

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

|                  |
|------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| RECEIVED         |
| DATE ENTERED     |

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Strassberger's Conservatory  
Southside Conservatory

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2302-2306 S. Grand

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

— VICINITY OF

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#3 - Hon. Richard Gephardt

STATE

Missouri

CODE

29

COUNTY

St. Louis City

CODE

510

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                   | STATUS  | PRESENT USE                            |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC             | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED                   | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE   | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED      | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: none |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 4215, Tower Grove Station

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri 63163

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Assessor's Office, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

1200 Market Street

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

STATE

Missouri 63101

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

1. City of St. Louis Historic Landmarks

DATE

1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Community Development Agency, City of St. Louis

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

STATE

Missouri

HR-8-300A  
11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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STRASSBERGER'S CONSERVATORY

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- 
2. Compton Heights Historic District, City of St. Louis, Historic Inventory  
September 20, 1977 Local  
Community Development Agency, City of St. Louis  
St. Louis Missouri
3. Missouri State Historical Survey  
1977 state  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City Missouri 65102
- 

ITEM NUMBER 11 PAGE 1

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey  
and State Contact Person  
Department of Natural Resources October 10, 1979  
Office of Historic Preservation 314/751-4096  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City Missouri 65102

# 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 (exterior) | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR (interior) | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

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

The Strassberger building was built in 1904-05 as a music conservatory, with commercial storefronts on the ground floor. Ground plan is L-shaped, with the main facade on Grand Boulevard and secondary entrances on Shenandoah. It is built up to the sidewalk on both Grand and Shenandoah. The building is three stories with a full basement. The southern two storefronts on Grand Avenue form the one-story "el" of the plan. The third floor is only one-third the area of the first two floors.

As originally constructed, the first floor housed seven storefronts, an eight-room residence, two offices, toilet and teaching room, and the entry to the conservatory above.

The second floor contained the performance hall and fifteen rooms used for teaching, wardrobe, toilets rooms, smoking and dressing rooms, and a 17' by 65' foyer.

The third floor contained a small hall and seven classrooms.

The basement held a dining hall, wardrobes, toilet rooms, "preparing room," kitchen and eight cellar rooms.

The exterior is in good condition. The interior is in fair condition, having suffered some water damage to finishes. The building is vacant and open to weather through broken windows.

Walls are brick masonry thirteen inches thick.

Foundations are rubble stone masonry, with cut stone facing above grade to the ground floor line on street facades.

Floor construction is 2X12 wood joists with wood flooring.

Roof construction is flat, with wood rafters and built-up roofing over the one- and three-story portions, and hipped with roll roofing and wood trusses over the second floor performance hall.

Plan dimensions are 64'-6" by 130'-10", plus a 27' one-story area on the south side. The main area of the basement, first and second floors is 9,468 square feet each. The third floor contains 3,200 square feet. Total building area is 30,663 square feet.

The performance hall has a twenty-foot ceiling height. Elsewhere, the ceiling heights are approximately thirteen feet.

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The interior has been changed very little except for ground floor storefronts. Major spaces are the entry hall and grand stair on the ground floor, foyer and performance hall on the second floor. The "ballroom" or performance hall has a seating capacity of approximately 450. A 2'8" high by 17' deep stage was added later. Also at that time some windows behind the stage were closed. The western bays of the second and third floors house offices and music practice rooms.

An advertisement for the large performance hall claimed it "consist of fine new stage sceneries, elaborate drop curtains, stage illumination, etc., very suitable for small operas and plays of any kind. White maple floor good for dancing, appropriate and fitted up for Lodges, and it acknowledged as the largest Lodges Hall in St. Louis, with large ceiling fans, well illuminated and ventilated." ("Reporter of the Strassberger's Conservatory of Music, Vol. 7, #8, Sept. 1907.)

Windows are rectangular on the street facades, with pairs of double hung wood sash and steel or cast iron lintels except for the performance hall windows, which have segmental brick arched heads. There are five windows along the west (Grand Avenue) facade and seven along the north (Shenandoah). Windows on the east and south sides have shallow segmental arched openings.

Storefronts along Grand Avenue have been altered with curtain-wall additions in the 1950's.

Ground floor storefronts have square cast iron columns at third points of each bay, steel angle lintels, and steel or cast iron bases. Storefront entries are recessed, with the returns wood panelled. Hardboard and plywood panelling now cover the vacant ground floor space. The cast iron columns bear the imprint of "Christopher Simpson, St. Louis, Mo."

Walls on the street facades are of hard-faced red pressed brick, in common bond. Mortar is colored red. Workmanship is excellent. Also on the street facades, molded white terra cotta and buff-colored brick is used decoratively in string courses at the second floor line, above the second and third floor windows, and below the cornice brackets. The string course at the second floor line consists of a projecting flat band above an egg and dart molding. The plain buff brick band above the second floor windows forms hoods above the segmental arches of the performance hall windows. The head of the third floor windows are given the most noteworthy decorative treatment of the building: shallow niches (recessed one course) are created above the windows by a round arch of buff-colored brick and terra cotta voissoirs, with the top course of the arches

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being a half-round molded shape. Inside the niches are placed shallow relief terra cotta busts of famous composers. Each of the eight busts is unique.

The terra cotta work is a combination of specially-designed elements, such as the pediments and busts of composers, and catalog items such as the shapes used for string courses.

The three-story portion of the building is capped by a pressed metal cornice on terra cotta brackets and, above the cornice, a terra cotta balustrade between brick piers, with a terra cotta and brick armorial cartouche in the center of the west facade. The decorative effect is somewhat neo-classical and a good example of much of the St. Louis German-American brick masonry of the period. The style has been called "German Classical Revival."

Other notable decorative details are the pedimented entries on Shenandoah Avenue. Terra cotta brackets on brick pilasters carry a triangular terra cotta pediment at the western entry, and a rounded pediment at the eastern entry. Also, at the western entry, a metal canopy with a hanging glass "fringe," partially gone, has been added. "Strassberger" is lettered on the glass. This entry leads to the performance hall.

Early photographs and renderings show awnings on the storefronts. No sign of these remain.

The architect was O.J. Wilhelmi, born in St. Louis and educated in Germany. Albert H. Haeseler was the contractor.

The cost was "over \$72,000" ("Reporter of the Strassberger's Conservatory of Music," Vol. 5, #6, Sept. 1905) for the building as completed in 1905. The two storefronts in on the south were not built until the following year.

The design of the Conservatory apparently changed during construction. A newspaper article illustrated with a rendering describes the building as having only two stories, with the busts of composers in niches above the second floor windows. Cost was projected to be \$60,000. The partial third story was apparently a change to the original design to gain additional classroom space.

# SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD      | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |   |  |
|-------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                       |  |
| 100-1499    | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                        |  |
| 1500-1599   | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                      |  |
| 1600-1699   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |  |
| 1700-1799   | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC       | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                        |  |
| 1800-1899   | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                 |  |
| 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 1904-05

BUILDER/ARCHITECT A.H. Haeseler, Builder  
Otto J. Wilhelmi, Architect

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Strassberger's Conservatory is a rare example of a building type important to the cultural life of St. Louis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was patterned after German conservatories familiar to many St. Louisans who had recently emigrated from Germany. It was part of an effort to preserve their traditions of forming singing societies, bands, orchestras and other musical societies.

The Conservatory was built in 1904-05 and dedicated in October, 1905 as the Southside Conservatory of Music. The architect was Otto J. Wilhelmi, born in Missouri and educated in Germany. The builder was A.H. Haeseler. The style is German Classical Revival, and the construction is a good example of St. Louis brick masonry craftsmanship and ornament of the turn of the century.

The founder Clemens Strassberger was born in Saxony, Germany in 1859. He was a member of a military band and travelled in Europe with bands and orchestras before emigrating to America in 1880. In St. Louis, before founding the conservatory, he was a solo cornetist with two orchestras.<sup>1</sup> The conservatory first opened in 1866 in Strassberger's home. In 1892 the conservatory moved to 2235 Warren Street on the North Side. A year later, larger quarters were acquired at 22nd Street and St. Louis Avenue. The first South Side branch opened in 1901 at Grand and Cleveland Avenues. The South Side branch moved to the subject building in October, 1905. This building was the first designed and built especially for the conservatory and became its headquarters. The opening was reported with illustrated articles in several English and German-language newspapers in St. Louis.

The music conservatories, including the Strassberger, reached their peak in the first decades of the 20th century. The population was becoming prosperous, so time and money were available to middle class families for leisure and educational pursuits; the streetcar system made commuting convenient; and learning to sing or to play an instrument was a popular goal. Strassberger's Conservatory grew to three branches, under the direction of Bruno Strassberger, brother to Clemens. Clemens was "touring Europe" for his health in 1907 and was not mentioned again in "The Reporter" of the conservatory.

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The conservatories declined somewhat in popularity and prestige during the 1920's and even more so in the Depression of the 30's. Amateur music was becoming less popular as records, radio and professional performances became more prevalent. An editor of "The Reporter" of Strassberger's Conservatory writes in 1929: "The vital question of the present day which confronts the instructor in music is: To what extent have social conditions and the perfection of mechanical and musical devices affected the desire for 'an average musical education.'"<sup>2</sup> Although an adjacent article lists several former students now successfully employed in radio work, the tone of the editorial implies that radio had already had a devastating effect upon conservatories of music.

In addition to its importance as a unique building type, the Strassberger Conservatory forms part of a continuous two-to three-story commercial frontage along Grand Boulevard which would be significantly diminished in character if the Strassberger were missing. Immediately south of the Strassberger is the Shenandoah Theater, originally a professional stage theater built at the turn of the century, and converted to a movie theater in the 1940's. The Tower Grove East Neighborhood Association, which owns the Strassberger and the Shenandoah, plans to rehabilitate the buildings together for use as a performing arts center. The Shenandoah's theater and the Strassberger's performance hall would provide a combination of spaces not readily available elsewhere in the area. Considerable interest has been expressed by local and regional performing arts groups.

FOOTNOTES

1. "C.G. Conn's Truth," Dec. 1890, clipping in Strassberger Scrapbook, Missouri Historical Society.
2. Source: Missouri Historical Society.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

## Books

*Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis*, Wm. Hyde, ed. (The Southern History Co., N.Y., Louisville and St. Louis: 1899) Vol. III, p. 1607.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.29 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME "Cahokia, ILL-MO"

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 | 740300 | 4276880

B    |    |   

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C    |    |   

D    |    |   

E    |    |   

F    |    |   

G    |    |   

H    |    |   

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 010 of St. Louis City Block 1443; Lot 010 is located on the Southeast Corner of the Intersection of Shenandoah Avenue and Grand Boulevard, fronting 135' on Shenandoah on the North, 92'-9½" on Grand on the West and 92'-9½" on a public alley on the East.

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. Donald T. Brubeck, Architect

June 15, 1979

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Brubeck, Architects

314/361-0685

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

4961 McPherson

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

St. Louis

Missouri

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles.  
(M.I.T. Press, Cambridge: 1969).

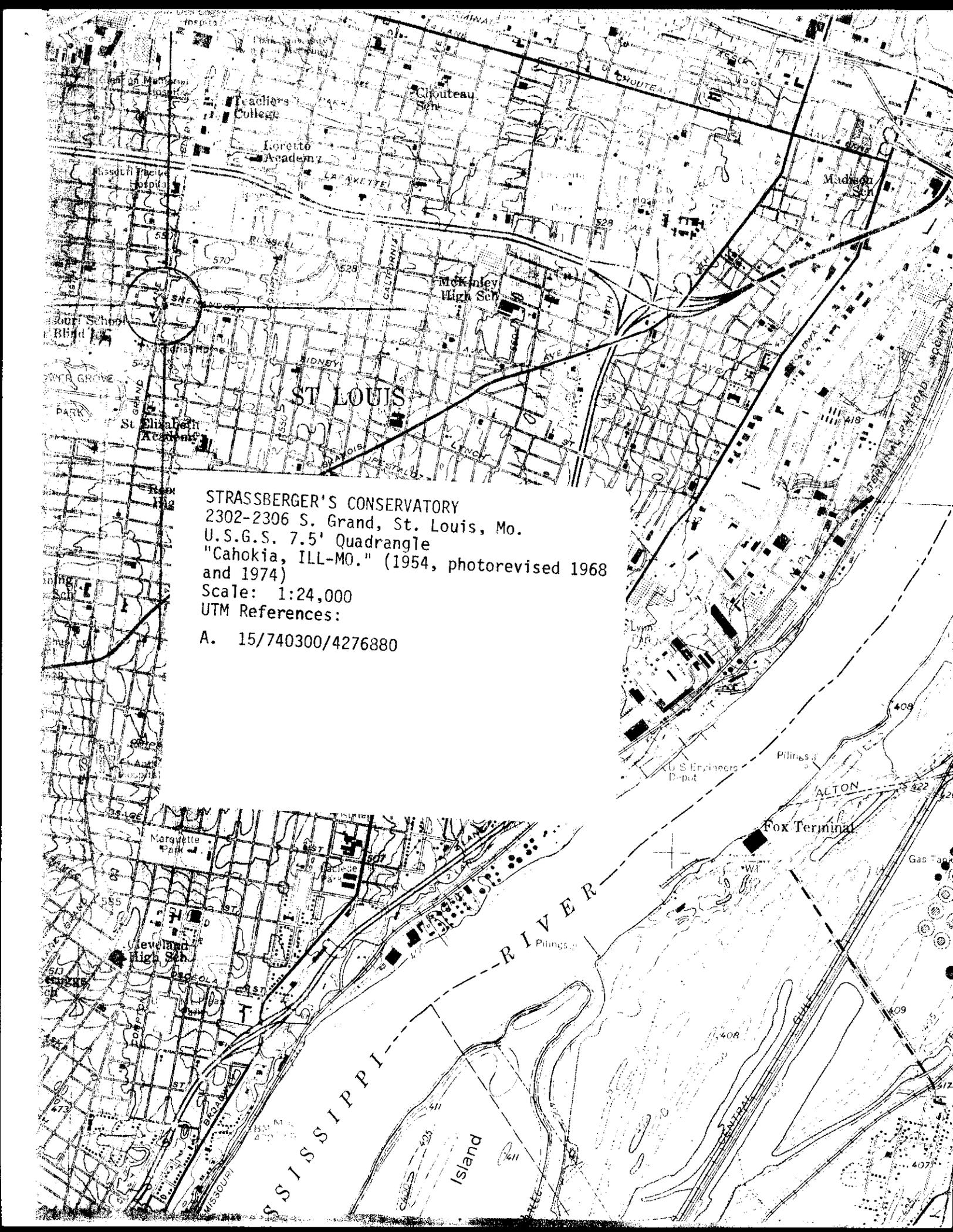
Periodicals

"The Reporter of Strassberger's Conservatory of Music," ed. J.W. Sneed et.al.  
(St. Louis: 1900-1929). Source: Missouri Historical Society, Strassberger  
file.

Other

Missouri Historical Society scrapbook file: "Strassberger Conservatory of  
Music, St. Louis, programs of concerts, clippings, etc. 1888-1932. 5 vols."

"Strassberger Center Project" feasibility study prepared by John D. Lark &  
Associates, Architects and Planners, with W. Phillip Cotton, Jr., Architect,  
St. Louis, Mo. 1978.



STRASSBERGER'S CONSERVATORY  
 2302-2306 S. Grand, St. Louis, Mo.  
 U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle  
 "Cahokia, ILL-MO." (1954, photorevised 1968  
 and 1974)  
 Scale: 1:24,000  
 UTM References:  
 A. 15/740300/4276880

subj.: Strassbergers Conservatory  
St. Louis, Mo.

photog.: Donald T. Brubeck

date: 3/17/79

neg.: Donald T. Brubeck  
4961 McPherson  
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

view: from nw

photo no.: 1 of 4



subj.: Strassbergers Conservatory  
St. Louis, Mo.

photog.: Donald T. Brubeck

date: 3/17/79

neg.: Donald T. Brubeck  
4961 McPherson  
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

view: from sw

photo no.: 2 of 4



subj.: Strassbergers Conservatory  
St. Louis, Mo.

photog.: Donald T. Brubeck

date: 3/17/79

neg.: Donald T. Brubeck  
4961 McPherson  
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

view: from sw

photo no.: 3 of 4



subj.: Strassbergers Conservatory  
St. Louis, Mo.

photog.: Donald T. Brubeck

date: 3/17/79

neg.: Donald T. Brubeck  
4961 McPherson  
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

view: from ene

photo no.: 4 of 4

