

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Rotunda, The

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number City Park, Washington Street [n/a] not for publication

city or town Hermann [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Gasconade code 073 zip code 65041

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 [])

Signature of certifying official/Title David A. Shorr/SHPO and Director 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 _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date _____

5 Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0	buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6 Function or Use

Historic Function
Recreation and Culture/museum

Current Functions
Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
OTHER: Missouri-German

Materials
foundation stone
walls brick
roof metal
other wood

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

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Agriculture

Architecture

Industry

Ethnic Heritage--European

Periods of Significance

circa 1864-1923

Significant Dates

circa 1864

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9 Major Bibliographic 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

#MO-254

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: _____

10 Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	635470	4284340			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11 Form Prepared By

name/title Claire F. Blackwell/Director
organization Historic Preservation Program date 24 July 1995
street & number P.O. Box 176 telephone 314/751-7858
city or town Jefferson City state MO zip code 65102

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**Rotunda, The
Gasconade County, MO**

SUMMARY: The Rotunda is an octagonal, red-brick building built in 1864 as an exhibition hall for the Gasconade County Agricultural Association. One story in height, the building is capped by a pavilion roof with double cupolas. The Rotunda was the center of activity of the popular agricultural fairs held throughout the late nineteenth century and the focus of annual wine displays and competitions. Located on the site of the old fairgrounds, now a city park, the Rotunda is the only remaining fair building other than a wooden bandstand. With the exception of some minor alterations, the building retains its historic appearance and association with the ethnic, agricultural, and architectural heritage of Hermann.

NARRATIVE: The building is constructed of red brick, laid in common bond on a low stone foundation. The primary elevation, facing west, has a round-arched doorway with glazed fanlight and double-leaf doors. A similar entrance is located on the opposite (east) wall, but it is now obscured by a frame addition. The remaining six elevations each have a large, round-arched window covered with arched shutters of vertical boards painted green. The pavilion roof is capped by two polygonal cupolas. All roofs, originally wood-shingled, now are covered with corrugated metal. Decorating the eaves of each roof is a jig-sawn, wood fascia board.

The interior features an unadorned open space with wood floors and painted brick walls. The interior measures approximately 50'x 7' from wall to wall; the walls are 12" thick. A wide (6 1/2") wood moulding rings the perimeter below window level. Window openings feature original arched fanlights above replacement 6/6 sash. The space is open to the rafters, revealing an intricate system of trusswork radiating from a massive central wood post.

The Rotunda was rehabilitated in 1951 by a community organization, the Brush and Palette Club, to accommodate the production of community Maifest pageants. Windows and doors were replaced with salvaged items, and rafters were reinforced with tie rods. Electricity and a forced-air heating unit were added, an electric fan was built into one of the rear sides of the lower cupola, and a stage was constructed. A small wood structure was built over the rear entrance to create dressing rooms. Despite these alterations, the Rotunda retains sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to convey its significance as a public building associated with the German heritage of Hermann.

The Rotunda is currently used occasionally for community purposes. Although owned by the City of Hermann and located in an active city park, the building has not been maintained regularly and is in need of stabilization. A project is currently underway to develop architectural plans and specifications for future restoration of the building.

(The photographs, taken in November 1991, were field checked on August 31, 1995; no alterations have been made and the photographs accurately reflect the current appearance of the building.)

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Rotunda, The
Gasconade County, MO

SUMMARY: The Rotunda is significant under Criteria of Eligibility A and C: (A) it is associated with the German settlement of Hermann and its development as a wine-producing region of national and international renown, events significant in the history of Missouri; and (C) it *embodies the distinctive characteristics of Missouri-German building traditions and craftsmanship.* The Rotunda is significant in the areas of significance Agriculture and Industry: constructed in 1864 by the Gasconade County Agricultural Association, the building provided a location for horticultural exhibits and wine-judging events held during the annual county agricultural fairs. It is further significant in the area of Architecture: its unique design conveys its symbolic value as the centerpiece of the agricultural fairs and reflects the distinctive characteristics of Missouri-German construction and craftsmanship.¹ Finally, it is significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage: European: the building reflects the importance of grape-growing, wine-making, and other horticultural pursuits to the economic growth and cultural stability of Hermann as a distinctly German community.

NARRATIVE: The City of Hermann was established in 1836 by a group of German immigrants in Philadelphia, the Deutsche Ansiedlungs-Gesellschaft zu Philadelphia (German Settlement Society of Philadelphia). The Society envisioned the founding of a German enclave in a remote part of the United States, where settlers could enjoy life in America while retaining their German language, customs and heritage.

Following a tour of several Midwestern states in search of a suitable location for such a colony, members of the Society proposed selection of a site along the Missouri River in northern Gasconade County, Missouri, an area whose bluffs and valley bore resemblance to the Rhineland. Baden schoolteacher George Bayer was soon dispatched to Missouri to purchase land for the Society. Bayer acquired nearly 11,000 acres of land in that vicinity by October 10, 1837. That land was transferred in turn from Bayer to the Society to the newly incorporated town, named Hermann after Germany's hero of the fourth century A.D. The town offered lots to settlers at a nominal cost; Society members were eligible to select the lot of their choice. By spring of 1839, Hermann had a population of 450 and boasted 90 houses, two hotels, and a post office.²

The German settlers soon discovered that their rocky, hilly land was ill-suited for farming. However, the slopes and rocky ridges appeared ideal for growing grapes, as evidenced by the

¹Although the design of the Rotunda has been attributed locally to specific individuals, including Eduard or Robert Robyn or John Bohlken, no written documentation has been found to confirm the architect or builder.

²William G. Bek, The German Settlement Society of Philadelphia and Its Colony, Hermann, Missouri (Philadelphia: Americana Germanica Press, 1907), p. 134.

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Section 8 Page 3

**Rotunda, The
Gasconade County, MO**

prevalence of native wild grapes. The Hermann town trustees began encouraging the cultivation of grapevines as early as 1844, offering settlers the opportunity to purchase wine lots on an interest-free basis. By 1846 six hundred lots had been sold at \$50.00 each.³

The first cultivated vine planted in town, an Isabella, produced fruit in 1845. That same year 50,000 vines were planted in and around Hermann, with the amount tripling the following year. The first wine was produced in 1846, surprising all by its excellent quality.⁴

As the first attempts at wine-making met with considerable success, both in terms of quality and a receptive market in St. Louis, many settlers seized the opportunity to better their meager conditions. In the words of pioneer winegrower George Husmann, "a perfect rage for growing grapes, as a sure source of riches, took possession of our sober, steady citizens."⁵

By the mid-to-late 1850's, new varieties, such as Norton's Virginia and Concord, were introduced, and in the late 1850's the state's first nursery was established near Hermann to supply cuttings of the new varieties. Varied plantings protected farmers from total crop loss even in the worst of years, and the industry gained stability. By 1860 over 1,000 acres in the Hermann area were planted in grapes, and grapes were cited as Gasconade County's leading agricultural product. The 1870 census listed 42 farmers as "winegrowers," with production ranging from 500-1,500 gallons. By the 1860's, Hermann vied with Cincinnati and upstate New York as the premier wine-producing area in the United States. Winegrowing continued to be Hermann's main industry until the advent of prohibition in 1919.

One of the oldest agricultural societies in the state, the Gasconade County Agricultural Association was formed in 1857. Appearing early as members were pioneer winegrowers Michael and William Poeschel and George Husmann. The association held annual fairs, even through the Civil War years, and offered premiums to encourage improved produce. The majority of the members were from the winegrowing area in and around Hermann, resulting in

³ibid., p. 152.

⁴George Husmann, An Essay on the Culture of the Grape in the Great West (Hermann, Mo., Charles W. Kielman, 1863), p. 39.

⁵ibid., p. 39.

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Rotunda, The
Gasconade County, MO

emphasis on horticultural pursuits, rather than the broader range of agricultural activities.⁶ By 1870 the association had 140 members, the majority of whom were winegrowers.⁷

In 1861 the association purchased 6.11 acres in Hermann for use as a fairground.⁸ By 1864 they had constructed an exhibition hall, as reported in a notice written on 6 December 1864 for the First Annual Report of the Missouri State Board of Agriculture: "during the present year a substantial brick edifice has been erected on the grounds, at a cost of eighteen hundred dollars. . . ."⁹ The new exhibition hall served as a place for exhibiting grapes and wines, as well as other produce. It became the location for an annual wine-judging event, which had begun as early as the 1850's, and which attracted the attention of visitors from near and far. Special excursion trains were operated in the 1880's and 1890's to bring St. Louisans to the fairs.

The Hermann fairs are generally a jovial and merry gathering of all the lovers of pomology, and, especially, grape growing throughout the State, and even draw many of the same class from other States."¹⁰

With the decline of the wine industry following prohibition, interest in the fairs apparently declined. In 1923 the association sold the land, including the Rotunda, to the City of Hermann for \$4,000.¹¹

The Rotunda is a unique property that evokes strong associations with Hermann's ethnic heritage and grape-growing/wine-making industry. Dating to the period of the flowering of that industry, the building reflects the importance of wine-growing to the Hermann economy. Although unique in Hermann because of its polygonal form and specialized use, the Rotunda's design reflects typical Missouri-German details, namely well-built masonry construction and

⁶Missouri State Board of Agriculture, First Annual Report (Jefferson City, Mo.: 1865), pp. 65-66.

⁷Missouri State Board of Agriculture, Sixth Annual Report (Jefferson City, Mo.: n.p., 1870), p. 97.

⁸Recorder of Deeds, Gasconade County Courthouse, Hermann, MO, Book N, p. 567.

⁹Missouri State Board of Agriculture, First Annual Report (Jefferson City, Mo.: 1865), p. 65.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 68.

¹¹Recorder of Deeds, Gasconade County Courthouse, Hermann, MO, Book 50, p. 602.

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Rotunda, The
Gasconade County, MO

segmental arched windows. Minor twentieth century alterations do not detract from the structure's architectural or historic character.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bek, William G. The German Settlement Society of Philadelphia and Its Colony, Hermann, Missouri. Philadelphia: Americana Germanica Press, 1907.

Gasconade County. Recorder of Deeds. Deed Records.

Hermann Advertiser-Courier. 18 September 1884.

History of Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Crawford and Gasconade Counties, Missouri. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888; reprint ed., Cape Girardeau, Mo.: The Ramfire Press, 1958.

Husmann, George. An Essay on the Culture of the Grape in the Great West. Hermann, Mo.: Charles W. Kielman, 1863.

Minutes of the Agricultural Association of Gasconade County, 1876-1899. City Hall, Hermann, Mo. (Typescript translation of the German original.)

Missouri State Board of Agriculture. First Annual Report. Jefferson City, Mo.: Emory S. Foster, 1865.

_____. Sixth Annual Report. Jefferson City, Mo.: n.p., 1870.

van Ravenswaay, Charles. The Arts and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1977.

1860 Agricultural Census, Gasconade County, Missouri

1870 Agricultural Census, Gasconade County, Missouri

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Section 10 Page 6

**Rotunda, The
Gasconade County, MO**

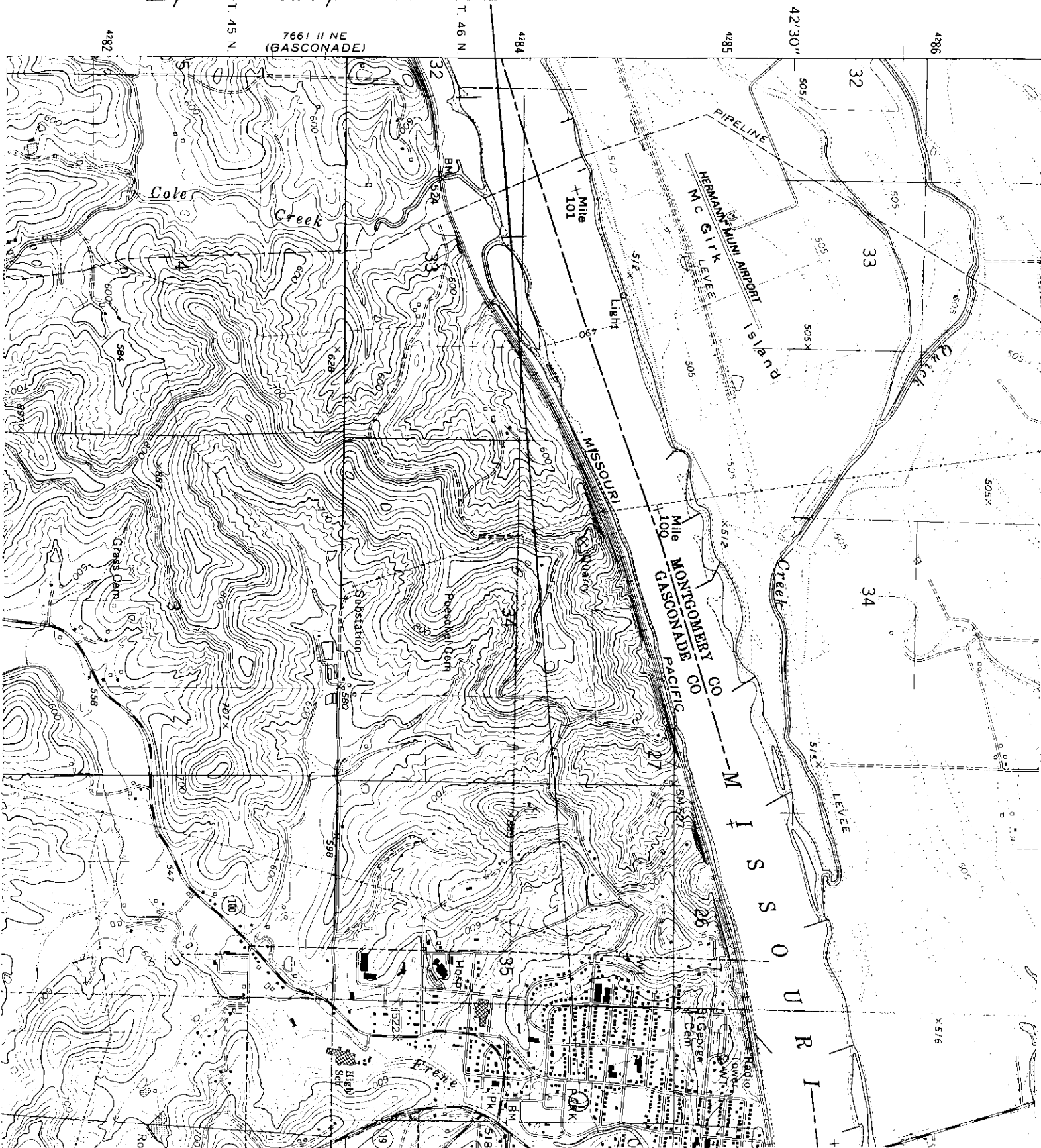
Verbal Boundary Description

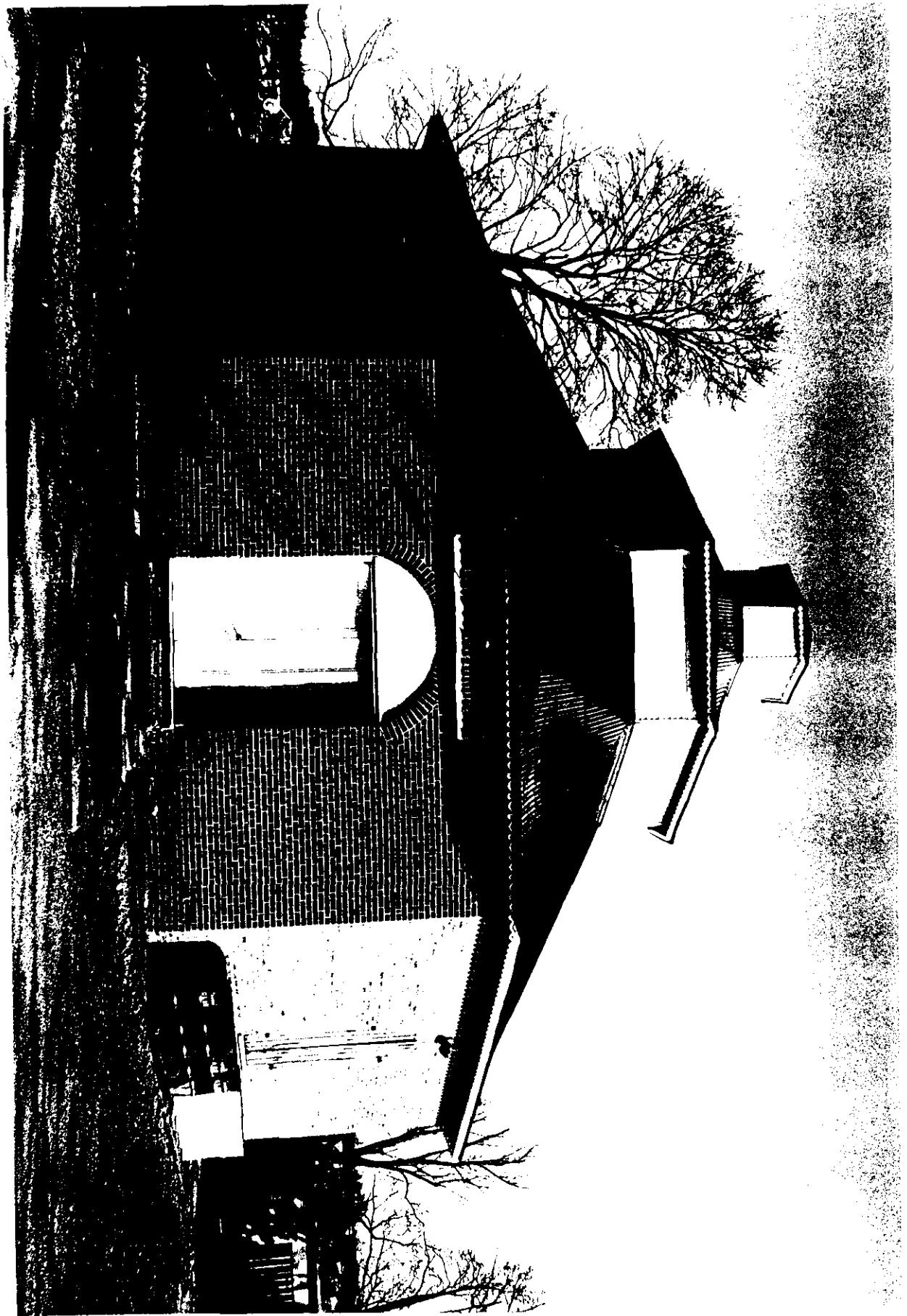
The Rotunda is located near the center of the Hermann City Park, an unplatted section of the City of Hermann, Gasconade County. The boundary of the nominated property is described by a circle with a radius of 40 feet centered on the building's central support post.

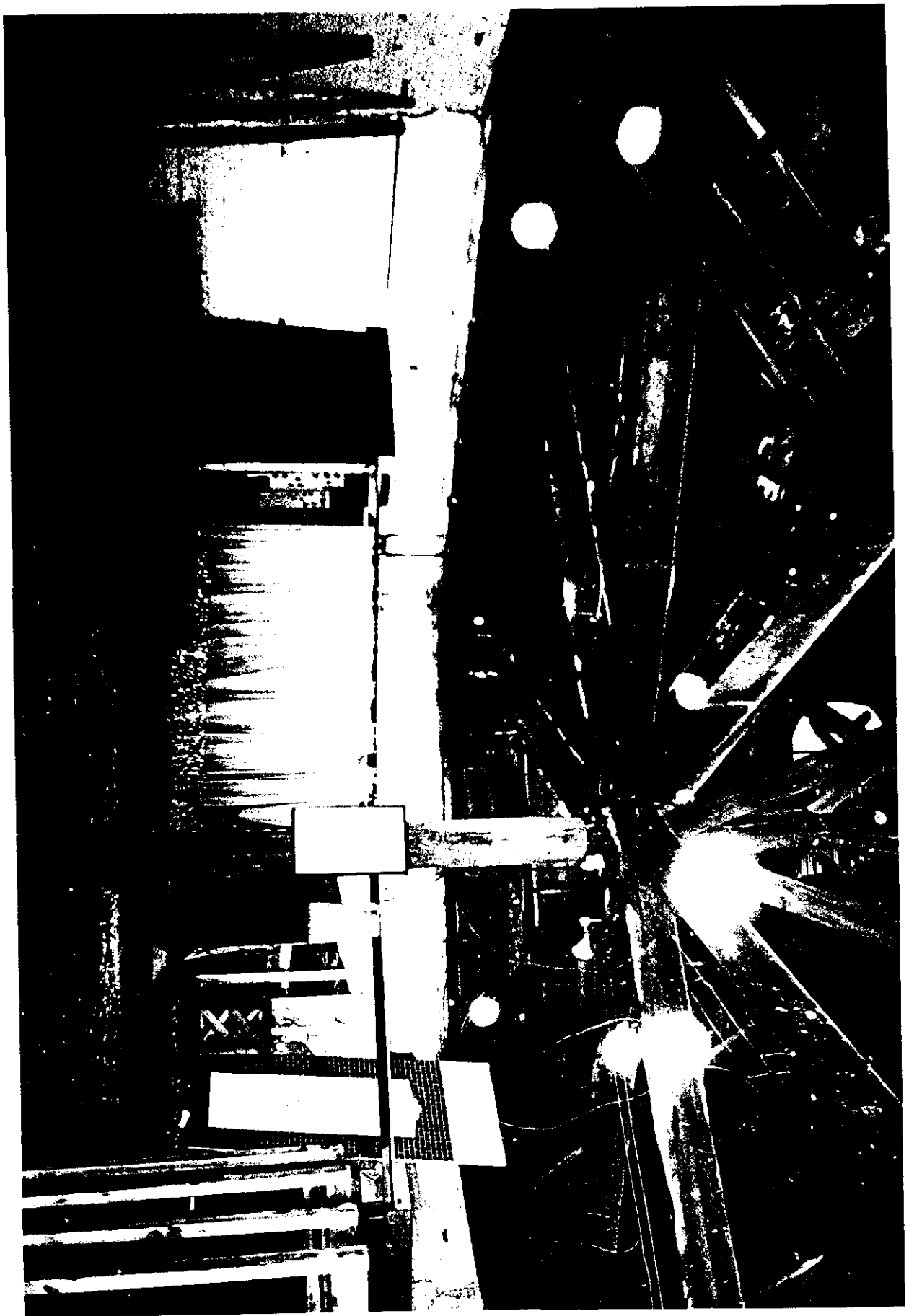
Boundary Justification

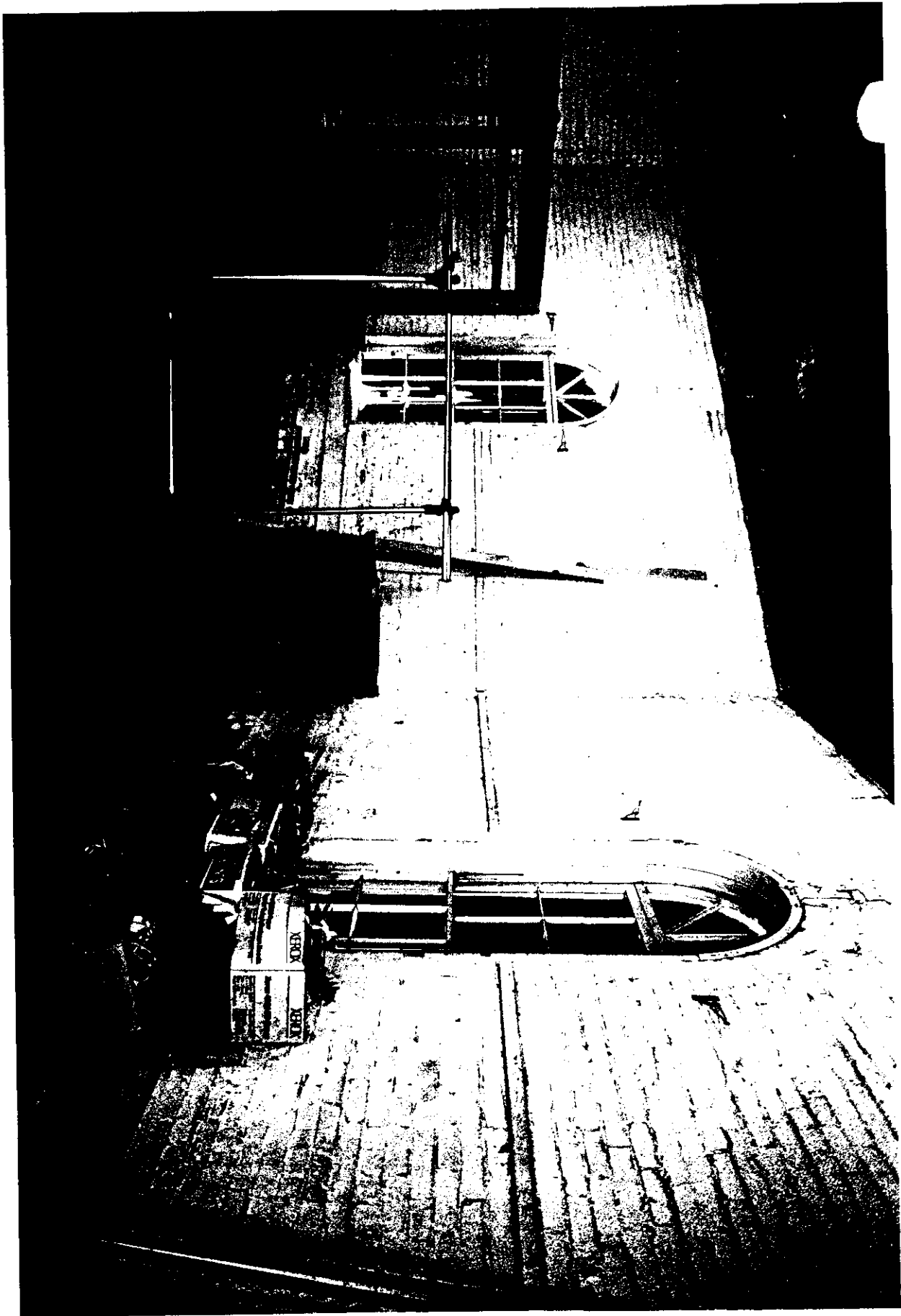
The Rotunda is located on an undivided 6.11 acre parcel within the city limits of Hermann, Gasconade County, MO. Its boundary has been drawn to exclude newer park structures and facilities that do not contribute to the building's significance or associative values.

ROTUNDA, THE
CITY PARK, WASHINGTON STREET, HERMANN
GASCONADE COUNTY, MO
15/635470/4284340









PHOTO

UNAVAILABLE