

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Old May Company Department Store

and/or common "The Dollar Store"

2. Location

street & number 509-23 Washington Avenue

not for publication

city, town St. Louis

vicinity of

state Missouri

code 29

county City of St. Louis

code 510

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Kimble A. Cohn and James J. Dwyer, Jr.

street & number 727 North First Street

city, town St. Louis

vicinity of

state MO 63102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis City Hall

street & number Market Street and Tucker Boulevard

city, town St. Louis

state MO 63103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1. Architectural Survey of the Central Business District, St. Louis has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 1975; revised April 1977; February 1982 federal state county local

Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

depository for survey records 721 Olive Street, Room 1113

city, town St. Louis

state MO 63101

Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 1983.

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- 2. City Landmark of the City of St. Louis
May 1978
Heritage and Urban Design Commission
Room 416 City Hall
St. Louis, MO 63103

- 3. Missouri State Historical Survey
April 1983
Historic Preservation Program
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Item number 11

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- 2. James M. Denny, Chief, Nominations-Survey
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
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 type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The complex of buildings on Washington and Lucas Avenues now commonly known as "The Dollar Store" was built in stages between circa 1875 and 1905. (See Site Plan.) In spite of years of neglect, the complex -- first joined under one roof by the May Company in 1905 -- is of preeminent architectural significance as the only remaining Commercial Palace from the years of St. Louis' most dramatic growth. Although the basic building material in the complex is brick, the elevations on Washington Avenue are Bedford stone (painted) and cast iron. Stories range from five to seven but the overall height of the complex is approximately 80 feet throughout. The monumental entrance bay from 1898 enhanced the Washington Avenue facade; the first story storefront modifications are non-contributing.

The earliest building, the Bradford-Martin Building at the northeast corner of Washington Avenue and Sixth Street, can be seen in Plate #21 from Compton & Dry's 1875 bird's-eye perspectives of St. Louis. (Photo #1) Although Compton & Dry attributed the design to Major Francis D. Lee, the building was most probably the work of Lee with Thomas B. Annan.¹ (A letterhead from 1888 (Photo #2) documents the easternmost store of the original four bay, three bay, four bay, four bay composition.) In 1876, a building permit was issued to Mary A. Finney for the construction of a 30 foot wide, five story building at 509 Washington Avenue. The estimated cost was \$18,668; the architect is not known. In 1888, a building permit was issued to Meyer-Bannerman & Co. wholesale saddlery for the construction of a seven story building at the southeast corner of Sixth Street and Lucas Avenue. Although the architect is not known, the Meyer-Bannerman Building is remarkably similar to the 1889 Merchants' Laclede Building by L. Cass Miller and S. D. Hatch.²

A meticulous, thirty-nine page book of specifications printed by St. Louis architects Weber & Groves in 1898 for the conversion of 509-523 Washington Avenue for the D. Crawford & Company provides invaluable information about the first major alterations. All existing interior wood and iron columns were removed and footings under new columns enlarged. All interior brick walls dividing the Bradford-Martin Building and separating it from the Finney Building were removed. All the original cast iron storefronts were removed in the Bradford-Martin Building and an elaborate 27 foot wide entrance bay complete with glass dome was carved into the center of the Washington Avenue elevation. New stonework, a "fair quality of Blue or Buff Bedford," was to match the existing and the entire building given three coats of paint. Marble and mahogany finishes were used in the main entrance and entrance vestibules on Sixth Street and 509 Washington Avenue.

Crawford's dry goods occupied the building for only six years. In 1904, the property was purchased by David May who hired architect Will Levy to design an addition east of the Meyer-Bannerman Building on Lucas Avenue and close the alley with a 23 foot building joining the Bradford-Martin and the Meyer-Bannerman Buildings on Sixth Street. A photograph circa 1906 (Photo #13) captures the heyday of the May Company at that location. At the right is the former Finney Building at 509 Washington with its crowning pediment and eagle. Looking north on Sixth Street, the fill-in architecture between the old Bradford-Martin and Meyer-Bannerman Buildings is visible. At the far left is the old Union Market.

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The May Company merged with Wm. Barr Dry Goods Co. and moved into the Railway Exchange Building in 1913. In 1919, the zigzag fire escape which crosses the front elevation of the Finney Building was added. Prior to 1960, portions of the cornice which wrapped the Bradford-Martin Building were removed; sometime after 1960, the balustrades at the Washington Avenue entrance bay were discarded. Gypson block interior walls were added as the complex was gradually redivided into smaller shops.

Today, the elegant Victorian proportions of the Finney Building (1876) at 509 Washington can still be discerned even though the cornice and crowning pediment are gone. (Photo #4) Above the altered storefront is one of only two remaining curtain wall cast iron fronts left in St. Louis. Inside the corner piers, slender shafts ringed with shallow moldings and bands of closely placed spheres rise to crocket capitals. To the left the understated Italianate lines of the five story Bradford-Martin Building (circa 1875) rise above the collection of signs and storefront modifications. The stone facade is divided above the second, third and fourth stories by stringcourses underlined by a guilloche pattern at the second story and by a fret pattern at the third and fourth stories. Molded arches spring from molded capitals to frame the openings. Wreaths decorate the spandrels of the second and third stories; rosettes, the fourth and fifth stories. The ten bay brick wall, painted white, on Sixth Street is undecorated except for two small lion's heads which held the canopy above the entrance. Stone imposts, plinths and sill courses can be seen in Photo #3. The 1905 infill which joined the Bradford-Martin and Meyer-Bannerman Buildings is visible in Photos #3 and #5. A comparison of the two photographs suggests that the compound arched recesses which mimic the openings in the Bradford-Martin Building were bricked-in from the outset.

The Meyer-Bannerman Building (1888), most recently the home of Thomas Market (Photos #5 and #6), has been treated to three colors of paint which obliterate the rich contrast in building materials. Flanking the diagonally placed corner entrance, tall hexagonal granite plinths surmounted by molded bases support paint incrustated polished rose granite shafts which in turn support stone capitals, abaci and console table. Vegetal patterns decorate the spandrel above the entrance arch which is partially hidden by a shed roofed insert. To the right a metal cornice which "unified" the complex for client May disturbs the balance of the original High Victorian elevation. Asymmetrical and more lavishly ornamented than the eight bay elevation on Lucas Avenue, the Sixth Street facade focused on the fourth bay from the corner where brick strapwork decorates piers at the third and fourth stories and punctuates the large, segmentally arched window at the seventh floor.

Blocks of sandstone with traces of vegetal patterns and molded brick accent piers at the second, third and fifth floors on both elevations. A sandstone string-course wraps the building between the fifth and sixth floors. Ornamental metal mullions appear at all openings above the first floor with the exception of the two narrow bays on either side of the corner. Most sills have been capped with iron. All seventh floor windows with the exception of the fourth bay from the corner on

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sixth street have recessed brick corbelling below a decorative metal panel. The conical tower roof visible in Photo #3 has been removed as has a wide horizontal band between the parapet wall and the battlements. The three easternmost bays on the Lucas Avenue elevation originally contained an entrance -- perhaps for carriages. The other five bays are marked by five piers with four, rough-cut granite blocks at the base and decorative metal caps at the second story.

In November 1905, two months after the issuance of a permit which authorized the demolition of a two story structure at 512-514 Lucas, a permit was issued to the May Company for "alterations" to a brick store. The following day, however, the St. Louis Daily Record announced plans by the May Company to construct a six story store measuring 165 feet by 226 feet at 514-518 Lucas. Those dimensions are approximately the size of the entire complex including the six story building which was in fact built at 512-14 Lucas. The Daily Record listed Will Levy as architect with James Black Masonry and Contracting Co. as builders. Incomplete and contradictory records notwithstanding, the building now occupied by the "Jim & K Bar" was probably designed by Will Levy and built as an addition for the May Company in 1905.

The red brick addition of six stories was clearly designed as an extension to the seven story Meyer-Bannerman Building. The battlements and horizontal elements of the three upper stories of the older building were repeated although simple corbelling above sixth story windows was substituted for the more elaborate corbel table and metal panel treatment on the Meyer-Bannerman. Brick spandrels, recessed behind brick piers, are trimmed with stone at the third and fourth floors. The original storefront has been modified by non-contributing glass block and frame in-fill.

FOOTNOTES

¹Lee, a successful architect from Charleston, South Carolina, came to St. Louis after a distinguished record in the Confederate Army. In 1874, he formed a partnership with St. Louis architect Thomas B. Annan. The firm won the competition for a new Merchants' Exchange Building on Third Street that year. The Merchants' Exchange and all other known buildings by the firm have been demolished. Annan continued in practice after Lee's death in 1885.

²L. Cass Miller studied in Europe for three years before moving to New York in 1878 where he became associated with Stephen D. Hatch. Miller moved to St. Louis in 1881 but apparently maintained the association with Hatch. Their Merchants' Laclede Building (1889) at the southwest corner of Fourth and Olive Streets features a diagonally placed corner entrance, similar corbelling, a conical roof above the seven story round entrance bay, the same contrast of building materials and basic relationships of vertical and horizontal elements as in the design for the 1888 Meyer-Bannerman Building.

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 type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 c. 1875; 1876; 1888; 1904-05
Builder/Architect Lee & Annan; unknown; Miller & Hatch; Will Levy (respectively)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old May Company Department Store qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and C and is significant in the following areas: **ARCHITECTURE:** Designed in stages between circa 1875 and 1905 (see Site Plan), the five to seven story complex is significant as the only extant St. Louis example of a turn-of-the-century Commercial Palace. The complex gains additional significance by virtue of the chronological evolution of its parts which (though adapted) reflect changing tastes, attitudes and uses: The Bradford-Martin Building (circa 1875) is the only Italianate commercial building to survive from the post-Civil War building boom west of Fourth Street. It is also the only extant building in St. Louis designed by architect Francis D. Lee with Thomas B. Annan. The Finney Building (1876) is one of only two cast iron curtain wall storefronts left in St. Louis. The Meyer-Bannerman Building (1888) is a rare St. Louis example of High Victorian commercial buildings and one of only two designed by L. Cass Miller with Stephen D. Hatch. Although some architectural elements have been lost, the complex retains the essential physical features which convey its historic and architectural integrity. **COMMERCE:** The evolution of the complex parallels the growth and development of retailing in St. Louis and the West from the small jobbers in 1875 to the first conversion for a major local dry goods company in 1898 to the headquarters of the nation's largest retailer in 1905. During the years the May Company occupied the building, David May's enormously successful family partnership was dissolved and the company incorporated with common stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange in early 1911.

Inflated U.S. Census figures for 1870 placed St. Louis population at more than 310,000 -- a total which prevented Chicago from becoming the fourth in national rank order.¹ Downtown in 1870 stretched in a narrow band along the edge of the Mississippi River with banks, hotels and commercial buildings located near the Court-house on Fourth Street. The 1872 decision made in Washington, D.C. to locate the new Post Office and Custom House on a city block between Eighth and Ninth Streets was greeted locally with lawsuits, outrage and lampoons. Businessmen considered the location too far west and residents in the area were rightfully concerned about their neighborhood but the site was obtained by the government in 1874 and excavation commenced. That same year saw the opening of Eads Bridge which belatedly brought rails across the Mississippi River at St. Louis and Washington Avenue, the approach to the bridge, became the gateway to the city.

By 1875, commercial buildings and hotels had been built on Washington Avenue as far west as Eighth Street. (Photo #1) The Martin-Bannerman Building (523-11 Washington, circa 1875) attracted tenants who dealt in wholesale hats, caps, straw-goods, furs, gloves and boots as well as wholesale and retail china. The cast iron Finney Building (509 Washington), constructed in 1876, was the home of Pratt, Simmons & Krausnick -- St. Louis' oldest jobbers of millinery and fancy goods and manufacturers

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and trimmers of hats. The Meyer-Bannerman Building was built in 1888 at a strategic location across the street on Lucas Avenue from Union Market. In addition to their wholesale saddle business, a fireproof horse collar factory was located in the basement as late as 1897.

The construction in 1880 of the William Barr dry goods company building (demolished) on a city block between Sixth and Seventh signalled a change in retail marketing techniques and volume. Construction during that decade of large wholesale and manufacturing houses west of Sixth Street on Washington Avenue provided a handy resource for the new department stores which could buy in quantity and under-price small retailers. D. Crawford & Co., founded in 1866 by D. Crawford and A. Russell, had grown large enough by 1878 to commission an ornate three story building (demolished) on a quarter block at Fifth and Franklin. Twenty years later D. Crawford hired Weber & Groves to convert the Martin-Bannerman and Finney Buildings for their new headquarters. New facilities included a complete cold storage plant, a cafe with a steel kitchen constructed on the roof so as to reduce cooking odors in the cafe and a free nursery. Among other conveniences,

and one that is thoroughly appreciated, is the Ladies' Waiting Room, neatly laid out in a cool and pleasant part of the building, and equipped with all such conveniences, as Stationery, Telephone, Messenger Calls, Easy Chairs, Couches, and such other conveniences, as appeal to the lady buyer who is tired, who wishes to write a note, await an appointment, or has some similar reason for needing the use of a private spot in the center of a busy city, during the hurry and bustle of business hours. Among other evidences that show the thoughtfulness and care expended upon the needs of the patrons of D. Crawford & Co., is a Sub Post Office and Money Order Department, a branch office of the American Express Co., Notary Public, Hair Dressing and Manicuring Parlors, and an office where Gas and Water Bills can be paid, thus avoiding a special trip to the office of the company.²

Flags, flying from ten, twenty-foot flagpoles with brass balls and pulleys atop the roof beckoned local customers and the large out-of-town market attracted by the nearby wholesale business.

D. Crawford & Co. was purchased in 1904 by David May who had opened his first store at age 29 in Leadville, Colorado, in 1877. May emigrated from Germany in 1867 and clerked his way to a partnership in a Hartford, Indiana, clothing store. On a fishing trip in the Rockies, he heard about the discovery of silver at Leadville and opened a store in a canvas shack to sell copper-riveted Levi overalls and red woolen underwear to miners. The business quickly expanded to Pueblo, Cripple Creek and other mining communities. In 1888, May bought a clothing store in Denver; within a few years he and three brothers-in-law opened stores in Cleveland and St. Louis.

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By 1900, May Company was the largest retailer in the nation. The 1904-05 expansion by May of the Crawford Company to include the Meyer-Bannerman Building and addition to the east was touted: "The up-to-date Department Store at Washington, Sixth and Lucas is one of the points of interest in St. Louis. A beautiful restaurant and fifty different stores are under this one roof."³ The family partnership was dissolved in 1910 with the incorporation of the May Department Stores Company; common stock was listed on the New York Stock Exchange early in 1911. That stock has paid continuous quarterly cash dividends ever since -- longer than any other department store company on the Exchange.

May acquired Barr's store in 1911 and moved to the first eleven floors of the new Railway Exchange Building in 1913. Today, the May Company owns 124 department stores, 1,291 shoe shops, discount Venture stores and is the third largest department store chain in the country. The company's downtown St. Louis store, still located in the Railway Exchange Building, is the only profitable department store in downtown. Its only remaining competitor, the financially troubled Stix, Baer & Fuller Company, is located immediately west of the Old May Company Building on Washington Avenue. In recent years that stretch of Washington Avenue has become identified as a seedy, low-rent district in need of renewal. Fortunately, the "renewal" of the Old May Company complex which contemplated demolition is no longer a threat. The complex was designated an official Landmark of the City of St. Louis in 1978 and a partnership with experience in restoration and development has gradually acquired the bits and pieces of the complex held by separate owners.

FOOTNOTES

¹Federal census takers indebted to William McKee of the Missouri Democrat withheld St. Louis' 1870 figures until Chicago's 298,000 total had been announced. The U.S. Census of 1880 reported a St. Louis total of only 350,318 in spite of a major boundary expansion and continued growth since 1870.

²D. Crawford & Co., Crawford's Correct Guide (St. Louis: D. Crawford & Co., Fall and Winter, 1900-01, n.p.)

³St. Louis Today (St. Louis: Robert A. Reid, c. 1907), p. 34.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Granite City, IL/MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	7	4	4	7	11	10	4	2	79	3	2	10
Zone	Easting				Northing								

B

Zone	Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Old May Company Department Store is located in City Block 120 and is bounded by Washinton Avenue on the south, Sixth Street on the west, Lucas Avenue on the north and ~~the western property line of 503 Washington 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 © Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., 1983.

name/title 1. Carolyn Hewes Toft, Executive Director

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date 18 April 1983

street & number 721 Olive Street, Room 1113 telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis, state MO 63101

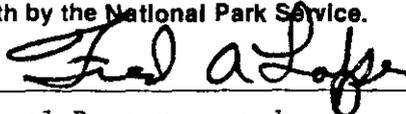
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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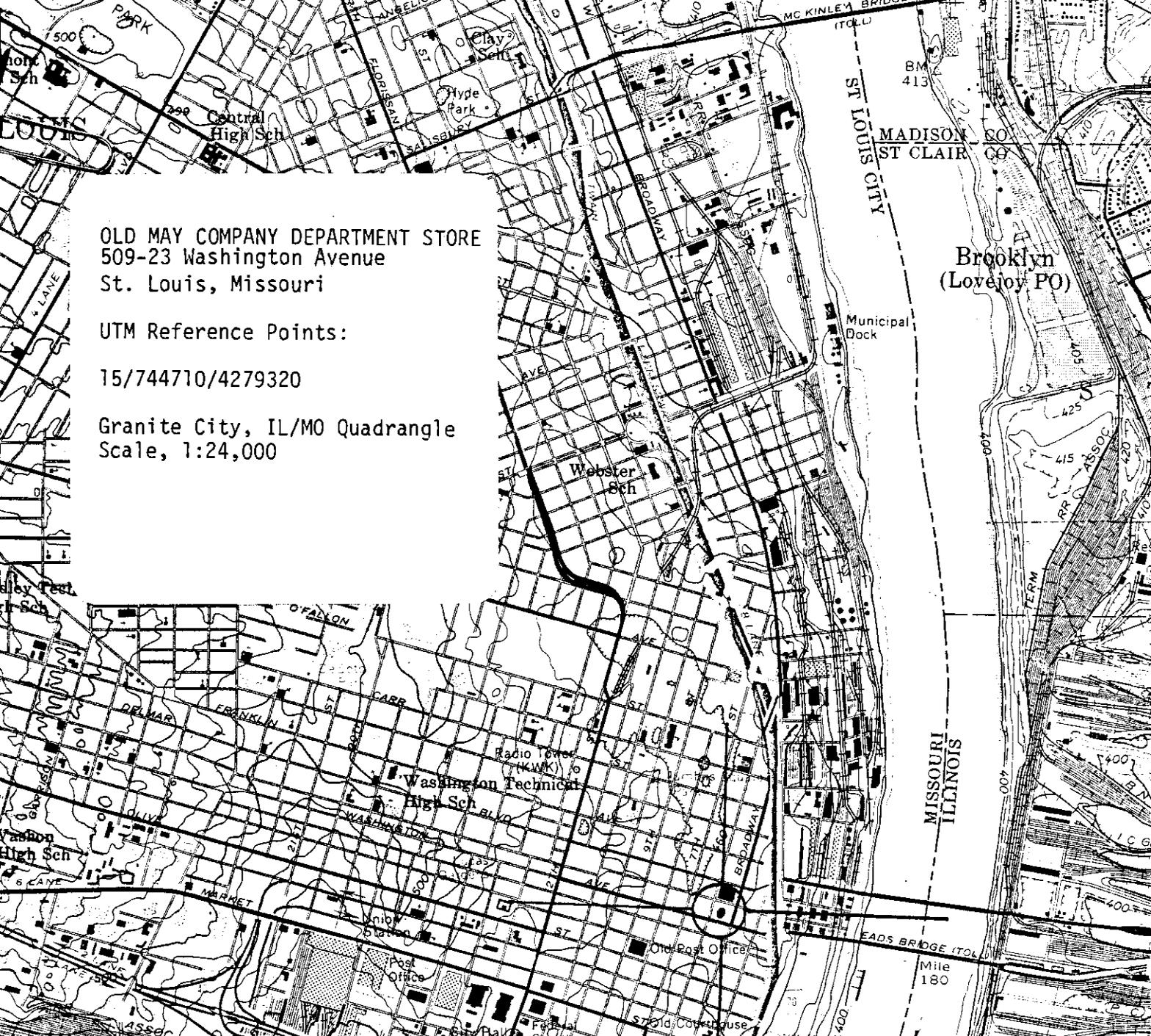
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St. Louis, Missouri. Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. Photocopy of letter from E. E. Rainwater, President -- Merchants' Terminal Railway Co. to Col. Henry Flad, President -- Board of Public Improvement, 1888.

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OLD MAY COMPANY DEPARTMENT STORE
 509-23 Washington Avenue
 St. Louis, Missouri

UTM Reference Points:

15/744710/4279320

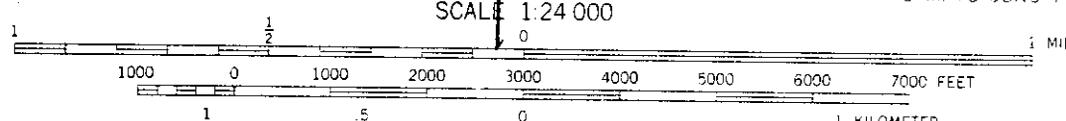
Granite City, IL/MO Quadrangle
 Scale, 1:24,000

Brooklyn
 (Lovejoy PO)

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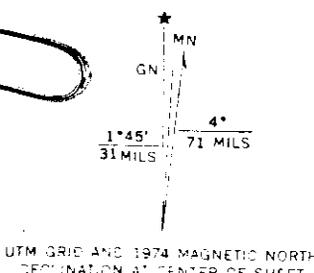
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SCALE 1:24 000

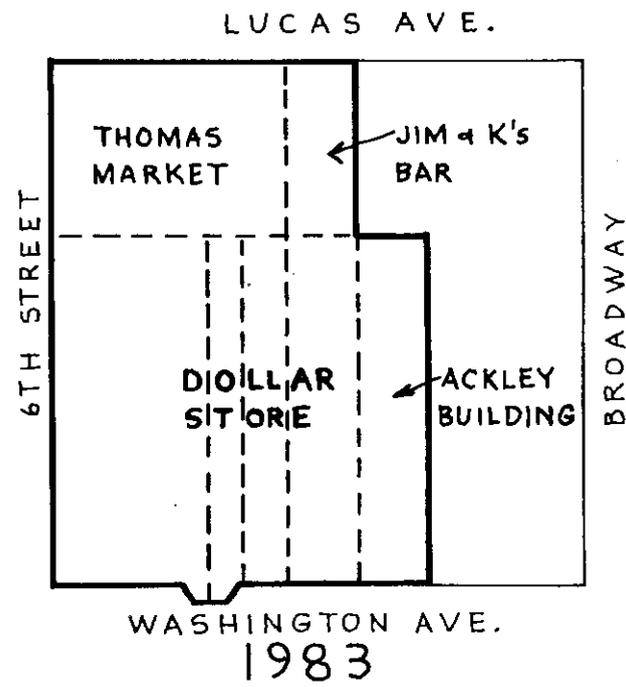
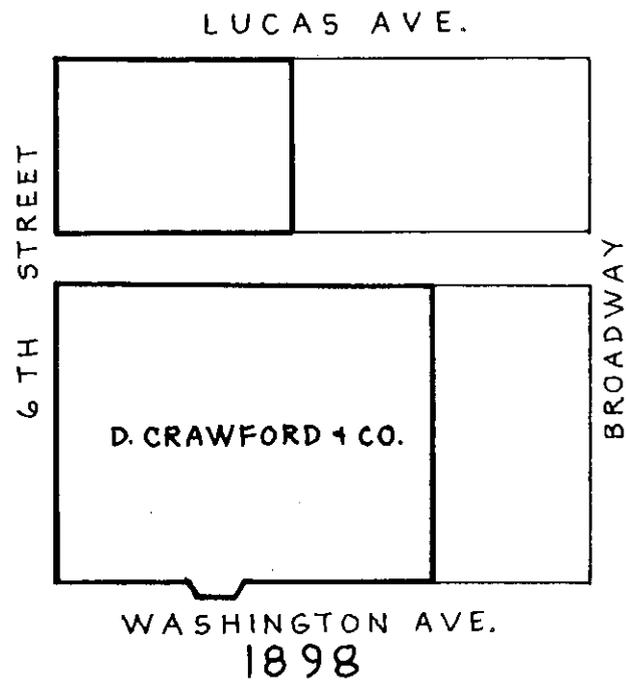
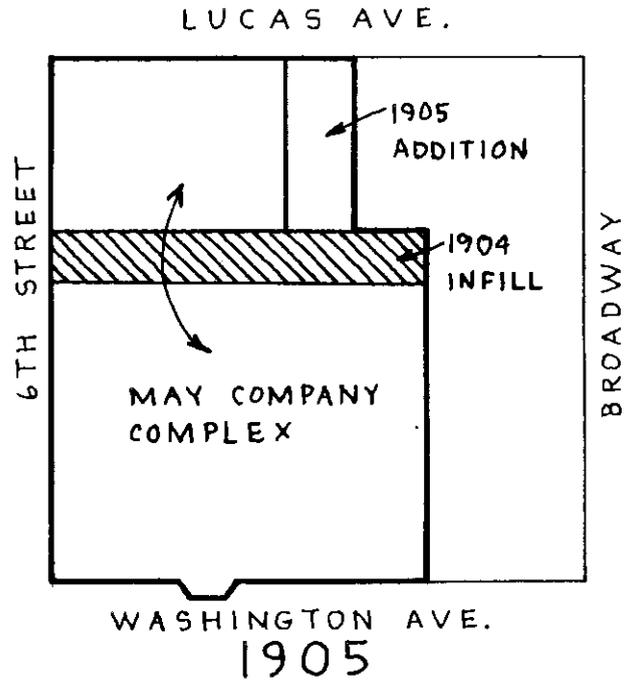
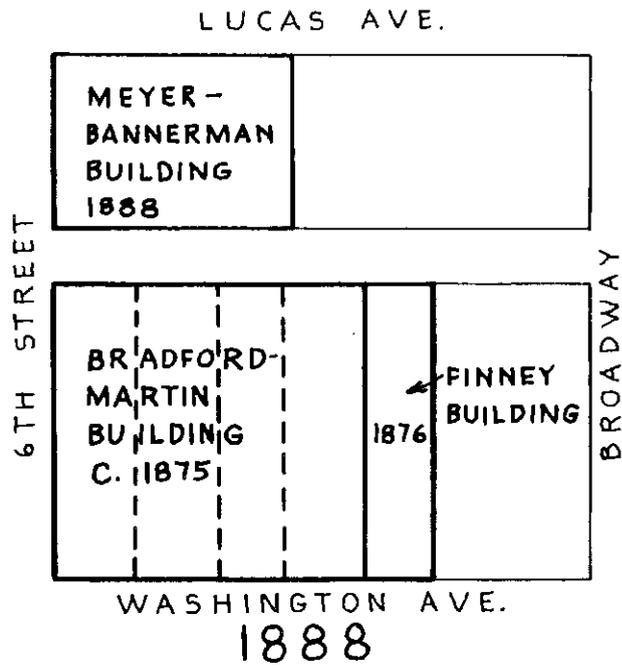


CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
 DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801.
 AND BY THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION
 MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ROLLA, MISSOURI 65401
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



SITE PLAN: OLD MAY CO. DEPARTMENT STORE ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

1/8"=1'0" N ↑

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **May Company Department Store Building**

City or Vicinity: **St. Louis [Independent City]**

County: **St. Louis [Independent City]** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Vivian Paul (unless otherwise noted)**

Date

Photographed: **1979 (unless otherwise noted)**

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

1 of 6. Plate #21 from Camille N. Dry and Richard J. Compton, Pictorial St. Louis-1875.

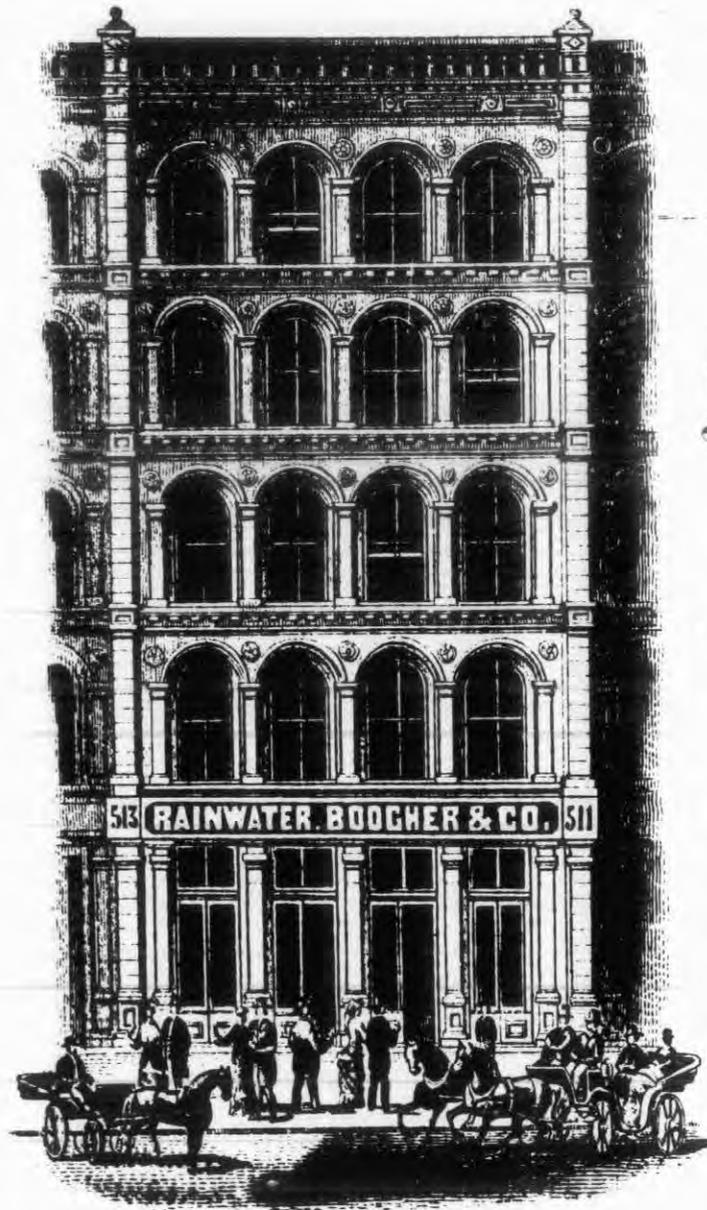
2 of 6. Letterhead: Rainwater, Boogher & Co., 1888. 511-13 Washington Ave.

3 of 6. S (principal) and W elevations, facing NE. Photo taken by unknown, circa 1905.

4 of 6. Washington Ave. (S) elevation, facing NW.

5 of 6. SE corner of Sixth and Lucas, N and W elevations, facing SE.

6 of 6. SE corner of Sixth and Lucas, N and W elevations, facing E. Photo taken by Kimble A. Cohn, 1982.



Jno. B Morris

S. L. Bogher

Rainwater, Bogher & Co.

WHOLESALE HATS, CAPS,

STRAW GOODS, LADIES HATS AND GLOVES.

NO. 511 & 513 Washington Avenue.

St. Louis, Jan 5th 1888

The Dollar Store on Washington Avenue





The DOLLAR STORE

LADIES WARE

DOWN TOWN BOOKS

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