

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name A & P Food Stores Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street number 6016 Delmar, Also 6014 and 6018 Delmar [n/a] not for publication

city or town Saint Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63112

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.

Claire Blackwell 21 Aug 2000

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire Blackwell Deputy SHPO 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 _____

Date _____

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:)

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

A & P Food Stores Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

LANDSCAPE/parking lot

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

LANDSCAPE/parking lot

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/ Art Deco

Modern Movement/ Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

CONCRETE

roof SYNTHETICS/rubber

other GLASS BLOCK

Narrative Description

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

A & P Food Stores Building
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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 # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

A & P Food Stores Building

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1940-1950

Significant Dates

1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Saum Architects

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description

SUMMARY

Built in 1940, this one story, brick, rectangular, Art Deco, commercial building has a flat roof and a rounded corner at its main entrance on the northeast corner of the building. Designed as one of the earliest A & P supermarkets in St. Louis, the property includes the store's original parking lot (with the building situated along the western third of the property). Both the building and the parking lot are contributing sites and they are located on the south side of Delmar Boulevard just west of the intersection with Des Peres Avenue and cater-cornered across the viaduct from the Delmar Station of the Wabash Railroad. To the west of the A & P Food Stores Building, this major neighborhood commercial area continues along Delmar Boulevard to Skinker Boulevard at the edge of the city and into University City along Delmar west of Skinker. This part of Delmar is a major early twentieth century commercial district of primarily two and three story retail/commercial buildings that developed in northwest Saint Louis to support the nearby, middle class, residential areas, mostly in what is now the Skinker-DeBaliviere local historic district.

EXTERIOR

Primary Façade (North Elevation)

The primary façade of this building on the north elevation faces Delmar with its large horizontal display window and includes the rounded corner at the northeast corner with what was originally a slightly recessed entry flanked by additional display windows, one facing north onto Delmar and the other facing east into the parking lot. Both the north elevation and the rounded corner share stylistic details which are distinctive from the secondary elevations.

The primary façade consists of buff colored brick with 3 red brick stringcourses dividing the upper façade into horizontal bands. There is a single, long, horizontal display window that spans nearly two-thirds of the north elevation, which originally had enameled steel panels in the bulkhead. A display window, approximately one-third the length of this main window was originally positioned to each side of the recessed entry and originally had the same enameled steel panels in the bulkhead. At some point, the enameled panels of the main window were replaced with buff colored brick, but as part of the historic rehabilitation project now nearing completion, enameled panels will once again form the bulkheads of the display windows. At each end of the north elevation's large, horizontal display window as well as flanking the ends of the display windows adjacent to the entry (and forming the ends of the rounded corner), are paired pilaster-like strips (3 sets in all) with glass block windows between the pilasters. These pilasters project slightly from the main façade and are made of buff brick set as 4 vertical rows of sawtooth brick flanked by soldier bricks and the paired pilasters rest on glazed black brick plinths. Vertical, buff colored brick bands form the lintels of both the rounded entry and the storefront display window. The parapet cap of the main façade is caststone (concrete) with a soldier course of buff colored brick below this cap. Light green, enameled, metal panels shaped like upside down triangles are positioned horizontally between each of the 3 the red brick stringcourses and the concrete parapet cap to divide the upper façade above the display window into thirds as well as to accentuate the 3 horizontal bands of the upper façade.

The parapet of the rounded corner originally extended above the row of sawtooth brick that defines to top edge of the façade and although it is still under reconstruction as part of the current historic tax credit project, from an historic drawing (attached), it is clear that a similar series of 4 light green enameled triangles were originally centered on the rounded corner above the storefront entry (with 2 remaining) and these triangles were flanked by soldier courses of buff colored brick which extended from the base of the entry's lintel to the stepped parapet cap above the row of sawtooth brick. The original stepped parapet spanned the area between the pilaster strips at each end of the rounded entry with a cast stone (concrete) row that was fluted forming a long horizontal band to either side of the stepped brick detailing centered over the recessed entry and above the caststone course which forms the parapet cap on the remaining portions of the façade.

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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description (continued)

Secondary Elevations

The secondary elevations are all treated similarly with the exception of the rounded corner at the north end of the east elevation which forms part of the primary elevation and a short section of the primary elevation treatment which wraps onto the west elevation. These secondary elevation walls made of red brick and the stringcourse motif of the primary elevation is continued from the main façade along all other elevations with the stringcourses made of rusticated concrete bricks left their natural gray color. While the east and west elevations continue the horizontal banding from the primary elevation with the three stringcourses and even have an additional concrete brick stringcourse about halfway up the wall, the south (alley) elevation only has a single stringcourse, which is the continuation of the lowest stringcourse on the east and west elevation, but due to elevation changes and the lower roof profile toward the rear of the building, this stringcourse is positioned in the upper third of the rear elevation. The elevation change at the alley also reveals a stone foundation, which appears to have been made of salvaged materials since some stones are dressed while others are not. On the alley, there were small loading dock openings and on the east elevation near the rear was a service entry door.

To the east of the building is a large, paved parking lot that covers the remaining portion of the property, extending east of the building to the corner of Des Peres and from Delmar to the alley on the south side of the property. Historically, this part of the property was a boggy hole that was filled in and leveled with a stone retaining wall (below grade) built along the alley. The parking lot has been part of the historic property since the building's construction, a necessity for mid-twentieth century commercial construction, especially a supermarket and it continues to be a part of the property today. The parking lot is paved with asphalt, and extending to the public sidewalks with the driveway entry originally adjacent to the building on the northwest corner of the parking lot.

INTERIOR

The interior was originally one large retail space, punctuated by 2 rows of 4 steel H-columns that supported the steel I-beams which were clad in wood, dividing the interior into 3 open bays across the front of the building. The interior was originally one large open room with an original divider wall about two-thirds of the way back across the building to separate the stock room from the retail store. The ceiling joists and roof structure of the retail space were originally covered by Celotex panels, but these panels and some of the structural supports were damaged by a recent fire. A previous owner had repaired this damage by installing a dropped, acoustical ceiling and sheetrocking the exterior walls. As part of the current rehabilitation project, the eastern third of the retail space (the eastern bay) was restored to its original ceiling height, with a simple sheetrock ceiling. The center and western bay of the original retail space will be finished as two separate retail spaces with a simple wall divider along the column line. The eastern bay has been divided up into office spaces for the owner, the architectural firm, the Saint Louis Design Alliance, primarily utilizing shorter partition walls and connecting the eastern bay to the original stock room across the back of the building. The area at the rounded corner now forms a vestibule with a glass block wall, approximately at the position of the original recessed entry wall, that parallels the radius of the rounded corner with doors at either end of the radius into the adjacent interior spaces.

ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

When the current historic rehabilitation project began, the upper façade had been covered with siding, squaring off and damaging the upper portion of the rounded corner entry, as well as removing the stepped parapet detail. Both the east and north elevation had been painted gray, obscuring the decorative details. The building had not been in use in recent years and its display window glass and the doorway had been replaced with plywood boards. Because there was visible evidence under the siding and paint, the siding was initially removed to reveal how much of the original brick façade was

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**A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO**

Narrative Description (continued)

intact. There had been some damage to the parapet and bricks on the rounded corner, but most of the original façade was still intact, including the pilaster strips with the glass blocks, the black enameled brick plinths, light green enameled steel triangles, and the large openings for the massive display window and entry.

The historic elevation drawing submitted with the request for the original building permit, as well as other extant A & P Food Store buildings in Saint Louis, which are of similar design, have provided the owners with documentary evidence to reconstruct this parapet as part of their tax credit rehabilitation project. Although buff colored brick has replaced the original enameled steel panels of the bulkheads under the concrete display window sills (as shown on the historic elevation drawing) and it currently blends well with the brick of the upper façade, the new owners have decided to install new enameled panels to match the originals in the bulkheads as part of their current rehabilitation project. Based upon the drawings submitted to and approved by the National Park Service as part of rehabilitation, the display windows are being reframed in aluminum (see drawing of Proposed North Elevation) with an aluminum framed, transomed, entry door centered on the rounded corner below the reconstructed stepped parapet and two additional aluminum framed, transomed, entry doors positioned at each end of the primary display window.

Over the years, the openings on the alley elevation have been bricked in and altered slightly, but their location at the alley has no significant impact on the historic integrity of the building. Although the east wall did not originally have windows, part of the adaptive reuse of this building required windows, and 4 sets of metal, paired casement windows now punctuate the east wall, but their position on this secondary elevation as well as their simple design and even placement, minimize the impact of this alteration, which was approved by the National Park Service. In 1960, a concrete block addition was attached to the building at the south end of the east elevation along the alley. It was apparently used for the mechanical equipment that ran the coolant cases. Since it is at the back of the property it is basically non-intrusive and does not impact the historic integrity of the building.

At some point after 1940, a small one story concrete block building was constructed in the middle of the parking lot (see historic fire insurance map) but it has since been demolished, returning the parking lot to its original dimensions. For security reasons and to comply with current city landscaping requirements, a new, ornamental, metal fence has been constructed around the perimeter of the parking lot and the owners have taken this opportunity to utilize the triangular detailing from the building's parapet as a feature of the ornamental fence's design, helping visually tie the large parking lot to the building's design. Although the original curb cut for the parking lot remains, this is now a gated pedestrian entry and a new curb cut, at the south end of the Des Peres side of the lot now provides secured, gated, access for automobiles.

Although the configuration of the interior has changed, the space divisions, approved as part of the current tax credit rehabilitation project, retain the three bay divisions formed by the original support columns, even keeping the original beam cladding and simple ceiling moldings in the eastern bay. In addition, the new glass block wall helps redefine the entry as it was originally, as a rounded corner, rather than the squared off, recessed corner entry of the previous remodeling. With the exception of a small portion of the divider wall (across the back third of the building) between the original retail space and storage area, as one office, which was removed to help connect the eastern bay with the back of the building, there have been no structural alterations to the interior.

Even without the completion of the historic rehabilitation project, the A & P Food Stores Building retains the applicable National Register standards for historic integrity. Its setting has not altered drastically and it is still located on the Delmar commercial strip serving the adjacent residential neighborhood. It also retains its basic exterior design elements and materials (with missing elements currently under repair). Finally, it maintains its associations with the adjacent commercial developments and its historic associations as a supermarket (with its attached parking lot).

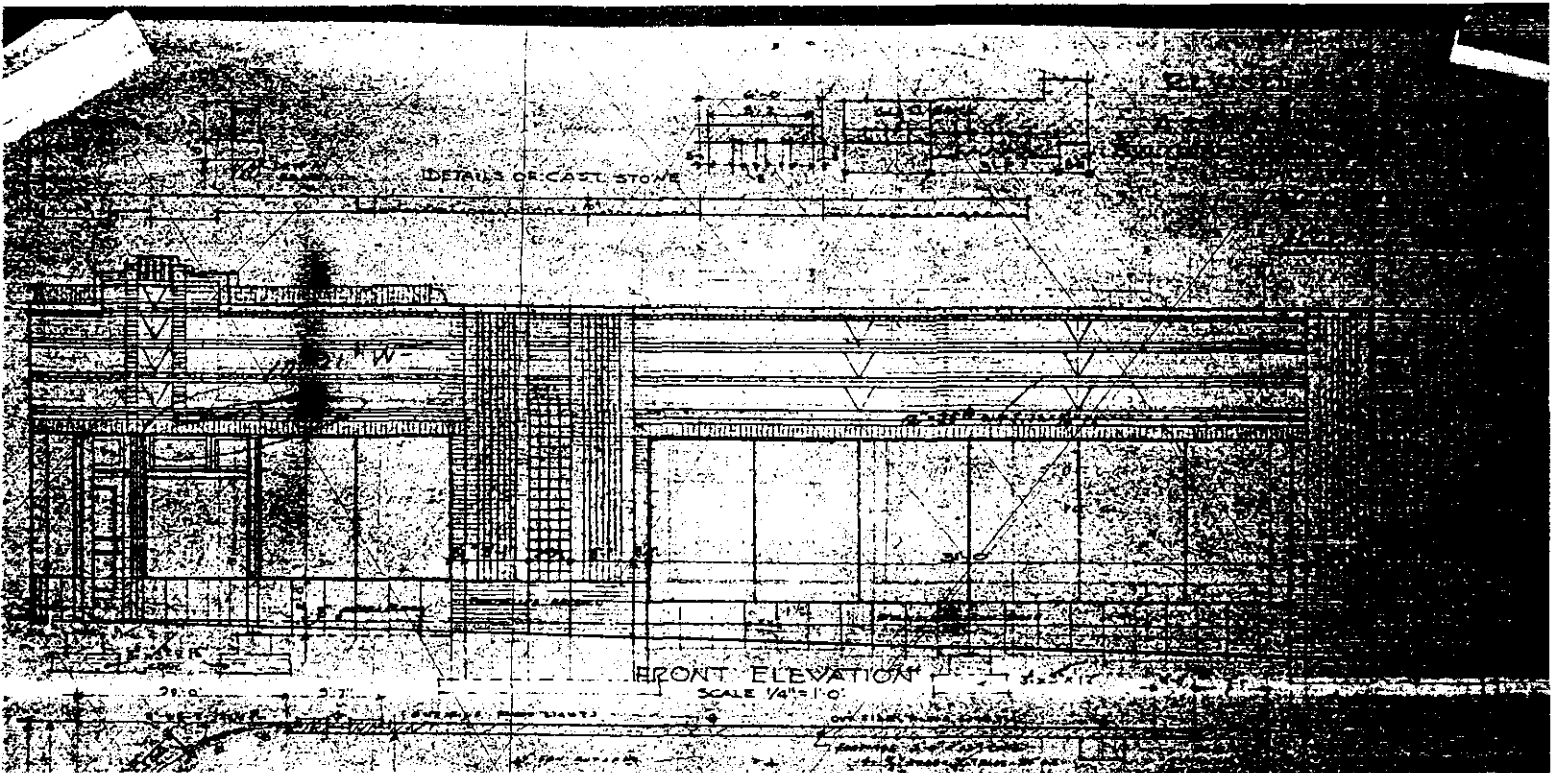
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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Original North Elevation Plan
By Saum Architects
(From Original Building Permit Files
at St. Louis City Hall Archives)



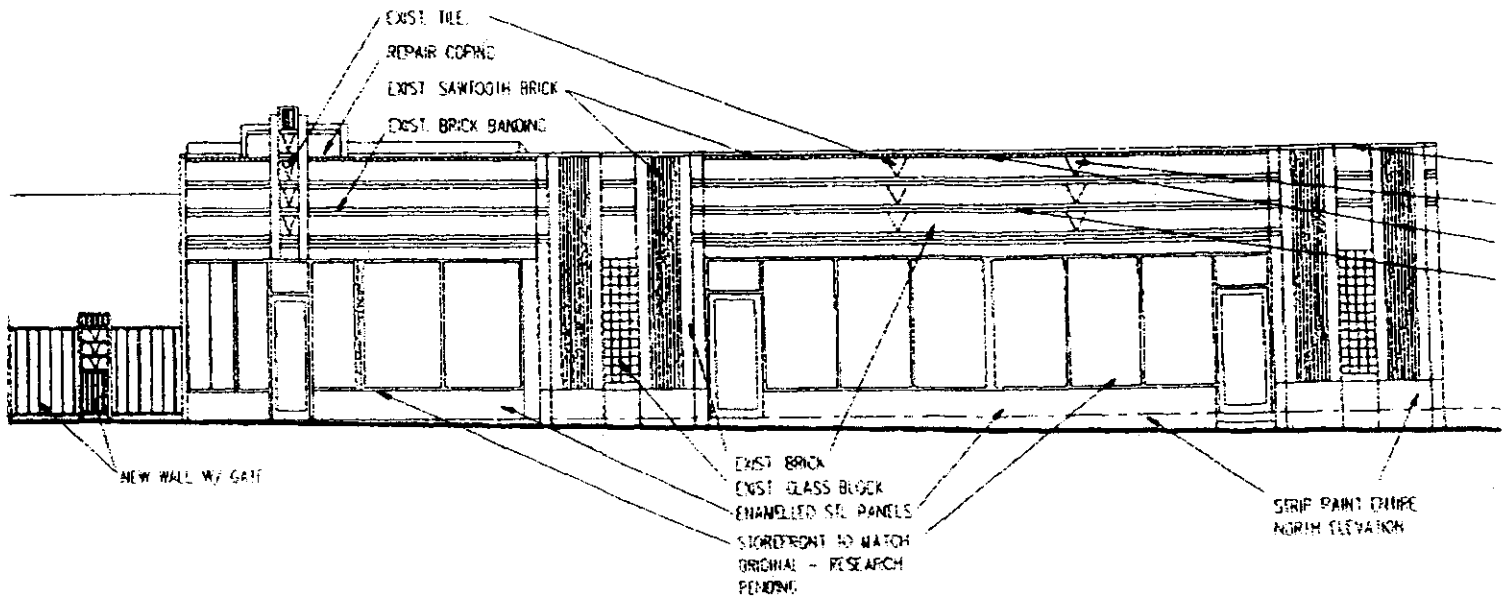
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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

1999 Proposed North Elevation
(Approved by National Park Service)
Designed by St. Louis Design Alliance



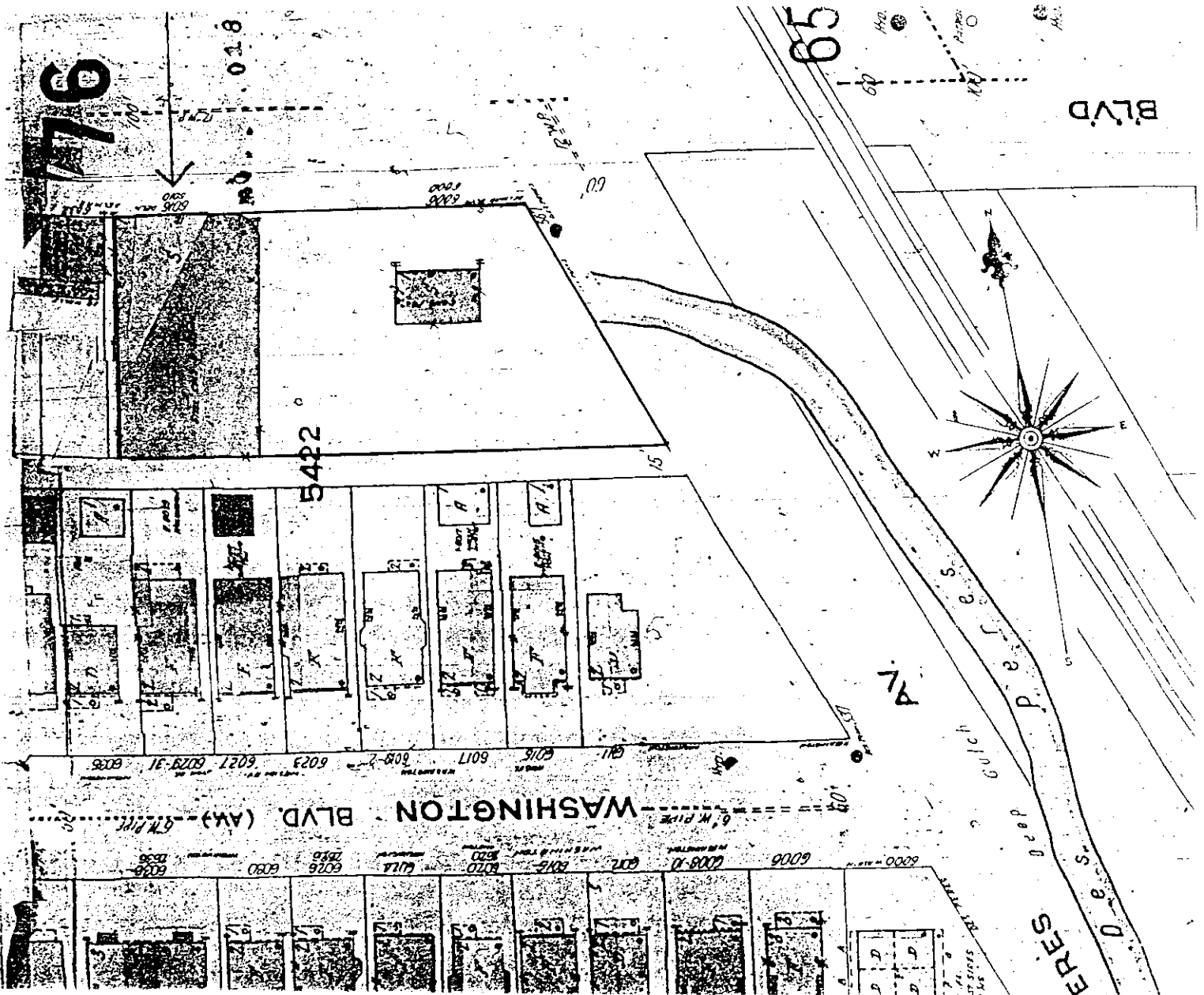
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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Site Plan of Property
Taken from 1903-1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps



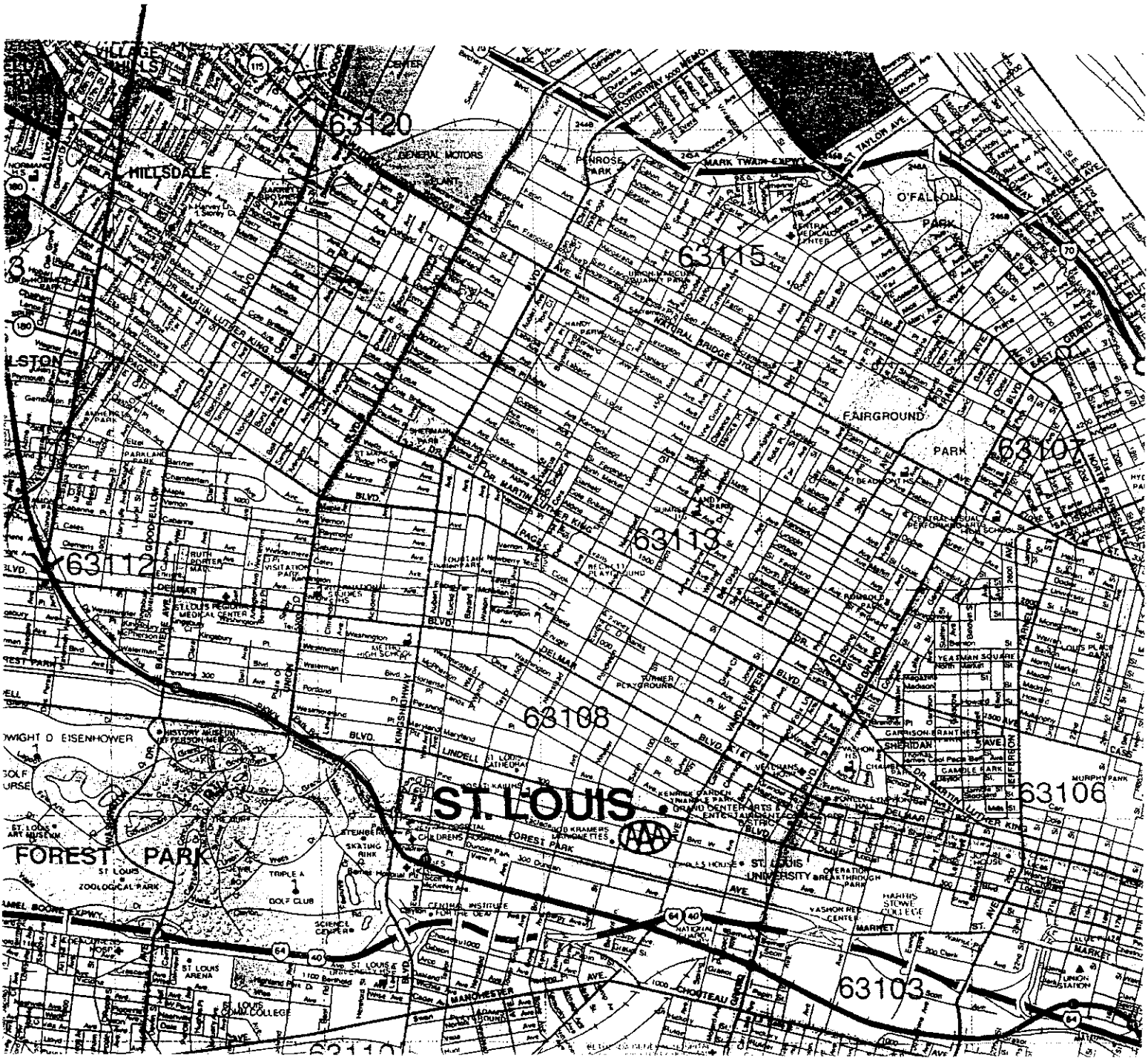
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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of Saint Louis (Independent City), MO
Locating the property



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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance

SUMMARY

Built in 1940¹, the A & P Food Stores Building at 6016 Delmar Boulevard in Saint Louis [Independent City], Missouri is significant under Criterion C as a rare example of a small commercial building with an Art Deco design in Saint Louis, where most of the Art Deco buildings are either large commercial structures or residences. This one-story, Art Deco supermarket is not only one of the rare examples of small, commercial, Art Deco buildings in the city, it also represents the work of a prolific but lesser known, early twentieth century Saint Louis architectural firm, Saum Architects, and is one of the few known commercial designs utilizing Art Deco stylistic details by the firm in Saint Louis. Besides its architectural significance, the importance of the A & P Food Stores Building is compounded as one of the earliest supermarkets in the city. Because of the supermarket's close association with accommodating the demands and convenience of the new automobile consumer (since supermarkets were premised on providing ample parking and one-stop grocery shopping), which impacted the lifestyle of city residents before World War II and changed the character of the small neighborhood retail business environment in Saint Louis, this A & P Food Stores Building is also significant under Criterion A: (Commerce). The concept of a supermarket, combining both dry goods, produce and meat into one retail business with ample parking, was an innovative approach developed in the 1930s designed to replace the smaller neighborhood groceries, greengrocers and butcher shops. This new business concept was utilized extensively in Saint Louis by the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, a leading grocery company in Saint Louis prior to 1950 and one of the leading grocery companies nationwide in the development of the modern supermarket. The A & P Food Stores Building at 6016 Delmar Boulevard is one of the oldest extant A & P supermarket buildings in Saint Louis, and was one of the last remaining A & Ps in Saint Louis when the company left the city in 1979-1980.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Encouraged by the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in 1925 which strictly prohibited historical styles, American architects began designing buildings that were much less derivative of historic architectural styles and more celebratory of the technological advances in the mid-twentieth century. Originally termed the Modernistic movement, the styles remained popular throughout the Great Depression and World War II but they were not distinctly identified until the 1970s, when the terms Art Deco and Art Moderne began to differentiate two of these Modernistic styles from the more popular International style. Both Art Deco and Art Moderne place an emphasis on flat planes and horizontal banding, as well as a glorification of modern, twentieth century, design materials (such as aluminum, glazed metal, glass blocks, etc.), but beyond these commonalities, the two styles usually are distinguished by the verticality of Art Deco designs and the horizontal emphasis of Art Moderne structures. While Art Deco is primarily a style of ornament, the ornament is generally simple geometric shapes, utilizing fluting, reeding, zigzags, and chevrons as design motifs. Art Moderne is most closely associated with its "streamlined" appearance, usually affected by rounded corners, visually referencing the modern designs of trains and other industrial marvels. While Art Deco remained popular during the Great Depression, primarily on the more monumental designs usually associated with New Deal agency funding public buildings (the Public Works Administration), Art Moderne, with its less elaborate design features, grew in popularity, especially on smaller scale projects, partly because the style cost less and required fewer materials to construct during the economically tight years as the nation began its recovery from the Great Depression.²

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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Completed in 1940, the A & P Food Stores Building is an excellent example of Art Deco design as it was applied to smaller scale commercial buildings in Saint Louis. As a simple, one-story, brick store building completed in 1940, the A & P Food Store Building utilizes a combination of simple Art Deco design details, including the simplicity and geometric form of the façade design, the use of a lighter colored brick surface, the setbacks of the façade design (separating the main façade from the pilaster and parapet details), the original stepped parapet detail (now under reconstruction), the zigzag detailing provided by the sawtooth bricks in the pilaster strips, and just below the parapet, the geometric shapes used as decorative details (in this case triangles). In addition, the use of modern materials, such as the black glazed brick, large plate glass windows, glass blocks, cast stone (concrete), and enameled steel panels (in the bulkheads and the decorative triangles now under reconstruction,) are also characteristic of the Art Deco style. The A & P Food Stores Building also shows the impact of the later Art Deco designs, ones that would ultimately be identified as Art Moderne or Streamline Modern because of their simple horizontal designs (accentuated on this building by its flat roof, stringcourses in contrasting brick, and the large horizontal display windows and entry opening) as well as the rounded corner at the entry.

The A & P Food Stores Building was designed by Saum Architects,³ a firm formed by brothers Frank J. and Thomas P. Saum in 1915, although it appears that Frank Saum operated independently as early as 1910.⁴ Once they started their own firm, the Saums designed the imposing, eight story Saum Hotel at 1919 South Grand (in the certified Shaw Neighborhood Local Historic District), as well as houses, flats, and apartments, most of which were in the subdivisions west of Grand and in the Central West End, or in the suburbs surrounding Saint Louis. Most of their known designs date from 1915 through 1930, with only a few buildings designed by their firm after 1930 identified, partly due to the available research on this twentieth century architectural firm. Of their known designs, only three of their residential designs are currently listed on the National Register, as part of residential districts in University City or Clayton.

Only in a few rare instances have examples of their commercial designs been identified since most were for smaller scale projects which did not receive the notoriety of large scale commercial designs. Three of these are outside of the city of Saint Louis in the newer suburbs and, like many mid-twentieth century commercial buildings, four of the eight known examples of their work in the city of Saint Louis have been demolished. The A & P Food Stores Building represents one of the five extant known examples of their designs for a small-scale commercial buildings.

While one of their commercial designs in University City (7300 Dartmouth) is an Art Deco design, the only two known Art Deco designs by Saum Architects in Saint Louis are both supermarkets for the A & P Tea Company, although the building at 4719-4721 Gravois, a building designed in 1939, the year before the A & P Food Stores Building was built, it is not as ornate as the A & P Food Stores building, lacking some of the ornamental details, most notably, the curved corner at the entrance of the building.⁵

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A & P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Not only was A & P Food Stores Building one of the Saum's few small scale commercial designs, it also represents one of the rare cases of Art Deco design in small commercial structures in the city of Saint Louis. Unlike other major cities in the region, especially Kansas City and Tulsa, Saint Louis does not have a high concentration of Art Deco designs, partly due to the fact that much of the city had already built up before the 1930s, when Art Deco became popular. In Saint Louis, there is a small concentration of Art Deco commercial designs in the central business district, but most of the examples of Art Deco commercial designs in Saint Louis are much more monumental works and often skyscrapers, such as the Southwestern Bell Building and the Courts Building downtown, or the Southwest National Bank Building on South Grand. In addition, there are good concentrations of Art Deco designs among the residential buildings, especially in Saint Louis Hills in the southwestern corner of the city, and there are several notable churches, including two in Saint Louis Hills (St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church and St. Mark's Episcopal Church).

However, there are few representative examples of Art Deco among the smaller commercial buildings spread around the city, but most are still concentrated in the southwestern part of the city near Saint Louis Hills, since it was the last subdivision to be developed within the city limits in the 1930s. In Esley Hamilton's Art Deco survey of Saint Louis and Saint Louis County (two separate, not overlapping, areas), he found few representative examples of these smaller commercial buildings and specifically noted that these buildings appear to be more seriously threatened in relation to their numbers than other resources in other styles and periods. Although he had not included the A & P Food Store Building in this survey (because its façade had been covered with wooden siding at that time, obscuring its decorative details), he did include another Art Deco grocery store by the same architects, Saum Architects, but it is located outside the Saint Louis city limits at 7300 Dartmouth in suburb of University City.⁶ While the suburbs around Saint Louis, many of which were not established until the beginning of the twentieth century, have many more examples of Art Deco design, it is due primarily to the fact that these suburbs were still building their basic infrastructure well into the twentieth century, while Saint Louis had much of its land developed before the 1920s when the Art Deco style became popular.

HISTORY OF THE A & P and The Impact of Supermarkets

The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company was founded in Manhattan in 1859 by George Huntington Hartford as a bulk tea company, later expanded to include coffee and spices, which made it possible for the company to expand quickly throughout the New York City area. By 1871, the company had evolved into a grocery business and expanded west into Chicago, and by 1876 it had stores throughout the northeastern and Midwestern United States. The effort to expand was further bolstered when George Huntington Hartford brought in his sons, George and John A. Hartford, to help him run the business. By the late 1870s, the company began marketing its own brand of coffee, Eight O'Clock Breakfast Coffee, a very successful brand that encouraged further expansion of their grocery empire. In 1912, the company tried a new technique in marketing that allowed them to grow even further; instead of using only the deliveries and charge account businesses common at the time, the Hartford's tried the new concept of a cash and carry store. This new approach to business allowed the once small company not only to compete with much larger neighboring businesses but also to open 1,600 of the new cash and carry, economy-style stores over the next two years. By 1930, the A & P (as it was commonly called) had 15,737 cash and carry chain stores nationwide (east of the Rocky Mountains).⁷

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A & P Food Stores Building
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

In the 1930s the growth of supermarkets momentarily threatened the A & P company despite the fact that it had survived the 1929 stock market crash that precipitated the Great Depression, but the company quickly righted itself by following trends in the industry and replacing the cash and carry stores with self-serve supermarkets.⁸ Supermarkets became a threat to the A & P because they represented a dramatic change in the way food shopping was done. Instead of a cash and carry chain grocery store, selling dry goods and canned goods, with the customers going to a separate butcher and greengrocer for their meat and produce, the supermarket combined all of these departments into one building.

The growth of the supermarket was further aided by changing patterns in American society. As the automobile became more popular among middleclass Americans throughout the 1920s, people in cities soon began driving to the grocery store instead of using public transportation or walking from their home. This made it possible for people to easily take home a large quantity of goods from their shopping trips, not just what they could physically carry at one time, and encouraged people to do all their shopping at once. However, most of the existing chain stores were in the middle of business districts or corner business locations within a residential neighborhood where parking was usually only available on the street and was often a problem. This problem was compounded by the fact that a trip to a chain store still required a trip to the butchers' and the greengrocers' stores before shopping was completed. The supermarkets that the A & P Company began building in Saint Louis (and elsewhere) in 1939-1940, had parking lots attached, further increasing the convenience of the supermarket to the customer and influencing the way new stores were built. This change in the way the grocery business was organized, replacing small chain stores with supermarkets, not only changed the way people shopped, but also the way neighborhoods looked, as the multiple locations of the butcher, the greengrocer, and the corner grocer were all consolidated from a number of separate businesses and storefronts with only streetside parking, to a single supermarket with a parking lot attached.⁹

Michael Cullen, a former manager with Kroger, was the first to start building supermarkets strictly for that purpose when he left Kroger in the late 1920s to try his idea. By building large stores (up to 6400 square feet) Cullen was able to eliminate the need for a warehouse while retaining the benefits of buying in bulk. "King Kullens" stores were soon winning the competition with the other grocery stores where Cullen built them, even when competing with the large chain stores, such as the A & P. Beginning in 1932, the A & P Company experimented with the supermarket concept to compete with King Kullens tremendous success, having already experienced a nineteen percent drop in sales from 1930 to 1932. However, the A & P Company was originally slow to adapt to the changing business environment, but after seeing sales continue to decline in the face of the new competition, by 1934 the company had begun to convert their operations from cash and carry chain grocery stores to the supermarket concept.¹⁰

By 1939, when the A & P Company started building supermarkets in Saint Louis, they were cutting the total number of their stores by up to one-half nationwide, eliminating unprofitable cash and carry chain stores and replacing these chain stores with supermarkets at a rate of one supermarket opened for every six chain stores closed. The company was realizing an increase in profits for the first time in almost a decade due to the economic efficiency of the supermarket system. As one of the largest grocery chains in the nation, when the A & P Company shifted its business to concentrate on supermarkets instead of chain stores, it forced even more of the food retail industry to make the same change to remain competitive.¹¹

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The A & P chain continued to grow throughout the 1950s, in both the number of stores the company opened and the volume of sales. This growth began to decline by the end of the 1950s as the company began to grow too large for its own good.¹² The upper echelons of management began to lose sight of the original plans used to achieve success, insuring that the individual stores were well run in their rush to expand. During this expansion, there were constant attempts to cut overhead costs by reducing the shipments from the warehouse, avoiding all but the most necessary building repairs (e.g. Stores often went unpainted despite the need for it) and understaffing the help in the stores. All of these cost-cutting measures hurt business by denying the customer the very reason they had shopped at the A & P in the first place, the A & P had prided itself on clean stores that were well stocked and staffed by helpful employees. Without enough shipments from the warehouse, the shelves were under-stocked and sale items were unavailable, the stores were not the clean, nice looking businesses they had been, and there was not enough staff present to help the customers or keep the lines short at the checkout counters.¹³ These problems were made even worse by the fact that the company was micromanaging the stores throughout the chain. Individual stores were not allowed to set prices as upper-management wanted to insure that A & P stores had consistent products and pricing, so store managers were not able to adjust for local demands or to local competition. As all of these conditions added up, the management of the company began to focus on the bottom line more and more, leaving them unwilling to accept temporary losses or the closing of a few stores that would be necessary to overhaul the entire system. Instead, they repeated their early mistakes and would attempt to cut overhead costs further or maintain unprofitable stores.¹⁴

During this decline, throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, the A & P company tried a number of stop gap measures, ranging from special promotions to the idea of Warehouse Economy Outlet. All of these measures continued to make the problem worse by re-enforcing the existing structural problems with the company instead of trying to fix the problems at the source. Finally, during the mid-1970s shortly after a pair of hostile takeover bids by Consolidated Foods and Gulf and Western, an outside consulting firm was hired by the Hartford Foundation (the body set up to allow the Hartford heirs to retain a controlling interest in the company without having to run it outright) to try and fix the problem.¹⁵ The consulting firm, Booz-Allen, which recommended closing thirty-six percent of the stores in the chain, all of which were experiencing at least three percent losses and the consultants also recommended a re-organization and the hiring of outside people to come into the store, including the CEO, positions which had previously been filled from within the company.¹⁶ By the mid-1980s, the streamlining of operations combined with managerial re-organization to begin A & P's recovery. Although the company is not as large as it had once been and operates in a much smaller region than it did during the peak of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company from the 1940s and the 1950s, it is once again a vibrant and successful company.

The number of former A & P stores in Saint Louis further demonstrates the importance of the chain to the city. The fact that the company had as many as twenty supermarkets in Saint Louis also demonstrates how these stores helped shape the landscape of Saint Louis. Of the A & P stores in Saint Louis throughout the history of the company in the city, only fifteen of the eighty-four sites (of A & P supermarkets or cash and carry stores) were actually definitely used as supermarkets, although another five sites may have been supermarkets (but those five buildings have been razed, so this information cannot be confirmed). The remaining sixty-four sites were all cash and carry locations. These cash and carry businesses were located in storefronts, often within a larger, two or three story, commercial building, and were not used as supermarkets. Of these eighty-four total A & P sites, twenty-eight of them have been demolished in recent years. Furthermore, of the fifteen known supermarkets, most have been altered beyond recovery by additions and new veneers,

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

and only eight retain any significant historic integrity, all with some degree of reversible modifications. Only five of these supermarket buildings, including the building at 6016 Delmar, had been built before 1942 (the other three were built between 1956 and 1961), during the A & P's early conversion of their enterprises into supermarkets in Saint Louis. The first three A & P supermarkets in Saint Louis opened in 1939, but one has been drastically altered (stuccoed) and the other two have been demolished. In 1940, five additional locations opened including the 6016 Delmar building, but two of these have been demolished, one has been irreversibly altered, and one other has had its window openings filled with brick, severely impacting its historic integrity, which makes the 6016 Delmar building the oldest remaining and best extant example of the early A & P supermarkets in Saint Louis.¹⁷

BUILDING HISTORY

The A & P Food Stores Building represents the growth of the A & P company in Saint Louis as well as its conversion from a cash and carry chain store operation to supermarkets. The building permit was taken out in 1940 so that a supermarket could be built to serve the Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood, now the Skinker-DeBaliviere/Catlin Tract/Parkview Local Historic District. Like the twenty-four other A & P Food Stores in Saint Louis at the time it was built (only eight of which were supermarkets), the store at 6016 Delmar Boulevard was an important part of the neighborhood that it served, placed on the east end of the main commercial strip along Delmar. The A & P Food Stores Building was built just one year after the period of significance (ending with the 1930s) identified for the Skinker-DeBaliviere/ Catlin Tract/ Parkview Local Historic District. At the time the Local Historic District Certification was prepared in 1984, the A & P Food Stores Building did not quite meet the fifty year requirement yet and was not eligible to be counted as a contributing building because of its age, as well as the wood cladding obscuring its architectural integrity.¹⁷ However, the A & P Food Stores Building is still an important part of the neighborhood and demonstrates its continued growth. The location of this supermarket, adjacent to the residential neighborhood along a pre-existing, major, commercial boulevard, rather than within the neighborhood (and surrounded by residential buildings), is also indicative of the development of both the supermarket concept and the early twentieth century development of subdivisions which separated residential and commercial properties into different areas.

The Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood first began to grow after the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Shortly after the conclusion of the Fair in 1905, the area was subdivided into the Parkview Place Subdivision, a process that was continued with the Washington Heights Subdivision in 1907 and the Washington Heights Subdivision Addition and the Catlin Tract in 1909. All of the subdivisions had numerous private streets and were designed with deed restrictions in place to insure all of the structures built had a minimum value. Although the restrictions varied from street to street this neighborhood provided areas for lower-middle class families to move in, as well as the upper-middle class families that usually moved into neighborhoods with restrictive deeds and covenants. As the neighborhood grew, the existence of the restrictive covenants effectively acted as zoning ordinances and limited businesses to the major thoroughfares in the area, DeBaliviere and Delmar. These business districts extended north from Forest Park along DeBaliviere and east from the western city limits along Delmar.¹⁹

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

While the neighborhood grew, the businesses grew along with it. As a result, in 1940 when construction began on the A & P Food Stores Building cater-cornered across Delmar and the viaduct from the Wabash Railroad station, the area was ready for the addition of a supermarket instead of the corner grocers that it was replacing. The store was able to continue serving the community even as the demographics of the area were changing. By the 1950s, many students and faculty members from Washington University were moving into the area as more people attended college after the end of World War II. By the 1960s, migration to the suburbs was taking its toll on the area despite the earlier growth in population from students moving in, but the A & P Food Stores Building still housed a viable business, even as many of the other A & P supermarkets throughout the city were losing ground to competitors or were hurt by changes in the neighborhoods they served, forcing many of them to close. The A & P Food Stores Building was notable compared to the other A & P stores in the Saint Louis area because of the longevity of the business that it housed. In 1956, sixteen years after the A & P Food Stores Building was completed in 1940, the A & P chain had only twelve stores throughout Saint Louis, half the number of locations at the time of the original construction, but these were all supermarkets rather than neighborhood cash and carry stores. Then, by 1973, there were only seven other stores in Saint Louis and it was one of the last six A & P Food Stores in Saint Louis in 1977. By 1980 the chain had ceased operations in Saint Louis, at which time the A & P Food Stores Building store became a Jack's Bi-Rite supermarket.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The A & P Food Stores Building at 6016 Delmar is not only an excellent example of the smaller Art Deco commercial designs in Saint Louis and one of the few known extant Saum Architects commercial designs, it is also extremely important in understanding the history of the development of supermarkets and the history of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company's operations in Saint Louis. In addition, its location on the perimeter of a residential district, with its large parking lot, is indicative of the changing dynamics of city development which isolated commercial buildings from residential areas and addressed the growing importance of the automobile within the lifestyles of twentieth century St. Louisians.

ENDNOTES

¹ City of Saint Louis (Saint Louis, Missouri), Microfilm Room, Building Permits, Permit # J-4267. 14 May 1940; "Building News" *Saint Louis Daily Record*, (15 May 1940): 11.

² John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture; A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, second edition (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), 76-79; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780; A Guide to Styles*, revised edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992), 234-246.

³"Building News," *Saint Louis Daily Record*, 15 May 1940, 11.

⁴David Simmons, Saum Architects Research Notes, Taken from Newspaper Research, St. Louis MO.; Carolyn Hewes Toft and Jane Molloy Porter, *Compton Heights: A History and Architectural Guide*. St. Louis: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, 1984, 52.

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A & P Food Stores Building
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

ENDNOTES (continued)

⁵Simmons, Newspaper Research; Karen Bode Baxter and Timothy P. Maloney, Saum Architects Commercial Buildings in St. Louis, Informal Windshield Survey, March 2000; St. Louis County (Clayton, Missouri), Parks and Recreation Department, St. Louis County Historic Buildings Database; *St. Louis Daily Record*, 15 March, 1939, 11.

⁶Esley Hamilton, *Historic Building Survey: Art Deco & the International Style, St. Louis and St. Louis County, Missouri*, St. Louis: St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, 1987.

⁷Godfrey Lebhar, *Chain Stores in America, 1859-1959* (New York: Chain Store Publishing Corporation, 1959), 30-34; Edwin P. Hoyt, *That Wonderful A & P* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1969), 92-104

⁸"A Great American Tradition" In A & P Tea Co. History [company webpage] Montvale, NJ: A & P Tea Co, cited 21 January 2000, available from <http://www.aptea.com/history.htm>.

⁹Hoyt, *That Wonderful A & P*, 157-167; James M. Mayo, *The American Grocery Store: The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 133-150.

¹⁰Lebhar, *Chain Stores in America*, , 30-31; Hoyt, *That Wonderful A & P*, 158-163; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 133-150.

¹¹Lebhar, *Chain Stores in America*, 30-34; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 133-150.

¹²Karen Bode Baxter and Timothy P. Maloney, A & P Stores in St Louis, Informal Windshield Survey, March 2000.

¹³William Walsh, *The Rise and Decline of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company* (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart Inc., 1986), 124-125, 147-149, 159.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 167-174.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 150-156.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 120-121.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁸City of Saint Louis (Saint Louis Missouri), Microfilm Room, Building Permits; Landmarks Association of St. Louis, *Skinker-DeBaliviere/ Catlin Tract/ Parkview Local Historic District Certification*, City of St. Louis Ordinance 57688, Amendment Pending-Board Bill 624, May, 1984.

¹⁹Landmarks Association of St. Louis, *Skinker-DeBaliviere/ Catlin Tract/ Parkview Local Historic District Certification*, 4-5.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 8-10; *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory*. Saint Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, Publishers, 1932, 494; 1937, 494; 1939, 464; 1940, 1601; 1941, 26; 1942, 26; 1944, 26; 1946, 26; 1947-48, 26; 1956, 2; 1958, 2; 1961, 2; 1965, 3; 1969, 2; 1973, 2; 1975, 1; 1976-77, 1; 1980, 142.

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- _____. Missouri Historic Inventory Form: "Al Price Building " at 6655 Olive Boulevard, University City, Missouri, april 1993. Stored at the Missouri Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Historic Preservation Program, Jefferson City, Missouri.
- _____. Missouri Historic Inventory Form: "Former Kroger Grocery" at 909-911 Purdue, 7300 Dartmouth, University City, Missouri, February, 1987. Stored at the Missouri Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Historic Preservation Program, Jefferson City, Missouri.
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_____. City of Saint Louis. Microfilm Room. Building Plans. Building J 4267, p. 131-133.

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Verbal Boundary Description

A lot in Block 5422 if the city of St. Louis, Missouri, that begins at a point on the southwest corner of the intersection of Delmar Boulevard and Des Peres Avenue, thence southeasterly 130 feet 9 inches to the alley, and thence westerly along the alley approximately 259 feet 9 inches, and thence northerly 114 feet 6 ½ inches to Delmar Boulevard, and thence easterly 196 feet 1 ½ inches to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and its parking lot which is part of the historic property and these boundaries correspond to the property's legal description.



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A & P Food Stores
 Building
 St. Louis (Independent
 City), MO
 UTM Reference
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A and P Food Stores Building
St Louis (Independent City) MO

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A and P Food Stores Building
St Louis, MO

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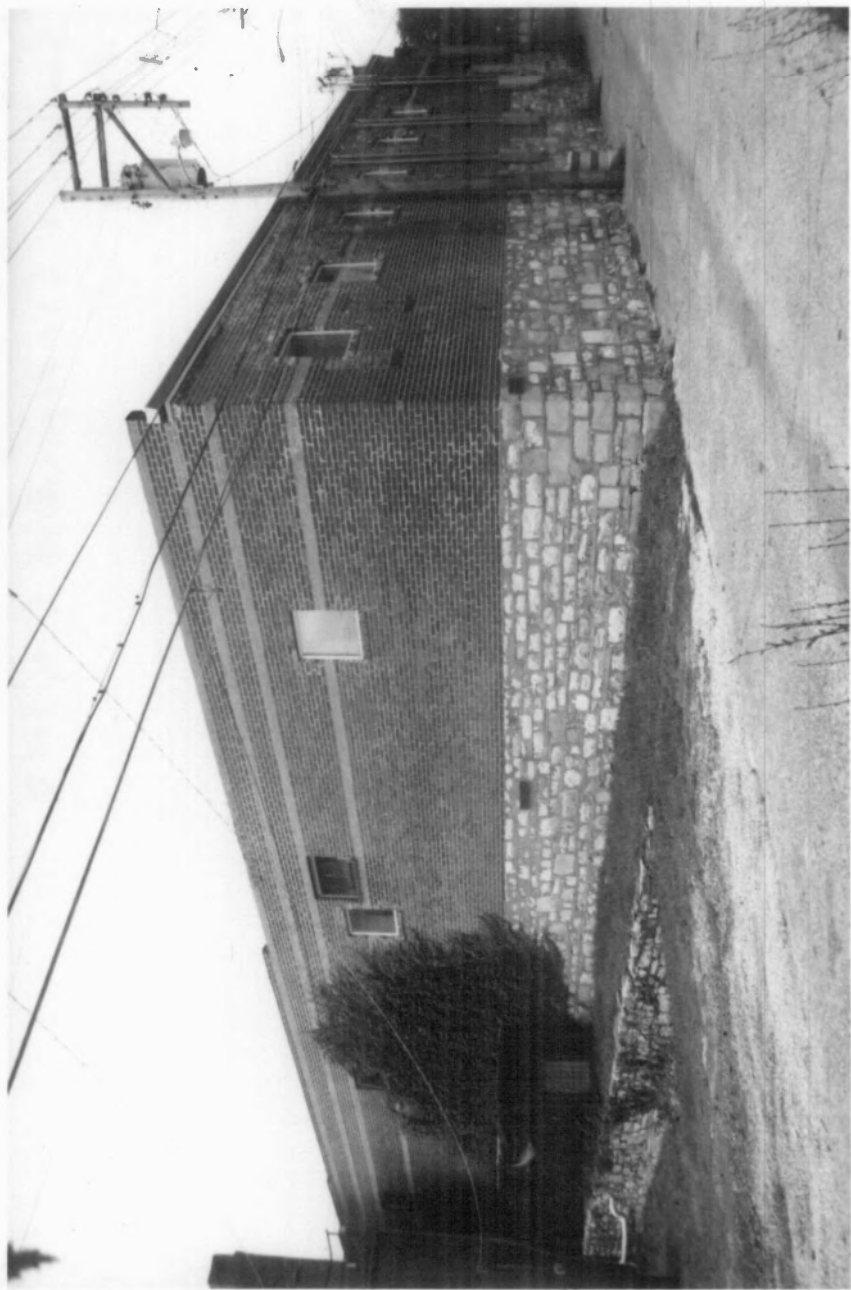
A and P Food Stores Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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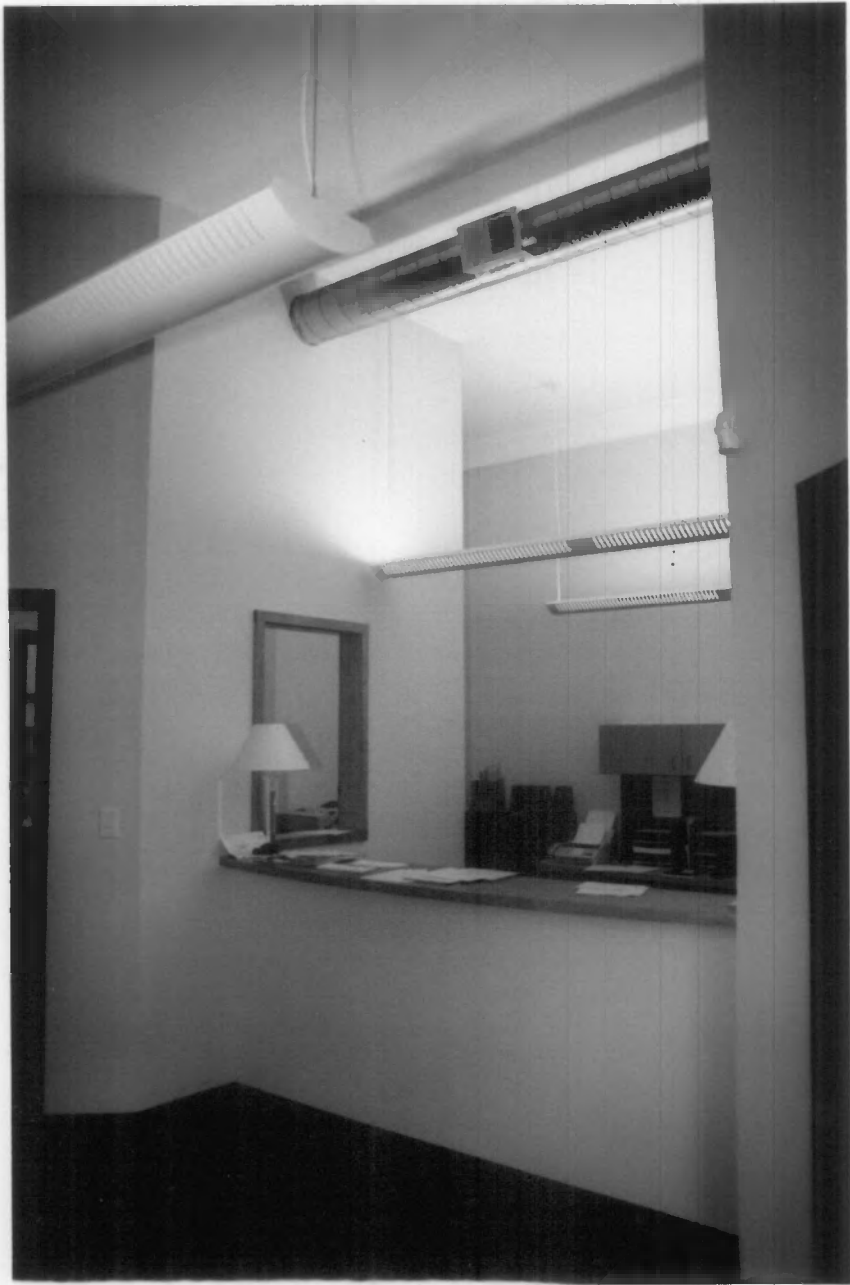
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