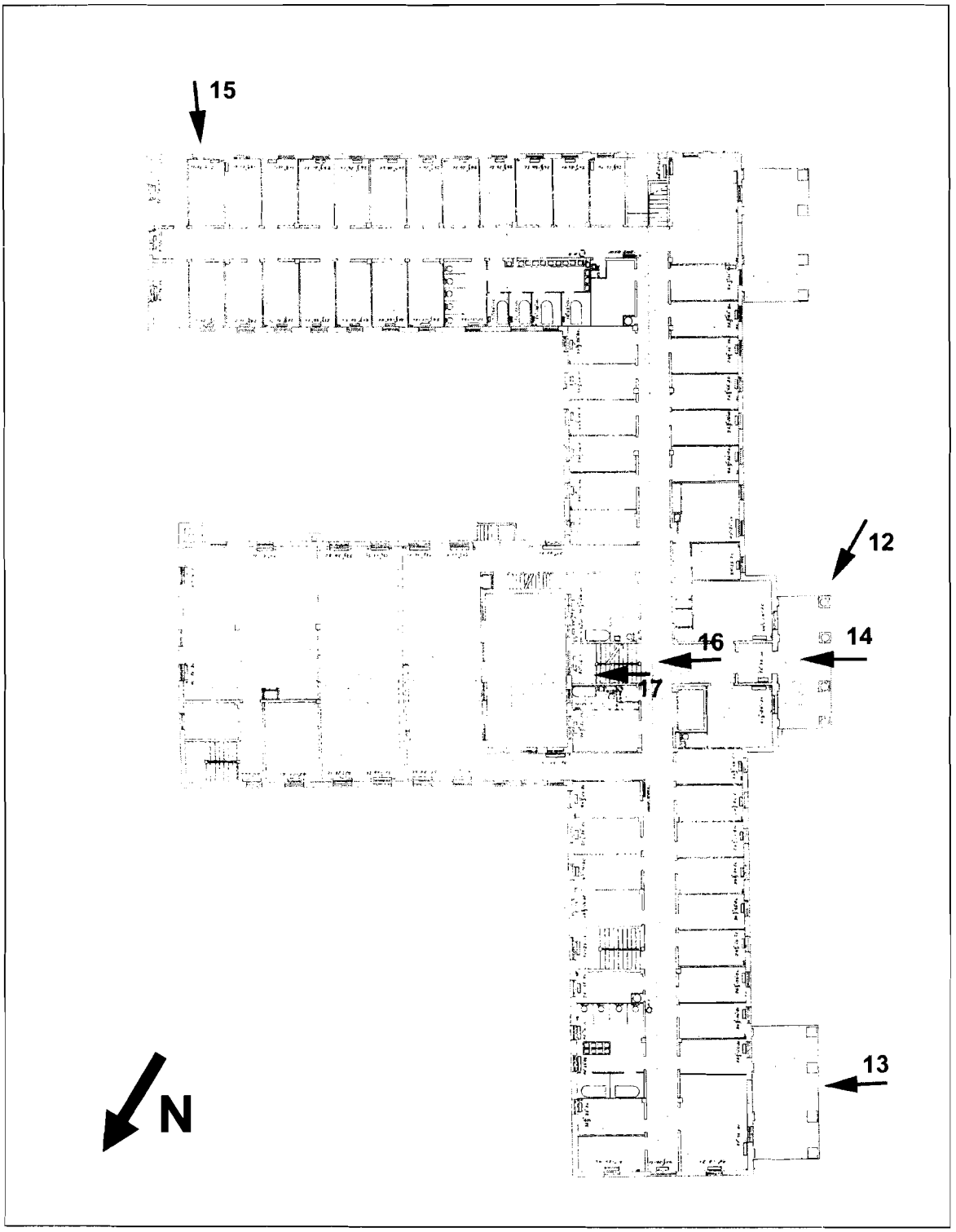
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Buchanan County Infirmary
Saint Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri
UTM Reference:
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FIRE

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