

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name International Shoe Company Building

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 665 Missouri Ave.  not for publication

city or town West Plains  vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Howell code 091 zip code 65775

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Mark A. Miles  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles, Deputy SHPO

September 14, 2011  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

International Shoe Company, West Plains MO  
Name of Property

Howell, MO  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1		<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY; factory  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Vacant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
OTHER: Shoe Factory  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: Concrete  
\_\_\_\_\_  
walls: Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: Flat  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

International Shoe Company, West Plains MO  
Name of Property

Howell, MO  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Industry  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1946-1962  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1946  
\_\_\_\_\_  
1952  
\_\_\_\_\_  
1962  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Reinhardt, Herbert H, Architect  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Burke, Arthur. Contractor  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Paris, Charles. Construction Engineer  
\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - \_\_\_ Other State agency
  - \_\_\_ Federal agency
  - \_\_\_ Local government
  - \_\_\_ University
  - \_\_\_ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

International Shoe Factory, West Plains MO  
Name of Property

Howell, MO  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Approximately 3 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>601900</u> Easting	<u>4065800</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing	4	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Andrew Weil

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis date 5/5/11

street & number 911 Washington, Suite 170 telephone 314-421-6474

city or town St. Louis State MO zip code 63101

e-mail aweil@landmarks-stl.org

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs.**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner:**

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

name Richard J. Davidson, Howell Creek Property Co.

street & number 606 W. Broadway telephone           

city or town West Plains state MO zip code 65775

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   1  

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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**Summary**

The International Shoe Company (ISC) Building, located at 665 Missouri Avenue in West Plains, Howell County, Missouri, was constructed in 1946 with additions dating to 1952 and 1970. The 1970 addition was demolished in 2011. Both the 1946 and 1952 wings were designed by Herbert Reinhardt, ISC's architectural manager for the Machinery Power Division. It is one of three similarly-designed ISC factories in Missouri constructed after World War II, with the other examples located in Salem (Dent County) and Hamilton (Caldwell County) both of which are extant. The one story factory consists of two wings; the original 1946 roughly square brick wing at the east end of the complex, and an adjoining smaller square concrete block component (1952) on the west. The buildings have flat roofs and concrete slab foundations. The 1946 wing contains 41,400 square feet; and the 1952 wing contains 20,736 square feet. The interior floor plan is primarily open, exhibiting its original use as a manufacturing facility. The primary façade comprises the eastern wall of the 1946 component. The elevation was previously obscured by the demolished 1970 addition. The 1946 wing has brick bearing walls laid in common bond. Doors, windows and vent openings have either soldier-course arches or flat steel lintels, and most have brick rowlock lug sills. Some window openings on the façade have had their original dimensions altered, and removed sashes are filled with brick or concrete block. Original glass block lights span most of the façade and are intact. Sashes and window openings are partially intact on the west side and nearly intact on the north and south sides. Window alterations on the west elevation were completed during the period of significance, which extends from 1946 to 1962. Alterations to windows and doors are fully reversible, and the original fenestration pattern remains clearly visible. The parapet walls have terra cotta coping tiles, and the roof retains original pine decking (both wings). The 1952 concrete block wing, situated at the west end of the building, is utilitarian in appearance with rectangular bays of various sizes and steel sash industrial windows on the north, west, and south elevations. Most of the windows are intact and boarded. The factory is situated on the northwest side of West Plains and surrounded primarily by residential construction dating to the period of significance and before, though remnants of shuttered industrial buildings, such as the Amyx and Gullic baseball bat factory remain in the immediate vicinity due to the presence of the railroad. Roughly triangular in shape, the parcel is bounded by Howell Creek on the south, Missouri Avenue on the northeast and Williams Street on the southwest. There is a small, one story brick addition projecting from the north elevation of the 1946 building which houses HVAC equipment.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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**Narrative Description**

The ISC Building, originally constructed in 1946 and expanded in 1952 is a post World War II industrial facility. The building has no definitive style, though the repetition of the building plan in other towns at the same time may argue for the existence of an International Shoe Style. The primary façade comprises the east elevation, facing Missouri Avenue.<sup>i</sup>

**1946 Wing**

The building has a roughly square footprint and sits on a concrete slab foundation. The roof is reinforced by 12 inch deep I-beams on 6 x 6 inch H-beam structural steel columns spaced approximately 20 feet by 23 feet apart. The interior of the building is primarily an open plan factory production space with a height of 10 to 11 feet between the concrete slab floor and roof girders. Interior partitions enclose a loading dock and a chemical storage room. Partitions that once enclosed office and restroom areas have been removed. Original pine roof decking forms the exposed ceiling. The original belt drive system for the “heeling” equipment is intact in the northwest corner of the 1946 factory floor. The walls are 12” brick bearing walls laid three withes thick in common bond.

**Façade and Northeast Office Corner, 1946 Wing**

The 1946 wing façade is asymmetrical and contains fifteen bays filled with a variety of window and door openings of various types, sizes and arrangements. This variability in the sizes of the window and entry bays reflects the different uses of the interior space. The northeast corner of the north façade (where the corner office was originally located) contains two pairs of window openings with soldier course arches and rowlock lug sills. The openings house two original pairs of six-over-one double hung sash windows (Photo 6). The windows in the six rectangular bays on the façade (south from the northeast corner toward the entrance) originally held pairs of one-over-one fixed lights (Photos 8, 9, 12). The original primary entrance is boarded and filled with concrete block, but its details and dimensions are intact. This entry is the fifth bay south of the building’s northeast corner. Above the entry is an intact 36 light glass block transom light. The window openings and entry have flat soldier course arches and brick rowlock lug sills. Six of the seven window openings in the office area and the entry retain original dimensions, brick arches,

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<sup>i</sup> This section draws extensively, with permission, on:

Terri Foley and Ruth Keenoy, *Preliminary National Register of Historic Place Eligibility Assessment, International Shoe Factory, West Plains, MO*. Jefferson City, MO.: Missouri Department of Natural Resources/State Historic Preservation Office, 2008.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   3  

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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and sills, though all have been boarded and/or filled with concrete block. The remaining window sill has been removed to the ground level and converted into a functional doorway.

Continuing south along the primary façade, the fenestration changes to reflect the parts and storage area near the center of the elevation. This portion of the façade has five window bays centered either directly below or between banks of intact glass block lights. Three of the original window openings have been reduced in size using brick masonry and converted into narrow doors. In these bays, the soldier course arches are intact and the original dimensions of the windows are indicated by a seam and differences in the appearance of the masonry. One window opening retains its original width, but the sill has been removed with the wall below to create a doorway. Another window in the parts and storage area has been enlarged to be used as a door. The alteration was made by removing the sill and lower wall, as well as the glass block light above. The soldier course arch from the removed light remains intact. Above the altered window openings are banks of 33-light glass block lights. These openings remain in their original soldier course arches and have rowlock brick lug sills. Between the three central pairs of glass block lights, square vent openings are bricked in. An historic photograph indicates that some of these vents were bricked in during the period of significance (Photo 12). The infill of the vents is recessed and the rhythm of the alternating light and vent openings is intact.

The southern end of the primary façade projects eastward from the rest of the wall. The projecting area contains a room originally used for flammable materials storage. This section has five bays, including two loading bays at the south end and three window openings paired with rectangular glass block lights at the ceiling level at the north end. The loading bays and original window openings are filled with brick. The glass block lights are intact. The brick in the windows is recessed and the original dimensions of the openings as well as the rowlock lug sills are intact. The glass block lights have soldier course arches and rowlock lug sills. Between the glass block lights are vents created by spacing three soldier bricks in a square opening.

**South Elevation, 1946 Wing**

The projecting section of the primary elevation (described above) wraps a portion of the building's south elevation (Photo 1). This area holds the original dock, boiler room, and coal bin. Original sliding fire doors separate the extension from the main body of the building. The dock is constructed of steel structural elements and wooden framing and situated at the elevation's southeast corner. The dock exterior is covered with modern siding that covers original sliding exterior doors (intact below the siding), though a portion of an original door is exposed and operates to seal a non-original smaller opening. Adjacent to this door to the east is a standard steel fire door. On the west end of the dock is an original three-over-one, single hung sash window. The boiler room contains three loading bays with soldier course arches and rowlock lug sills, all of which have been framed in. On the west facing edge of the projecting boiler room are

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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two large window openings with soldier course arches and rowlock lug sills (also framed in) (Photo 2). Below these windows is a pair of recessed doors which communicated between the boiler room and coal bin. One entry is boarded over and the other contains an original panel door with four lights. The coal bin is intact, constructed of heavy aggregate concrete.

South of the freight and boiler area are nine bays, each of which holds a narrow boarded window below glass block lights situated at ceiling level (Photo 2). Each window is a combination six light sash and louvered steel vent below (e.g. Photo 10). These vent/window combinations begin at floor level and stand seven feet tall. The easternmost bay has a single window opening centered below a 44-light glass block light. The remaining bays have a single window opening centered below an intact louvered vent at ceiling level, flanked by openings filled with 44-light glass block windows. Glass block windows are intact; most wall level windows are intact (and boarded); some have been removed for safekeeping. Each pair of ceiling level glass block lights/vents shares a continuous soldier course arch. The wall-level vent/windows have jack arches and rowlock lug sills.

**West Elevation, 1946 Wing**

The west elevation of the 1946 wing serves as an interior partition wall between the 1946 and 1952 sections of the building. The fenestration matches that on the south and north elevations (a boarded six light window/vent combination centered below a 44-light glass block light). Because the adjoining 1952 building is smaller than the 1946 building, intact fenestration is partially visible on either side of the junction between the two buildings. Some openings along the enclosed interior wall were closed or converted into doors during the period of significance.

**North Elevation, 1946 Wing**

Aside from the aforementioned six-over-one double hung sash windows at the northeast corner, the north elevation of the 1946 wing has fourteen windows identical to those previously described on the west and south elevations (i.e., six-light steel sash windows over louvered vents, centered below the same pattern of ceiling-level vents and glass block lights) (Photo 6). Most of these windows are boarded over with plywood for protection, but are largely intact and visible from the interior of the building. Some have been removed for safe-keeping. Each pair of ceiling level glass block lights flanking a central vent shares a continuous soldier course arch. The floor-level vent/windows have jack arches and rowlock lug sills. Near the northwest corner of the elevation is a small, windowless, one story brick addition which houses HVAC systems. This wing was constructed concurrently with the 1970 addition and does not date to the period of significance. This addition is attached to the north elevation by a short enclosed hallway.

| Adjacent to the HVAC room (to the east) is a large dust-catcher, which stands on a concrete pad originally cast as the base for a gravity tank.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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**Description of 1952 Wing**

The 1952 addition attaches to the western wall of the 1946 wing. The addition is constructed of concrete block and stands one-story in height. The wing has a square footprint containing approximately 20,736 square feet of interior space. The roof is flat with built-up tar and gravel on pine decking, supported by 6' x 6" structural steel H-beam columns, 15" deep I-beams, and exposed bar joists. The support columns are placed at intervals of 20' x 20' and the distance between the interior concrete floor and the ceiling is approximately 11 to 12 feet. The wing's interior consists of a large open area that connects to the original 1946 wing via a 15' wide hallway, which extends parallel to the adjoining elevations. At the north end of the hallway is a door designed as the primary employee entrance. Hanging from the ceiling are drop lights and HVAC duct work. At the eastern corner of the south wall are two loading bays with modern overhead doors, and a small partitioned area. Located just inside the doors is a floor scale.

**South Elevation, 1952 Wing**

The south elevation contains two loading bays with modern overhead garage doors at the eastern corner (Photo 7). To the west of the garage doors, is a steel door beneath a six-by-six steel sash hopper window. The rest of the elevation contains twelve, original six-light steel sash hopper windows. The window sashes are all intact, though many lights are broken (Photo 3).

**West Elevation, 1952 Wing**

The west elevation contains seven bays; six original steel eight-by-eight hopper sash and a central steel door with a six-by-six steel hopper sash window above (Photo 4).

**North Elevation, 1952 Wing**

The north elevation contains eight bays; seven original steel eight-by-eight hopper sash windows and a central steel door beneath a pair of six light steel hopper sash windows near the center of the elevation (Photo 4).

**Discussion of Integrity**

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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Overall, the buildings possess integrity and reflect their appearance during the period of significance. The façade of the 1946 wing underwent alterations to many window openings when it became an interior wall in 1970 when the (now demolished) addition was constructed. The fenestration that once allowed light and air into the building's east side was enclosed by the addition and was subsequently sealed, but its pattern was not destroyed. The goal of the alterations was to separate the 1946 and 1970 portions of the building cheaply and effectively. As such, window sashes were simply removed and openings filled, while defining characteristics such as the pattern of the bays, soldier course arches and rowlock sills were left intact. When two windows were enlarged rather than filled, the sill and wall below (and in one case the glass block light above) were removed but the width of the bay was left intact. No new bays were created.

In openings that have been filled with concrete block or brick masonry, the original dimensions of the window openings are clearly visible in a majority of cases. In the case of windows that were reduced in size rather than blocked entirely, the original dimensions are illustrated by the presence of the intact arches and sills as well as seams between the infill and the original wall. These alterations are fully reversible, and do not prevent an understanding of the original fenestration and rhythm of the façade.

Original glass block lights, an important component of the original fenestration of the primary facade, are intact with the exception of one bay. While vents between these lights have been sealed, an historic photograph indicates that bricked in vents were present on the façade during the period of significance, and may indeed have never been open (Photo 12). Even with vents sealed, the fact that the infill is recessed within the opening leaves the rhythm of glass block lights and vents across the ceiling level of the façade intact. The original entry with its brickwork arch and transom light is intact, though the doorway space is filled with concrete block. The parapet wall is intact, as are most of the original terra cotta coping tiles. The brickwork is in excellent shape.

The north and south elevations of both the 1946 and 1952 wings are essentially intact and exhibit the original fenestration. Windows were largely boarded after the facility closed in the early 1990's, but sashes were left intact underneath (Photo 10). The doors to the loading dock on the south side of the 1946 wing have been covered with vinyl siding, but remain intact beneath.

The west wall of the 1946 wing was altered in 1952 when the western addition was constructed. Some window openings were turned into doors that connected the two wings. These alterations are not visible from the exterior of the building and date to the period of significance. The west wall of the 1952 wing has intact fenestration with original sash covered with boards.

With the exception of the loss of some original window sashes, alterations to the building are fully reversible. While window openings on the façade have been filled, the rhythm of bays remains intact. Designed for function, the few character-defining elements of the façade such as soldier course arches and rowlock lug sills are mostly intact. Though frame partitions once existed within the building to separate restrooms and offices from the work floor, the buildings were historically dominated by an open plan, as is the case today. Overall, a majority of original steel sash windows are intact, as are original glass block lights at ceiling level. The presence of exposed wooden roof decking, original loading bay

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   7  

International Shoe Company Building  
Howell County, Missouri

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doors, and mounted original machinery all contribute to the character of the building (Photo 11). The building possesses integrity of materials, workmanship, design, massing, and location.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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### Summary

The International Shoe Company Building at 665 Missouri Avenue in West Plains, Howell County, Missouri is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A in the area of Industry**. Constructed in 1946, with additions in 1952 and 1970 (the latter has been removed) the factory is locally significant and represents the Town of West Plains' attempts to attract industry and jobs to the heretofore primarily agricultural area following the end of World War II. More importantly, it is representative of the last phase of rural factory construction by the largest American shoe company-- St. Louis-based International Shoe (ISC). **The Period of Significance, 1946-1962**—begins with the construction of the first building, and ends with the election of Maurice Chambers as President of ISC. Forced to navigate a rapidly changing economic environment as the landscape of American manufacturing was impacted by foreign competition and the availability of cheap overseas labor, Chambers changed the company from a shoe manufacturer and wholesaler into a multinational corporation with a highly diverse portfolio of holdings. Under his direction, International Shoe became INTERCO.

### Narrative

#### Shoe Industry in Missouri

While the boot and shoe industry in Missouri was a major component of the state's economy by the outbreak of the Civil War, it arguably wasn't until George Warren Brown began the Brown Shoe Company in 1878 that the seeds of St. Louis' future prominence in the industry were planted. At the time, the center of boot and shoe production in the United States was located in the Northeast from upstate New York and Massachusetts to Pennsylvania. While small-scale manufacturers and cobblers certainly existed in St. Louis, the city was not known as a footwear manufacturing powerhouse prior to the growth of the Brown Company. The money made in shoes and boots in St. Louis prior to Brown was in the wholesale and retail markets whereby shoes were imported from the Northeast by jobbers and thence distributed across the Midwest and South by rail.

Using skilled shoe workers imported from New York as the core of his new company, George Warren Brown was the first to capitalize upon the natural advantages in terms of geography, manpower, and proximity to necessary materials that St. Louis and Missouri held for the production and distribution of footwear. As the century turned, these advantages would be fully realized as rail networks improved and St. Louis' population nearly doubled. The turn of the century also saw major changes in the methods by which shoes were produced. Throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century shoes had been made by highly skilled tradesmen, but as the 20<sup>th</sup> century

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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dawned, the industry became increasingly mechanized. With mechanization came reliance on large pools of low-wage unskilled labor to man the assembly lines.

In the decades between 1870 and 1910, the companies that would come to dominate the St. Louis shoe industry were born. In addition to Brown, large corporations like Johnson Stevens & Shinkle, Roberts Johnson and Rand, Peters, Pedigo-Weber, and Hamilton Brown all began to make their mark on the landscape. Employing advanced assembly line techniques and taking advantage of St. Louis' enormous supply of cheap labor, proximity to sources of raw materials, and extensive rail connections to the West, Southwest, Midwest, and South, these companies swiftly began to challenge the primacy of the Northeast as a shoe manufacturing center.

The ascendancy of the St. Louis shoe industry was rapid and aggressive. Over the course of ten years, between 1899 and 1909, Missouri rose from the eighth-ranked shoe-producing state to the second-ranked producer.<sup>ii</sup> In that period as well, the shoe industry became the single largest source of industrial employment in the state.<sup>iii</sup>

### **The International Shoe Company**

The International Shoe Company (ISC) was created in 1911 by a merger of the St. Louis based Peters and Roberts, Johnson & Rand Shoe Companies. Both of the component companies were major producers and the merger created a powerful new entity in the world of footwear. While the new company enjoyed great advantages in terms of capitalization and production capacity, it came into being during a very turbulent time for the industry in St. Louis. Between 1902 and 1914, there was much civil unrest among the city's shoe workers as various unions attempted to organize the labor force and improve conditions in the factories. ISC, a company that would change the shoe industry, was born at a time when the shoe industry itself was changing.

### **The Shift to Rural Factories**

As previously mentioned, at the time when ISC was created, the boot and shoe industry was the largest industrial employer in the state of Missouri. While the majority of this production was still centered in St. Louis, the landscape of production was beginning to change. As early as 1899 some companies had begun to shift their factories from St. Louis to small towns in rural parts of the state. In 1889, nearly 83% of Missouri's shoe factories were located in St. Louis.<sup>iv</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> John O. Roberts, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form—Nomination Form: International Shoe Factory, St. Clair, MO*. Washington D.C.: US Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1994. p.7.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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By 1904, that number had dropped to 60%, and by 1927 to less than 43%; this trend would continue throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>v</sup>

The primary reason that factories began moving to rural communities was production cost. It was much more expensive to do business and accommodate growth in St. Louis City because of factors such as the price of land, taxes, tolls, and the increasing threats to profits posed by unionization. The latter factor was of pre-eminent concern to the big St. Louis manufacturers because it had the potential to be very expensive, but it could theoretically be controlled. One of the main reasons that the St. Louis shoe industry was able to grow so rapidly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was that they had been able to undercut the prices of the large Northeastern companies that had heretofore dominated the market. This advantage can be attributed somewhat to factors such as its relative proximity to raw materials and large markets, its central location and excellent rail network. While these factors certainly played a part, St. Louis' most important asset as an industrial center was its ready pool of cheap labor. As the mechanized, assembly-line factory system took over the industry, the limiting factor for production and price became the availability of people who were willing to work long hours for little pay. Quite simply, there were more people in St. Louis who fit this description than in the more established Northeastern shoe centers.

According to historian Rosemary Feurer, a survey done in Massachusetts in 1906, then still the largest shoe-producing state, noted that the average shoe-worker earned more than \$25 a week.<sup>vi</sup> This wage was the result of a smaller labor pool and comparatively more reasonable labor practices. The *average* Massachusetts shoe-worker earned more than 90% of male shoe-workers in St. Louis and more than all female workers in St. Louis at the time.<sup>vii</sup> While large Northeastern companies like Endicott Johnson were known for their practice of paternalistic “welfare capitalism” which valued worker pride, paid relatively high wages, and provided benefits to employees such as healthcare, subsidized food, even parks and recreational opportunities, the St. Louis companies were known for sweat-shop conditions.<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Rosemary Feurer, “Shoe City, Factory Towns: St. Louis Shoe Companies and the Turbulent Drive for Cheap Rural Labor, 1900-1940.” *Gateway Heritage Volume 9, Number 2. Fall*. St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1988. P. 4.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Letter from George F. Johnson, reprinted in: *Partners All: A Pictorial Narrative of an Industrial Democracy*. New York: Endicott-Johnson Corporation, 1938.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Roberts, Johnson & Rand Shoe Company (RJR), one of the forerunners of ISC, was notorious for the conditions under which their employees labored. Desiring to keep costs as low as possible, RJR employed large numbers of teenagers and very young people. In fact, the year the company merged to become ISC (1911), more than half of its employees were between 14 and 19 years old and 84% of women and nearly 70% of men employed by the company were under 24 years old.<sup>ix</sup> A few years earlier it had been reported that 80% of the women who worked for the company earned less than ten dollars a week, which even at the time was a poverty level wage.<sup>x</sup> Of course, the practice of paying women less than their male counterparts was standard policy for all the big St. Louis companies. This is the reason that even until mid-century, the shoe-factory workforce was disproportionately composed of women. The workers in a St. Louis RJR factory were described by a foreman as “urchins with unkempt hair, ragged clothes, [and] scrawny arms,” and a manager noted how women who had worked in the factories since they were teenagers became “useless” after the age of 40.<sup>xi</sup>

In 1913, just after the merger which formed ISC, the Illinois Senate Vice Commission investigated one of the company’s factories in southeastern Illinois (near St. Louis) and discovered conditions to be so bad that Lieutenant Governor Barratt O’Hara called the company “a disgrace to the state of Illinois.”<sup>xii</sup> The investigation also uncovered lurid details such as a girl who worked for ISC who was “driven to a life of shame” because the company paid her so little.<sup>xiii</sup> Another witness described how the girls in the factories were worked at top speed to the point where they frequently fainted and how they were cursed and shaken by foremen when they couldn’t keep up.<sup>xiv</sup> Considering such conditions, it is no wonder that Henry Peters, one of the founders of ISC, was a leader in the St. Louis affiliate of the Citizens Industrial Association, an employer’s organization that sponsored anti-union propaganda and maintained a national blacklist. The company itself was listed as one of the patrons of the Corporations Auxiliary Company, a notorious spy and strike-breaking organization (Feurer, 5; Davis, 144).

Certainly not alone in its policies toward unionization and its harsh treatment of workers, ISC’s practices stemmed from widely held attitudes toward labor at the time. A colleague once recalled

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<sup>ix</sup> Feuerer, p. 4.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xii</sup> Horace Davis, Shoes: The Workers and the Industry, (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 96.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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that to Oscar Johnson, the President of ISC, “labor was simply ‘a commodity...he would purchase it at as low a price as possible.’”<sup>xv</sup>

**WWI**

It was under these conditions that a movement for workers rights took shape at the turn-of-the-century in Missouri’s urban shoe factories. Workers and various unions such as the Boot and Shoe Worker’s Union, the United Shoe Workers of America, and the Industrial Workers of the World all had a presence in the city and they battled the companies for better conditions. Violent strikes were relatively common and some companies employed armed gangs of strike-breakers. While workers rarely gained any meaningful concessions by striking, each incident slowed down production, cost the companies money and generated fodder for union propaganda. For example, between 1910 and 1913, the United Shoe Workers Union carried out five strikes in the St. Louis factories of the Hamilton Brown Shoe Company; one of these strikes alone cost the company over \$200,000.<sup>xvi</sup> While unions and workers attempted to make strikes as costly as possible for the companies in an effort to force them to come to terms, the strategy had a critical flaw. The Unions seem to have assumed that there were only two options open to the shoe manufacturers-- bear the costs of strikes, or capitulate to union demands. This assumption would prove to be false.

Following a major strike in 1906, several of the largest companies such as Roberts Johnson and Rand (soon to be a founding half of International Shoe) developed a solution to the problems created by organized labor which was as brilliant as it was insidious. Rather than capitulate to Union demands, they simply began to shift their manufacturing facilities away from the industrial center of St. Louis to small rural communities in economically depressed areas. Seemingly a simple maneuver, the strategy proved ingenious. The move to rural towns allowed the companies to overcome the problems of high taxes, high cost of land, and quarrelsome unions that plagued operations in the city. As an added bonus, they quickly discovered that rural towns were so desperate for employment that they would offer a wide range of incentives to attract a factory. Towns gave the companies land, paid the cost of factory construction, reduced or eliminated local taxes, and swiftly became addicted to the jobs a company brought. Because these small towns were so invested in their factories, they would jealously guard against unionization or any

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<sup>xv</sup> Andrew B. Weil, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form—Nomination Form: Endicott Johnson Shoe Distribution Warehouse, St. Louis, MO*. Washington D.C.: US Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 2007.p.11.

<sup>xvi</sup> Feurer, p.5.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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other threat that might upset the company. The new system worked so well, that a new era of rural factory construction was born.

While most of St. Louis' urban shoe factories stayed open to meet the demands of production during World War I, the profits that ISC reaped during the war years more than made up for the delay in the full-scale shift to the new rural production strategy. In addition, because of wartime disruptions to traditional Atlantic shipping lanes, materials bound for Europe were often sent by a much longer, but safer route through the Pacific via Russian ports. This meant that St. Louis' shoe companies had an advantageous head start on the Northeastern producers in terms of travel time, distance and freight costs.<sup>xvii</sup> It was in part these wartime advantages that set the stage for International Shoe's phenomenal growth in the immediate Post-War period which culminated in 1923, when the company arrived as the largest shoe manufacturer in the country.<sup>xviii</sup>

The enormous profits reaped by the major shoe companies during the war enabled them to afford to treat their urban factories as "sunk costs" and construct the necessary infrastructure to enable the rapid shift to production in new, small-town factories following the cessation of hostilities. According to historian Rosemary Feurer, "by 1928, the five largest St. Louis shoe manufacturing companies (with ISC at the top of the list) had established plants in fifty-six small towns within a 200 mile radius of St. Louis;" the majority were in Missouri.<sup>xix</sup>

Production and sales boomed for the company throughout the 1920s and a positive feedback loop of new factories, increased output, and increased profits fed ISC's expansion. The company hit peak production in 1929 producing more than 54 million pairs of shoes and grossing more than \$132 million.<sup>xx</sup> By now well aware of the impact that a factory could have on a town, International Shoe demanded "bonuses" and other concessions from the communities it decided to grace with its presence. Bonuses took the form of large sums of money ostensibly designed to help defray the cost of facility construction and were scraped together by townspeople, elected officials, and chambers of commerce who desperately wanted a factory. Between 1899 and 1938, despite the slowing of the economy during the Depression, the company received 45 bonuses from Missouri communities.<sup>xxi</sup>

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<sup>xvii</sup> Weil, p.13.

<sup>xviii</sup> Maxine Faye Fendelman, "St. Louis Shoe Manufacturing" (M.A. thesis, Washington University, 1947), p.79-80.

<sup>xix</sup> Feurer, p.5.

<sup>xx</sup> Davis, p. 63-64.

<sup>xxi</sup> Roberts, p.8.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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Despite a sudden and major drop in net sales as a result of the Depression (sales in 1932 were less than half of sales in 1929) the company survived.<sup>xxii</sup> While the company's cash reserves played a major role in its resiliency, the fact that it not only survived the shock of the market collapse, but clawed slowly back toward profitability throughout the 1930s can largely be attributed to its ability to reduce the size of its labor force and wages at will.

True recovery began with the outbreak of World War II in Europe, with sales spiking 30% between 1940 and 1941.<sup>xxiii</sup> As wartime contracts once again came pouring in, net sales jumped another 24% between 1941 and 1942; factories that had been idle or operating with a reduced work force were now working at peak capacity. With demand at an all-time high, additional facilities were required. Just as at the end of World War I, International Shoe came out of the conflict much larger and better capitalized. When peace was finally declared, ISC owned 67 factories and plants throughout the country and production during the War years from 1940 to 1946 (including demobilization) was tabulated at 33 million pairs of shoes.

Once again soaring with wartime profits and anticipating a continuation of the status quo ante, between 1946 and 1951 the company embarked upon another round of construction.<sup>xxiv</sup> Continuing the production model that had enabled them to suppress unionization and wring concessions from communities since the turn of the century, ISC constructed 14 new plants in small rural towns; among the locations chosen were the Missouri communities of Salem, Hamilton, and West Plains.

### **West Plains**

While large numbers of American settlers began to enter Missouri following the War of 1812 and the somewhat later departure of the Osage, the far southwestern area of the state did not begin to see many permanent non-Native American residents until the 1820s and 1830s. It was at that time that Josiah Howell, namesake of Howell County, moved to the area of what would become West Plains from Tennessee.<sup>xxv</sup> Typical of the migrants moving into the vicinity at the time,

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<sup>xxii</sup> International Shoe Company, Annual Report 1955 International Shoe Company (St. Louis: International Shoe Co., 1955).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxiv</sup> "\$5, 969,125 Earned By Shoe Co." New York Times, 6 January 1945.

<sup>xxv</sup> Workers of the writer's program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of Missouri, Missouri: The WPA Guide to the "Show Me State" (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941; reprint ed., St. Louis, MO.: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), p. 472.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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Howell was a farmer from the Upper South who was attracted by the ready availability of land in the remote parts of the new state. The Town of West Plains, centered in the vicinity of the Howell farm, was named in 1851, and later designated the County Seat when Howell County was authorized in 1857.<sup>xxvi</sup> During the Civil War, West Plains, like most of rural Missouri, was plagued with warfare between widely scattered Union forces and bands of Confederate irregulars. Civilians paid a high price during this period as both sides struggled to exert control over an area populated by people with conflicting sympathies. Part of the Union strategy was to establish a presence in major towns and thus ensure that they protected trade and governmental functions. In an effort to prevent Union control of West Plains, Confederate guerillas burned the town in 1863 and Howell County was nearly depopulated by the end of the War.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Never densely settled, the county and town recovered slowly from the conflict and by 1874 West Plains consisted of three hundred people; eight stores; one hotel; one printing office; four churches; two schools; one flour mill; a jail and a courthouse.<sup>xxviii</sup> The Frisco Rail Road arrived in 1883 allowing for much more efficient economic exchange and the population grew to 2,100 by 1890. Around this time, many of the farms in the area made a leap from traditional cereal agriculture to the specialized production of peaches and apples. As the orchard's matured, Howell County became widely known as a superior fruit-growing region and in 1904, Howell peaches won the gold medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.<sup>xxix</sup>

The area changed little from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century maintaining a low population density and an economy dominated by agricultural pursuits. The Great Depression hit the area hard as commodity prices plummeted and, like many rural communities, West Plains received aid in the form of PWA and WPA projects such as the present-day county court house and armory buildings.<sup>xxx</sup> In 1941, the WPA writers guide to Missouri described West Plains as a remote town with a population of about 4,000 and an economy based upon "diversified agriculture, dairy farming, livestock, and small grain."<sup>xxxi</sup> World War II saw agricultural production in the region shift into high gear as the military provided a ready customer that would buy as much as could be produced.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> Marian Ohman, Twenty Towns, (Columbia: Curators of the University of Missouri, 1985), p.104-105.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Ibid.,105

<sup>xxviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxx</sup> Ibid.,106

<sup>xxxi</sup> WPA Writers Program. p. 471-472.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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With the majority of residents farming the land, industrial development was slow to reach the region. While small-scale operations existed prior to World War II, primarily to package agricultural products, the first major Industry would not arrive until 1946 when the International Shoe Company came to town.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Soldiers returning from World War II arrived in a country whose labor market had changed in their absence. While there was great need for employment, the high levels of agricultural production commanded by the war effort were no longer necessary. In addition, the practice of agriculture became increasingly mechanized in the Post-War period. Both of these developments had major implications for the traditional economies of agricultural areas like West Plains. It was in this uncertain employment environment that the town received an economic boon in the form of a new shoe factory. Opening in 1946 with an initial hire of 289 employees (approximately 7% of the town's total population), the economic impact was immediate and substantial.<sup>xxxiii</sup> With a new major source of employment, the town's overall economy drastically improved and even in the first year of shoe production analysts noted a 50% increase in retail sales in the shops of West Plains.<sup>xxxiv</sup> As was the case with other rural shoe factory towns, for the duration of its presence in the West Plains, International Shoe was the largest single employer.

**Continuation of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Rural Industrial Model in the Post-War Period.**

In 1940, Richard O. Rumer, attorney for International Shoe addressed the St. Louis Stock exchange. In his remarks, he noted some features of ISC's longstanding policies and described its landscape of production. He noted that the company operated 45 shoe factories principally within a 200 mile radius of St. Louis. He went on to summarize the practices that the company had developed around the turn of the century, whereby factories were purposely situated in towns with populations that ranged from 1,000 to 50,000 people and that these locations were chosen largely based on inducements offered by the town to the company. Furthermore, he explained "The shoe business is readily adaptable to decentralization as manufacturing can be done economically in small units employing 350-1000 people, in buildings of light construction and by use of light machinery."<sup>xxxv</sup> As previously mentioned, these policies also had the added

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<sup>xxxii</sup> Ohman. p. 106.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Foley and Keenoy, p.7.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Richard O. Rumer, The Story of International Shoe, (St. Louis: International Shoe Company, 1940), p.6

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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advantage of creating a relationship of dependency whereby the economic health of a town became reliant upon the continued presence of the factory and thus enabled ISC to command concessions such as tax abatement, free land, cheap utilities, and the suppression of unions.

This was certainly the case with regard to the factory that ISC constructed in West Plains in 1946. Because of wartime production, International Shoe had the most lucrative year in its history in 1945 according to a New York Times article noting the company's fantastic profits.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Looking to channel those profits into further growth, the company dispatched representatives to several small towns to scout out possible new factory locations. On the way to Batesville Arkansas, two company representatives stopped in West Plains to visit the company's outlet in the local J.C. Penney store. The store manager was also the president of the town's chamber of commerce; he sensed an opportunity and called an impromptu Chamber meeting.<sup>xxxvii</sup> At the meeting, the ISC representatives explained their terms: in order to secure a factory, the town would need to provide construction costs of \$120,000 and four acres of land in close proximity to the railroad tracks.

Despite these difficult requirements, the town's decision-makers felt strongly that the factory would be a great opportunity and thus developed a plan to meet ISC's demands. West Plains purchased land for the factory and sold adjacent lots for \$300 to the townspeople. The lots were sold like raffle tickets and then drawn at random at the courthouse.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Additionally, the town provided all needed platting and infrastructure for the factory including utilities. The company in return provided engineering and architectural plans by Herbert Reinhardt, ISC's Architectural Manager for their Machinery and Power Division.<sup>xxxix</sup> Reinhardt worked for International Shoe from 1917 until 1956 and oversaw the design of 25 factories and 50 additions to existing facilities. Prior to his employment with International Shoe, Reinhardt worked briefly for the St. Louis-based architectural firm Helfensteller, Hirsch & Watson.<sup>xl</sup>

Typical of small, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century factory buildings constructed by International shoe, the unassuming one-story facility was built for function. When constructed, the building was located at the northwest edge of West Plains and was surrounded by residential areas and recently subdivided open land which could accommodate the housing needs of the employees. The site

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<sup>xxxvi</sup> New York Times, 6 January 1945.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Ohman, p.245.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> "Drawing Lots for Shoe Factory Addition." The West Plains Journal-Gazette, 28 March 1946.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Foley and Keenoy, p. 8.

<sup>xl</sup> Ibid.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

---

was adjacent to the railroad to the northeast, and freight bays at the southeast corners of both building components enabled the easy transfer of raw- and finished materials into and out of the factory. The freight bays, mechanical rooms, and storage facilities were strategically placed adjacent to a designated spur line, which ran parallel to the south façade. The single level of the factory-floor obviated the need for any mechanical lifting apparatus. The fenestration patterns, with variable arrangements of tall functional windows, vents, and glass block lights allowed for abundant light and ventilation. The fact that fenestration and window types change according to functional use areas recorded by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company indicates that these choices were made based upon the specific needs of each activity area.

In the development of the West Plains factory, ISC continued the policies of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that had so far enabled them to keep costs low, production high, and unions out. In addition to the concessions wrung from the town, it appears that the company was also continuing its pre-war policy of employing a largely female work force because they could get away with paying lower wages for equal work. While the gender distribution of the overall workforce at the factory during typical production is not known, the West Plains Journal Gazette noted in June of 1946 as the plant was under construction, “[A]t present [ISC] is training 42 persons at the armory. Eight of these are men and the rest are women.”<sup>xli</sup>

ISC’s early 20<sup>th</sup> century strategy of union-suppression by fostering economic dependence quickly took effect in West Plains as well. Less than a year after production began at the factory, an article entitled “Attempt Being Made to Form Union at Shoe Factory Here” appeared in a town newspaper called The Weekly Quill. The article detailed how the chamber of commerce and local business men, with the help of the police, were taking “quick and decisive action against what was described as communist agents attempting to organize employees of the...factory.”<sup>xlii</sup> The town fathers were clearly agitated by the prospect of a union causing ISC to abandon West Plains not just because they had spent a massive amount of money on the construction of the factory, but also because of the jobs they still anticipated. These fears were not unfounded. While the factory was under construction; ISC had closed plants in Kirksville, Sikeston, Dexter, and Windsor (Missouri) as a result of a strike in St. Louis where the unions were much more widespread. The trickle-down effect of a union strike in one portion of the manufacturing chain stopping production at non-union factories was a convincing argument against unionization.

The West Plains factory hadn’t even been in operation for a year when the Chamber of Commerce received reports that a man named Larry Williams had been seen “outside the factory after closing time...collecting money and passing out slips of paper” the Chamber dispatched

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<sup>xli</sup> “Shoe Factory to Start About 1<sup>st</sup> of September.” The West Plains Journal-Gazette, 20 June 1946.

<sup>xlii</sup> “Attempt Being Made to Form Union at Shoe Factory Here,” The Weekly Quill, 4 April 1947.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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two members along with the police to locate him and haul him before the group for questioning.<sup>xliii</sup> While Mr. Williams was eventually absolved (he had been delivering receipts for insurance policies), this extra-legal action by the powerful men of the town was exactly what ISC counted on when they located factories in small towns rather than cities like St. Louis.

Union representatives were routinely, and illegally, chased out of small communities across the state because the towns were so heavily invested in their factories that they couldn't afford to anger the companies that owned them. Joseph Madden of the Boot and Shoe Worker's Union had already figured out that the National Labor Relations Act did not apply on the ground in small town Missouri when he was run out of Caruthersville in 1935 for attempting to organize workers in a factory of the Brown Shoe Company.<sup>xliv</sup> As historian Horace Davis noted in 1940, ISC and Brown "illustrate the policy of direct but mobile warfare [with the unions]. They have...great staying power, and they have operated enough plants, and small enough plants, so that they could shift orders and even factories, and thus defeat the union in one plant or one community at a time."<sup>xlv</sup> By getting towns like West Plains to donate land and essentially pay for the construction of a factory, ISC made very little economic commitment to the communities in which they operated. And by keeping factories from producing at full capacity, it was easy for them to shift production away from (or close altogether) any factory in a town that did not comply with their wishes.

### **The End of an Era**

While ISC appears to have come out of World War II with every intention of continuing on the same path they had trod since the turn of the century, a major change in leadership as well as the beginning of a new era for the American economy were on the horizon. In 1949, Frank C. Rand the company's President and perhaps its strongest link to the company's origins died. President since World War I, it had been Frank Rand that continued and expanded upon the company's model of growth through vertical integration, domestic expansion, and the acquisition of competitors.<sup>xlvi</sup> According to the history of the company available through the website of its descendant *Furniture Brands International*, following the death of Rand "nonfamily

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<sup>xliii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xliv</sup> Feurer, p.2.

<sup>xlv</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>xlvi</sup> <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/Furniture-Brands-International-Inc-Company-History.html>

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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management would determine the future of ISC, and growth would take on different characteristics.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Following the acquisition of Florsheim Shoes and Savage Shoes (the largest manufacturer in Canada), the company embarked upon a period of massive diversification in terms of geography and economic pursuits. Fortunately for West Plains, the shoe factory was put to work making shoes for the Florsheim Division, which was acquired in 1952. The Florsheim brand was highly successful and its manufacture in West Plains necessitated an expansion of the factory with additional manufacturing space. However, while Florsheim was doing very well, many of the company's other brands were beginning to feel the impacts of competition from inexpensive foreign imports. Six years after the West Plains factory was expanded, the company made its first foray into overseas production, acquiring the factory of the Caribe Shoe Company in Puerto Rico. The manufacturing capacity of the Puerto Rican factory was used to replace production at the plant in the small town of Chester, Illinois.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, the company moved increasingly into retail sales. In 1955, ISC had controlling interest in 225 retail outlets; by 1960 it had 800.<sup>xlix</sup> The annual report of International Shoe in 1961 paints a picture of a company in transition. The introduction to the report references unanticipated costs related to organizational and operational changes, which in turn had been made necessary by rapid changes in the manufacturing sector.<sup>l</sup> The report discusses rapid changes in how people were shopping (the move from "main street stores to strip malls and shopping centers"), as well as the persistent rise in the costs of raw materials, driven in large part by growing international competition.<sup>li</sup> It goes on to discuss some of the strategies the company was employing to adapt, and singles out the advantages of production at the cheap Puerto Rican factory for special attention. In the same sentence the report notes the closure of three domestic facilities and the doubling of employment and tripling of production in Puerto Rico. The push to diversify was taken over and amplified in 1962 with the election of Maurice Chambers as President.<sup>lii</sup> A watershed moment, Chambers was the first company President who had not come out of either the Johnson family, or the original founding companies.

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<sup>xlvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xlix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>l</sup> International Shoe Company, Annual Report (St. Louis: International Shoe Company, 1961), p. 4.

<sup>li</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>lii</sup> Foley and Keenoy, 2008, p. 8



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 21

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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Under Chambers' watch, International Shoe initiated a period of international expansion and diversification that took it far beyond the traditional realm of shoe manufacture and retail.<sup>liii</sup> Arguably a businessman before a shoe man, Chambers' vision was of International Shoe becoming a diversified multi-national corporation. This view was no-doubt influenced by the struggle to stay profitable amidst a flood of shoes coming into the United States from foreign markets. In an effort to help the world's economies in the post World War II era, restrictions on international trade were relaxed and American protectionist policies that had supported domestic manufacturers in the first half of the century began to be dismantled. With the goal of reducing company costs, Chambers began permanently closing older domestic manufacturing facilities including six that were shuttered within one year of his assumption of power.<sup>liv</sup> Moving ever-toward a future as a multi-national conglomerate, Chambers renamed the increasingly diverse company INTERCO in 1966.<sup>lv</sup> Because Chambers' assumption of power coincided with a departure from family governance of the company, the elimination of the traditional identity of the International Shoe Company, and a period of major changes such as the removal of manufacturing facilities from U.S. soil to cheaper foreign locations and the diversification of the company into a multi-faceted conglomerate, 1962 is considered an appropriate end of the period of significance for the West Plains, and other rural ISC factories.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, INTERCO pursued an aggressive strategy of diversification. No longer a shoe company, Chambers described INTERCO in the 1972 annual report as "a broadly based manufacturer and retailer of popular priced products for the expanding middle-income population range." He went on to detail three major divisions: apparel manufacturing and distribution, general merchandising, and footwear manufacturing and retail.<sup>lvi</sup> In 1970, the West Plains factory, still making popular Florsheim shoes, had been expanded again with a packaging and shipping center. It appears that this was more the result of previously referenced strategies for adapting to changing patterns of distribution and consumption, rather than the need for increased production, as Chambers notes in the same annual report that the past decade had been a difficult one for domestic shoe manufacture. Indeed he states that the norm for the factories had been working substantially below capacity and that rapid encroachment from foreign-made footwear was the primary cause.<sup>lvii</sup>

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<sup>liii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>liv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lvi</sup> International Shoe Company, Annual Report (St. Louis: International Shoe Company, 1972), p. 1-3.

<sup>lvii</sup> Ibid., p.16.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 22

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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Despite the fact that sales and operating earnings continued to decline in the footwear division throughout the 1980s due to price competition from foreign manufacturers, the West Plains factory continued to manufacture Florsheim Brand shoes for INTERCO.<sup>lviii</sup> The town was very lucky that the brand the factory manufactured was the most prominent among INTERCO's footwear holdings. While other brands and factories had fallen by the wayside, Florsheim was noted in the company's 1986 annual report as being the driver of INTERCO's footwear market position, though it was admittedly a bright spot amidst an otherwise increasingly bleak landscape.<sup>lix</sup>

In the end however, the company was unable to successfully adjust to the changes wrought by increasing globalization and foreign competition in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and INTERCO filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy around the close of 1990. Following reorganization and the sale of many brands and divisions, the company noted in its 1992 annual report that it retained only its Florsheim and Converse Inc. shoe brands in its portfolio. The next year, the West Plains factory was closed. The descendent of the largest shoe manufacturer in the world, INTERCO was now primarily in the furniture business.<sup>lx</sup>

### Summary

While INTERCO continued to manufacture shoes in West Plains until 1993, the golden age of domestic shoe manufacture in small town Missouri and across the Midwest and South, had long since passed. Born from the merger of two upstart shoe companies in St. Louis as the city's producers seized the reins of power from the traditional footwear centers of the Northeast, International Shoe became the largest shoe manufacturer in the country in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Using its model of rural factory operation, developed during the awakening of organized labor in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the company was able to suppress unions and wring valuable concessions from the small towns where it located factories. This business model contributed to the company's dominance of the footwear industry in the United States during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The pattern of rural factory construction, exemplified in its final phase by the West Plains facility, represents an important step along the path of the shoe industry in Missouri. The West Plains factory was conceived under the presidency of Frank Rand, who had overseen the majority

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<sup>lviii</sup> INTERCO, Annual Report (St. Louis: INTERCO, 1986), p. 16.

<sup>lix</sup> Ibid

<sup>lx</sup> INTERCO, Calendar Annual Report (St. Louis: INTERCO, 1992), p. 3.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   23  

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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of rural factory construction in Missouri and around the Midwest and South by International Shoe. Continuing a pattern that had served the company for decades, Rand mistakenly anticipated a continuation of the status-quo in the American shoe industry in the Post World War II period. Following his death, changes in leadership and a continuing increase in international competition resulted in the company's move away from its former life as a domestic footwear manufacturer. Beginning in the 1950s and 60s, International Shoe developed a new identity as a highly diversified multi-national corporation. An example of the final period when International Shoe pursued its traditional model of domestic footwear manufacture, the West Plains Factory represents an important final chapter in the life of one of Missouri's most prominent companies and industries.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   24  

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   25  

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 26

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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**Boundary Description**

All of that real property located in the City of West Plains, County of Howell, State of Missouri per that general warranty deed dated May 16, 1996:

All of lots 1 and 2 in block 2 of Ramsey's addition to the City of West Plains, Missouri, except the following described tract: beginning at the northeast corner of lot 2, thence due south across said lots 1 and 2, 200 feet to the south line of said lot 1, thence with and along the south line of lot 1 to the southeast corner of said lot 1, thence in a northwesterly direction along the east line of said lots 1 and 2, 285.6 feet to the place of beginning.

All of a part of lot 2, block 2 of Ramsey's Addition to the City of West Plains, Missouri described as follows: beginning at the northeast corner of said lot 2 on the southwest property line of Missouri Avenue, thence due south 52.5 feet, thence easterly 52.5 feet to a point on the southwest property line of Missouri Avenue, thence due south 52.5 feet, thence easterly 52.5 feet to a point on the southwest property line of said Missouri Avenue 72 feet southeast of the point of beginning, thence northwesterly along the southwest property line of Missouri Avenue 72 feet to the point of beginning.

All of lots 3 and 4 in block 2 of Ramsey's Addition to the City of West Plains, Missouri, except the following described tract: beginning at the northeast corner of lot 4 in block 2, thence southeasterly along the west property line of Missouri Avenue a distance of 120 feet, thence south 53 degrees west a distance of 72 feet, thence north 60 degrees west a distance of approximately 130.36 feet to the north property line of said lot 4, thence northeasterly along the north property line of said lot 4 a distance of approximately 122.9 feet to the place of beginning

All of lot 1 of Henry Moore's subdivision of the N ½ of the SE ¼ of section 20, Township 24, Range 8 west all as recorded in plat book C at page 4.

All of lot 6 in Henry Moore's Subdivision of the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of section 20, Township 24, Range 8 as recorded in plat book C at page 3.

Vacated Alley between lots 1,2,3 and 4 in block 2 of Ramsey's Addition to the City of West Plains, Missouri and lot 1 of Henry Moore's Subdivision of the N ½ of the SE ¼ of section 20, Township 24, Range 8 and lot 6 of Henry Moore's Subdivision of the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of section 20, Township 24, Range 8.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary is that of the parcel as donated by the town of West Plains to the International Shoe Company in 1946.

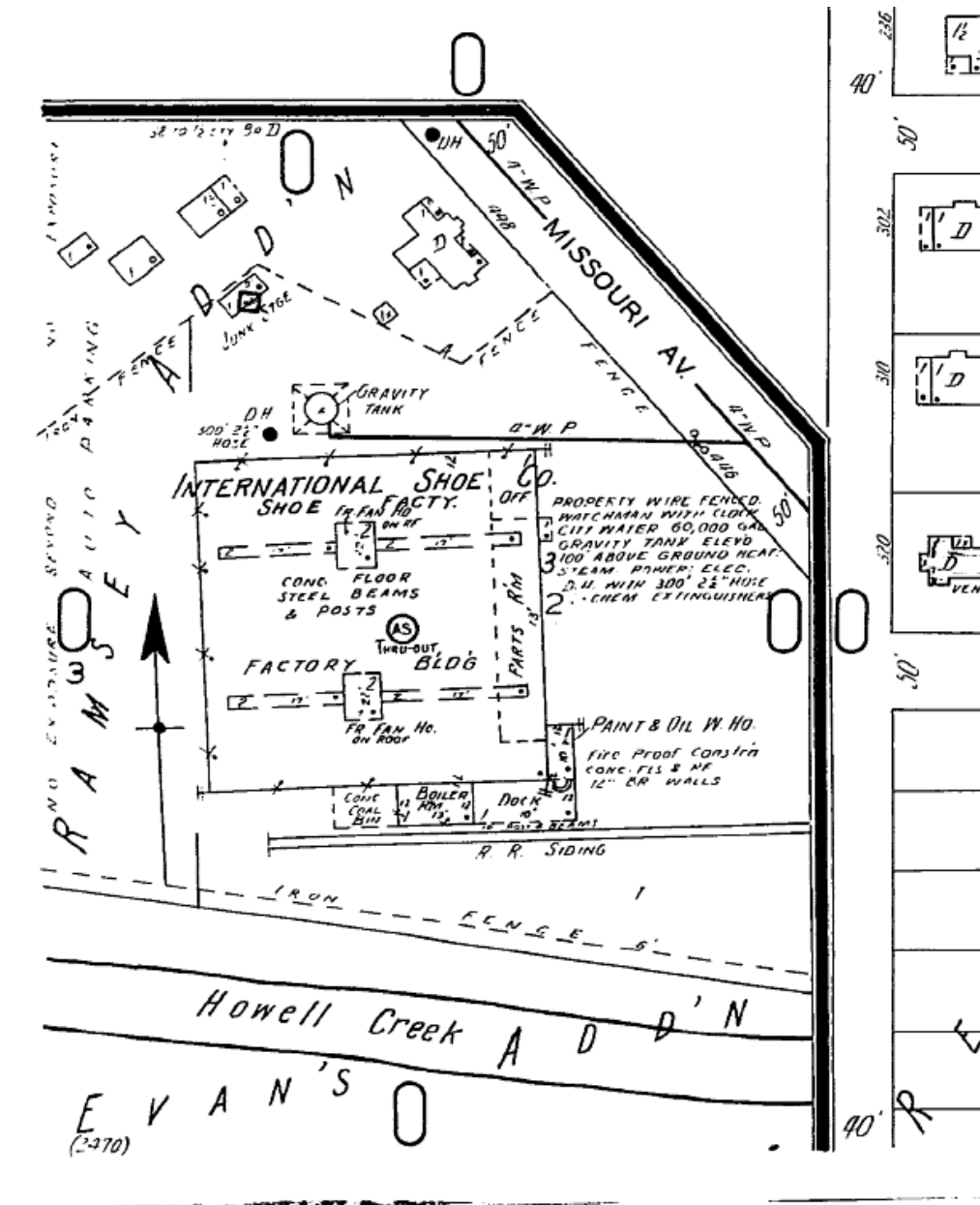
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 27

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

**International Shoe Company Building Factory, West Plains, MO.**

Source: Sanborn Map Company, West Plains, MO, Plate 8, January, 1948.

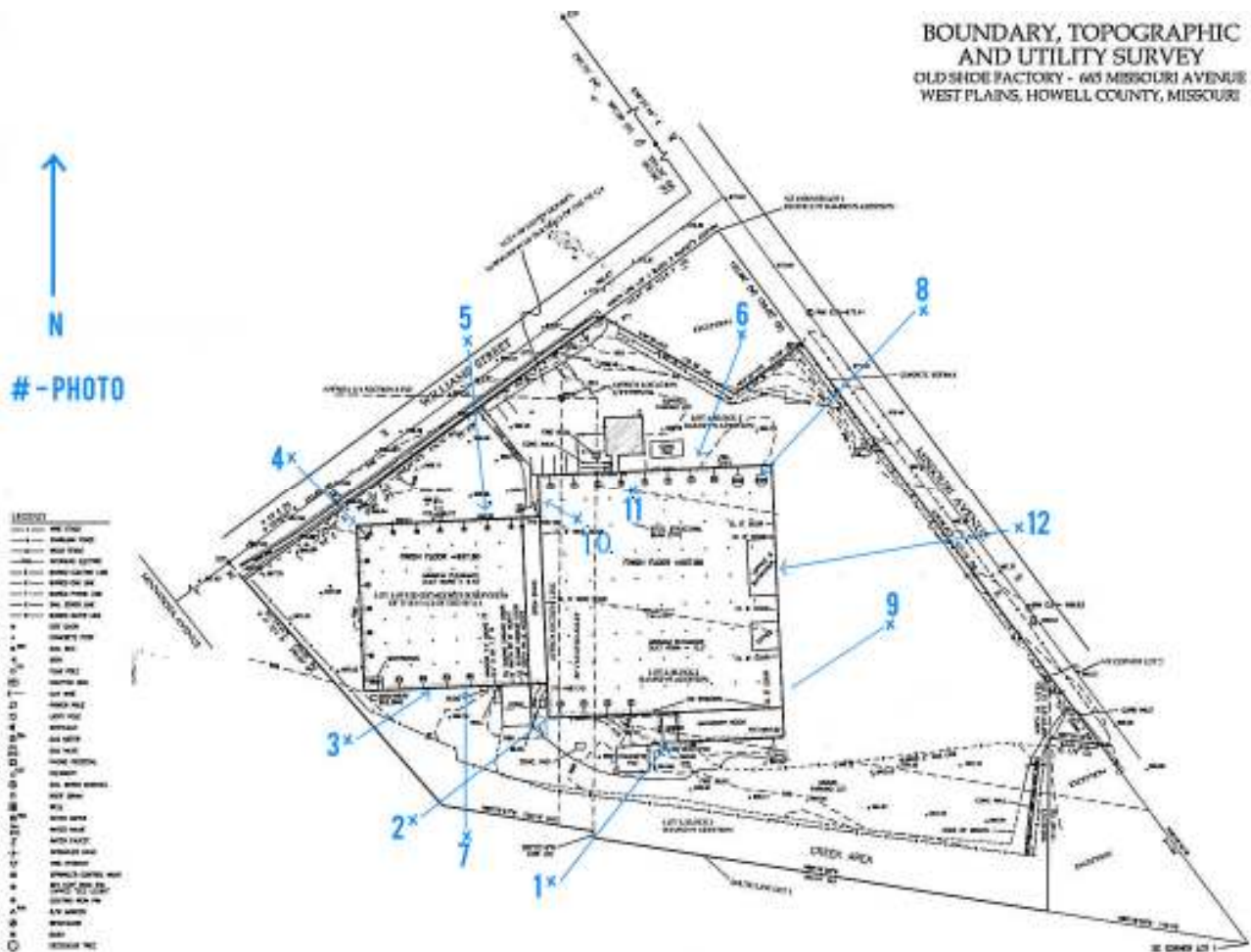


### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 28

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

## Site Plan and Photo Locations, International Shoe Company Building, West Plains, MO.





National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photo Log Page 29

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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International Shoe Company Building, West Plains, Howell County, Missouri. Photos 1-7, Dick Davidson, May 10, 2011; Photo 8-9, Dick Davidson, July 14, 2011; Photos 10-11, Andrew Weil, June 2, 2011; Photo 12, West Plains Daily Quill, date unknown.

Photo 1:

South elevation, loading dock area, 1946 wing (photo taken prior to demolition of 1970 addition, which is the brick elevation with large rectangular bay in upper right corner).

Facing: NE

Photo 2:

Southwest corner, 1946 wing

Facing: NE

Photo 3:

South elevation, 1952 wing

Facing: E

Photo 4:

Northwest corner, 1952 wing

Facing: SE

Photo 5:

North elevation, 1952 wing

Facing: S

Photo 6:

North elevation, 1946 wing

Facing: SW

Photo 7:

South elevation, 1952 wing

Facing: N

Photo 8:

East façade, 1946 wing (photo taken during demolition of 1970 wing, steel structural elements visible at left)

Facing: SW

Photo 9:

East façade, 1946 wing (photo taken during demolition of 1970 wing, steel structural elements visible)

Facing: SW

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photo Log Page 30

International Shoe Company  
Howell County, Missouri

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Photo 10  
Interior windows at NW corner of west wall, 1952 wing  
Facing: NW

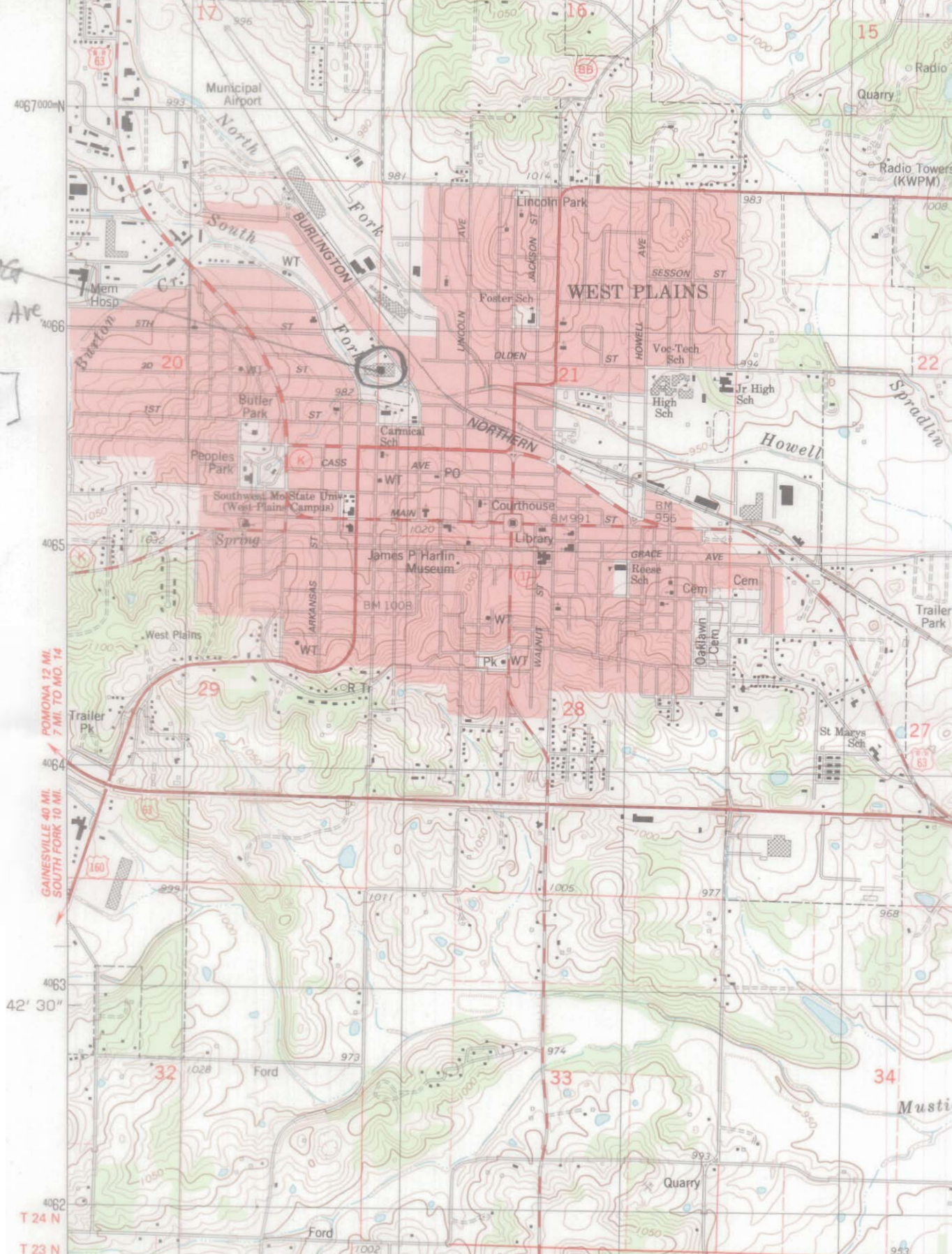
Photo 11:  
Belt Drive for Heeling Line Machinery, 1946 wing

Photo 12:  
Historic Photo of primary façade, no date  
Facing: SW

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

785' N SW  
(POMONA)

91° 52' 30" 601000E 602 603 604 50'



International  
Shoe  
CO. BUILDING

665 Missouri Ave  
West Plains,  
[Howell County]

Missouri  
Zone 15

E. 601900

N. 4065800

POMONA 12 MI.  
7 MI. TO MO. 14

GAINESVILLE 40 MI.  
SOUTH FORK 10 MI.

42' 30"

T 24 N

T 23 N



















WORKING HARD ON AREA

THE NEXT LEVEL STARTS HERE  
**PARK**  
123-456-7890  
1234 5678









INTERNATIONAL  
SHOE  
COMPANY  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI