

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

<b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b>	
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DATE ENTERED	

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Gumbel Building

AND/OR COMMON Gumbel Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 801 Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN Kansas City

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
VICINITY OF #5 Hon. Richard L. Bolling  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Missouri

CODE 64106

COUNTY Jackson

CODE 095

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Jeanette McDonald Groves

STREET & NUMBER 5353 Ward Parkway

CITY, TOWN Kansas City

--- VICINITY OF

STATE Missouri 64112

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, OFFICE OF THE RECORDER OF DEEDS  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City Annex

STREET & NUMBER 415 East 12th Street

CITY, TOWN Kansas City

STATE Missouri 64106

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE 1. Preliminary Inventory of Architecture and Historic Sites.

DATE 1974  
--- FEDERAL --- STATE --- COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri

CITY, TOWN Kansas City

STATE Missouri 64106

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GUMBEL BUILDING

CONTINUATION SHEET

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- 
2. Historic Kansas City Architecture.  
1975 local  
City Hall, 26th Floor E.  
414 East 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
3. Kansas City, A Place in Time.  
1977 local  
City Hall, 26th Floor E.  
414 East 12th Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64106
- 

ITEM NUMBER 11 PAGE 1

2. Mr. James M. Denny (State Contact Person)  
Department of Natural Resources December 6, 1977  
Office of Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 176 314/751-4096  
Jefferson City Missouri 65102

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Gumbel Building, 801 Walnut Street, in Kansas City's Central Business District, is situated on a sloping, corner location. The six-story rectangular building is oriented with its main facade facing west. It has a frontage of 72 feet on Walnut Street and 110 feet on Eighth Street.

The building is divided into three horizontal divisions: 1) the first floor; 2) the second through fifth floors, and; 3) the sixth floor and cornice.

The first floor originally had a corner entrance as well as an entrance on the east facade. The corner entrance has been removed and the entire first floor modernized by the addition of plate glass display windows. The main entrance on the east facade is recessed, off center to the right, and marked by red marble pilasters. Another entrance is located at the east end of the north facade. A cornice with a drip mold divides the first and second floors.

The middle division of the building is the most ornate. This section is marked by square piers at the corners of the building. Where these piers join the fifth floor, ornate terra cotta work, topped with Roman eagles, is featured. The west and north facades of this section are faced with terra cotta and fenestrated with three-part "Chicago" style windows, set in slightly recessed bays. The piers between the windows are ornate and rounded, suggesting Roman fasces, the bundle of rods symbolic of power. These rounded piers terminate at the top of the fifth floor with ornate composite capitals surmounted by a decorative shield and wreath motif. A decorative string course with a drip mold separates the fifth and sixth floors.

The top division of the building continues the squared corner piers. Recessed "Chicago" style windows are used, separated by squared piers. An ornate Italianate copper cornice completes the building. The east and south facades of the building are faced with brick and fenestrated with paired rectangular windows. The terra cotta and brick facades of the building conceal its reinforced concrete construction, with iron columns and skeleton steel front and sides. The building was reinforced with wire cable, rather than the more common reinforcement bars. A cinder aggregate was used to reduce the weight of the concrete, but the building was constructed of sufficient strength to allow the addition of two stories in the future, although this has not been done. The expanded metal floors were covered with terrazzo and slate was used for the baseboards. All precautions were taken to make this building fireproof. Fifty-six thousand square feet of floor space are contained in the building.<sup>1</sup>

### FOOTNOTES

1. Western Contractor, 20 May 1903, p. 1.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1904

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John W. McKecknie

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gumbel Building, 801 Walnut, in Kansas City's Central Business District, is significant in that it is one of the earliest examples of reinforced concrete construction in the country. John W. McKecknie, the designer, was a significant Kansas City architect and a pioneer in the use of reinforced concrete construction.

Reinforced concrete was apparently introduced into the United States in 1870 by Ernest Ransome, superintendent of the Pacific Stone Company of San Francisco. In 1884 he acquired a patent on the use of twisted iron rods to reinforce concrete. The advantage to this means of construction was to eliminate the wall mass, substituting a framework of columns and floors, making possible large window areas. Early reinforced concrete buildings hid the means of construction by terra cotta slabs. Not until the Cincinnati architects, Elzner and Anderson, built the Terminal Warehouse in Kansas City in 1905, was the concrete exposed, displaying an interest in the aesthetic values of the material.

Skyscraper construction in steel had gained wide popularity in the United States because of its rapid assembly techniques. Reinforced concrete was touted as an alternative with proponents noting certain construction advantages. As each floor hardened, it could become the formwork of the floor above, decreasing the cost of scaffolding and proving an invaluable saver of space on sites bordered by busy streets. By 1905, textbooks on the principles of reinforced concrete construction appeared.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, the Gumbel Building of 1904 is clearly one of the earliest tall, reinforced concrete buildings, and John W. McKecknie a significant early user of this technique.<sup>2</sup>

McKecknie was born in Clarksville, Ohio, in 1862 and spent his early life in Wilmington, Ohio. He graduated from Princeton University in 1888 and then continued his architectural studies at Columbia University, New York. He came to Kansas City in 1896 and opened an architectural office. In 1915 he formed a partnership with Frank E. Trask, the firm being known as McKecknie and Trask. McKecknie died in 1934. Other examples of McKecknie's reinforced concrete work in Kansas City are the Montgomery Ward and Company Building of 1908 at the southwest corner of Nineteenth and Campbell Streets, and the Gloyd Building, 921 Walnut Street, of 1909.<sup>3</sup>

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The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." The Gumbel Building, therefore, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture," "Economics," and "Technology."

FOOTNOTES

1. Peter Collins, Concrete, The Vision of A New Architecture (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 63 and 86-87.
2. Donald Hoffmann, "Early Concrete Construction in Kansas City," Skylines and Midwest Architect, 15 (Dec.-Jan. 1965): 13-22.
3. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, 20 October 1934, p. 2.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Collins, Peter. Concrete, The Vision of a New Architecture, London: Faber and Faber, 1959.
- Hoffman, Donald "Early Concrete Construction in Kansas City." Skylines and Midwest Architect, 15 (Dec.-Jan. 1965): 13-22. (cntd.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	3,6,3	2,4,0	4,3	2,9	3,5,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

ALL E OF E LI WALNUT LOTS 80 81 AND 82 ROSS AND SCARRITTS ADD

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

1. Sherry Piland, Researcher

ORGANIZATION

Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri

DATE

December 6, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

26th Floor East, City Hall, 414 E. 12th Street

TELEPHONE

(816) 274-2555

CITY OR TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri 64106

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Department of Natural Resources  
and State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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3. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, 20 October 1934.
4. Western Contractor, 20 May 1903.



GUMBEL BUILDING  
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle  
"Kansas City, Mo." (1975)  
Scale 1:24,000

UTM Reference:  
15/363240/4329350

KANSAS CITY

K A V

**Photo Log:**

Name of Property: **Gumbel Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Paul Kivett**

Date

Photographed: **Circa 1971**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 3. NW corner of building, looking SE. View shows N façade on the right and W façade on the left.
- 2 of 3. NE corner of building, looking SW. View shows E façade on left, N façade on right.
- 3 of 3. S façade of the building. View looking NE.



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