

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Autocar Sales and Service Building

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 2745 Locust [N/A] not for publication

city or town: St. Louis [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63103

**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 [ ] )

Mark A Miles

5/15/06

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/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

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ] .
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ] .
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- removed from the  
National Register
- other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ] .

Signature of the Keeper

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

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

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

**Name of related multiple property listing.**

Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis  
 [Independent City], MO

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
 COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

**Current Functions**  
 VACANT  
 WORK IN PROGRESS

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 OTHER/Two-Part Commercial Block

**Materials**  
 foundation CONCRETE  
 walls BRICK  
 STONE/Limestone  
 roof ASPHALT  
 other TERRA COTTA

**Narrative Description**

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

**Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri**

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

COMMERCE  
ARCHITECTURE

**Periods of Significance**

1917-1937

**Significant Dates**

1917

**Significant Person(s)**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Bradshaw, Preston J.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	742175	4279950			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Karen Bode Baxter, Ruth Keenoy, and Timothy P. Maloney

organization Karen Bode Baxter, Preservation Specialist date 3/27/06

street & number 5811 Delor telephone (314) 353-0593

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63109

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

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

**Additional Items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name 2745 Locust, LLC, c/o Jassen Johnson

street & number 120 S. Central, Ste. 1500 telephone (314) 652-0800

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63105

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Description

#### SUMMARY

Built in 1917 and designed by noted St. Louis architect Preston J. Bradshaw, the Autocar Sales and Service Company Building at 2745 Locust in St. Louis, Missouri, is a two-story, brown brick, curtain wall, concrete framed, flat roofed, automotive showroom that utilizes classical revival details. Located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Locust and Leffingwell, the building faces Locust Street, which is generally characterized by one and two story automotive and industrial buildings. Most of the buildings in the immediate vicinity were designed for other early automotive related businesses. The building's design modestly references the Second Renaissance Revival in its stylistic details, a popular choice for early twentieth century small commercial buildings, a stylistic influence that utilizes classical revival details, but organizes the building into distinct horizontal divisions with different window treatments for each floor. This helps define this two-part commercial block through the use of limestone and terra cotta sill and lintel courses as well as a cornice with modillions to band the building horizontally. The brick pilaster strips help separate the facades into a rhythmic pattern of window bays. Since this building retains its historic integrity associated with its period of use as an automotive dealership, it meets the registration requirements for the "Automotive Dealerships and Retail Businesses" property type in the "Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of St. Louis, 1880-1955" MPD.

#### EXTERIOR

The front faces south onto Locust Street with concrete sidewalks extending from the street to the foundation of the building. The façade is divided into two main bays for display windows on either side of the smaller, central entrance bay; brick pilasters provide a visual delineation for the bays. A smooth limestone watertable creates a base for the display windows and brick pilasters. The display window glass was removed and the openings have been carefully infilled with concrete block. The slightly recessed entrance to the building is located in the center bay and guarded on each side by brick pilasters with decorative terra cotta capitals. Above these capitals a decorative, terra cotta sign panel spans the center of the second floor to heighten the appearance of the entry. The original entry door has been replaced with a metal framed, glass door with a sidelight to the east and a large transom above. The first and second floors are distinguished by slightly projecting, continuous terra cotta belt courses, which act as lintels for the first floor display windows and second floor wood windows. Centered above each first floor display window are two adjacent, original, two over two, double-hung, wood sash windows flanked by decorative brick frieze panels. A projecting limestone beltcourse creates a continuous sill for the second floor windows. There is a projecting limestone cornice with modillions at the base of the parapeted roofline. The parapet has a series of projecting brick panels to add texture and is capped with a stretcher row of brick to further add to the horizontality of the building.

The west elevation continues the detailing on the façade, including the limestone and terra cotta belt courses, brick pilasters, frieze panels, blocked in (concrete) display windows, and limestone cornice with modillion. This elevation is eight bays wide with two wood sash windows centered above each first floor opening; however, these are eight over one windows. The first floor windows on this elevation have limestone sills with recessed brick frieze panels beneath them; except for the front two bays, which were additional display windows (like the façade). These large openings have also been infilled with concrete block and some have glass block sections. The third and fourth bays from the north (alley) have garage door openings, one with a modern replacement, metal garage door and the other with an older style, rollup garage door; which opens directly into the automobile sized freight elevator. This door also has an adjacent, slightly recessed, metal man-door with limestone steps and a large, wood framed transom above.

The north elevation abuts the alley and has a much simpler treatment, as it is not considered a primary or street elevation. This elevation is divided into four evenly spaced bays, separated by brick pilasters. The raised, rusticated limestone foundation is visible. Each first floor window opening is infilled with concrete block with a row of glass block across the top. The second floor windows are covered with fiberglass panels but the sixteen-light, central pivot, steel windows remain intact behind these panels (visible only from the interior). There is a ghost sign along the cornice that extends the length of this elevation. The parapeted flat roof is capped with clay tiles.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

## Narrative Description (continued)

The east elevation is barely visible as it abuts an adjacent, 1-story, automotive building, but it does have a row of central pivot steel windows still intact.

### INTERIOR FEATURES

The interior is divided into two bays supported by seven square concrete pillars that support concrete beams. It appears that the front two bays comprised the original auto showroom. The floors on the first floor are poured concrete with vinyl tile in the front entryway area. The automobile freight elevator is located in the fourth bay from the north on the west elevation; it is intact and has a simple wood enclosure. To the south of the elevator is the original, straight flight, enclosed, concrete stairs with a metal handrail. The second floor has a poured concrete slab floor and the ceiling is also poured concrete supported by concrete columns for the original fireproof construction. The second floor retains its original open floor plan.

### REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

The positioning of the building on a street corner, where large display windows could be used as a automotive showroom as well as the large overhead doors accessible from the side street to provide access to the garage bays are a distinctive form and massing of automotive dealerships of this era in St. Louis. The building also retains most of the details that helped define it as an automotive dealership building and as such meets the registration requirements of the "Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of St. Louis" MPD. According to the registration requirements, the building must retain most of its fenestration patterns, especially on the upper levels, even though the first floor display windows may be blocked in and the Autocar Sales and Service Building actually retains almost all of its original second floor windows, both the wood sashed windows on the street elevations as well as the industrial steel pivot windows on the alley and east elevation. While its first floor display window openings have been carefully blocked in, as noted in the registration requirements, the original opening pattern is still intact and the two garage door openings are still in use as driveways to the interior. In addition, the original exterior terra cotta and brick detailing remain intact, including the original front entry. The interior retains features that help distinguish its original use as an automotive building, especially its historic open floor plan, an essential feature in automotive dealerships where cars were moved internally through the building. The use of the concrete frame and flooring as well as the historic automobile freight elevator, which are both intact, are also essential features in automotive buildings. In fact, the one significant alteration, the blocked in first floor windows is the only integrity concern, one that is common to nearly every automotive building in St. Louis' Automobile Row, which is why the registration requirements specifically state that this is an acceptable alteration, as long as it is done in such a way, as it was in this building, that it could be reversed. In fact, as part of an historic rehabilitation project that is currently underway, these first floor openings will once again be reopened.

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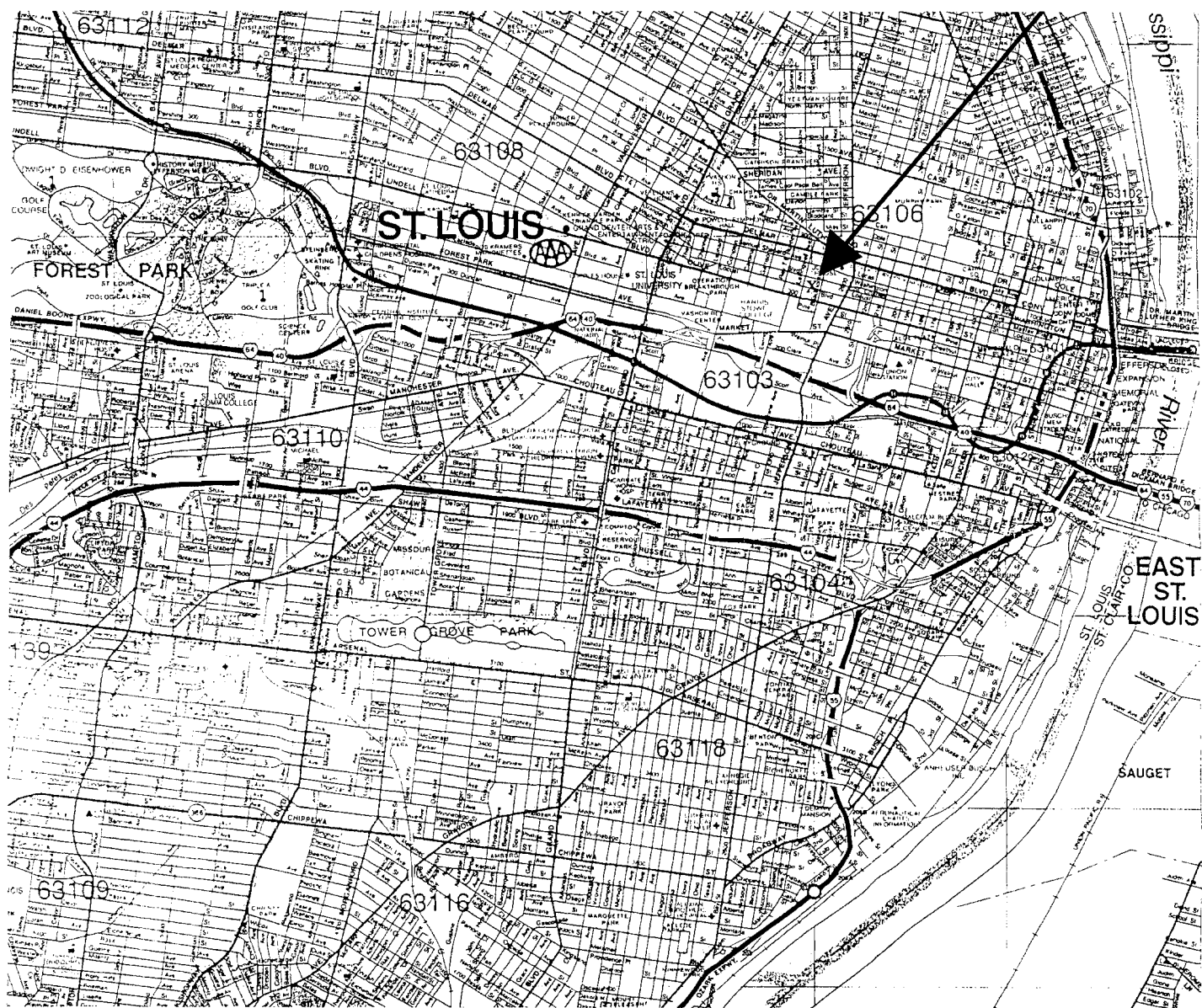
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of City of St. Louis, MO

Locating Property



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### SUMMARY

Constructed in 1917, the Autocar Sales and Service Building located at 2745 Locust Avenue, Saint Louis [Independent City], Missouri is significant under National Register Criterion A: Commerce, for the building's role as an integral member of the former Automotive Row along Locust Avenue in St. Louis. Throughout its period of significance (1917-1937), the property continuously served as an early automobile dealership and (during the late 1930s) as a retail tire business. The Autocar Sales and Service Building is also eligible under National Register Criterion C: Architecture, for its unique design as an early example of the emerging automobile showroom, as well as the building's association with its architect, Preston J. Bradshaw. Bradshaw was a significant member of St. Louis's architectural community, designing numerous buildings throughout the city during the course of his career which stretched from 1907-1949. The property meets the requirements for registration under the Multiple Property Document entitled "Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of Saint Louis," under the context of "Marketing and Servicing the Automobile in St. Louis, 1900-1955."

#### BUILDING HISTORY

The Autocar Sales and Service Building, situated at the northeast corner of Locust and North Leffingwell Avenues, was an early and viable component of St. Louis' well-known Automotive Row. Automotive Row extended along Locust Avenue, continuing east-to-west from Jefferson Avenue to Grand Boulevard. Developed by the mid-nineteenth-century as a residential neighborhood, this area rapidly changed during the latter part of the century as major transportation routes and their associated streetcars began to bring commercial interests into the area. Locust Avenue soon became the central location for St. Louis' early automobile developers and promoters because of its direct access to nearby paved routes such as Grand and Olive Boulevards. Its prominence as the hub for St. Louis' automobile businesses continued until the mid-1950s when large mall-type auto showrooms began to emerge along the outskirts of the city's limits.<sup>1</sup>

The Autocar Sales and Service Building was constructed in 1917 and designed by St. Louis architect, Preston J. Bradshaw. Bradshaw attended Columbia University and moved to St. Louis in 1907 at the age of 27. He worked as a draftsman for McKim, Mead, and White until beginning his own architectural firm in 1916. Bradshaw was well known to the city by the 1910s as a specialist in designing "small mercantile buildings," although today he is best remembered for his large and elegant hotels.<sup>2</sup> Examples of Bradshaw's hotel commissions in St. Louis include the Missouri, Lennox, Mayfair, Forest Park, and Chase Park Hotels.<sup>3</sup>

It is noteworthy, although not as widely recognized, that Bradshaw also designed a number of automotive-use buildings, including 18 buildings within Automotive Row. Eight of 31 buildings within the boundaries of the Locust Street Automotive District, which extends along the 2900-3100 blocks of Locust, are attributed to Bradshaw. Additional automobile buildings designed and/or renovated by Bradshaw include Roberts Chevrolet on Delmar Boulevard in University City and James Southside Chevrolet on South Grand Boulevard in St. Louis City.<sup>4</sup>

The Autocar Sales and Service Company Building was designed as an early automobile dealership. By the late 1910s, the idea of constructing a building specifically for such a purpose was beginning to take shape. Automotive-related use buildings initially consisted of converting older facilities such as warehouses and liverys. This proved to be "problematic – automobiles could not be easily moved in or out of existing doorways, and interior supports limited movement inside the building."<sup>5</sup> In addition, there was a concern about the combustible nature of automobile engines, fueled by gasoline or electricity. In 1908, the City of St. Louis issued an ordinance that mandated where automotive buildings that stored gasoline or other explosive materials must be constructed. The ordinance also provided construction safety standards such as the provision of firewalls between sales and repair areas.<sup>6</sup> Automotive buildings needed to be fireproof and they also needed to structurally support the weight of the cars themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Initially, auto-dealerships imitated traditional commercial building designs – they incorporated street-front facades and were normally more than one-story in height. In addition, their design featured heavy decorative cornices, large single-pane windows at the street level, and pedestrian-oriented entrances. There were, however, subtle differences that generated the evolution of the modern showroom design of the 1950s. Such variations included larger display windows (such as those incorporated in 2745 Locust) that framed the automobiles and allowed customers to "catch a better glimpse of the cars displayed inside."<sup>8</sup> Additionally, large side or rear doors facing a street or alley provided automobile access without disrupting the storefront design at the primary elevation.



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Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Although interior space was designed much like traditional commercial buildings, the showroom was stocked with cars, auto accessories, clothing, auto manuals, and repair guides. In many instances dealerships also supported a repair shop, featuring “workbenches, [a] lubrication pit, wash rack, and turntable . . . upper floors, rather than containing offices or apartments, were instead portioned out into inventory and storage areas made accessible by a heavy-duty elevator.”<sup>9</sup>

Numerous automotive-related businesses utilized the property at 2745 Locust Avenue during its period of significance (1917 – 1937). The Autocar Sales and Service Company occupied the building from ca. 1918 until 1923, at which time the business relocated across the street to 2740 Locust Avenue. Following a brief vacancy, Victor Motors, Inc., moved into the building in 1924 where it remained until 1926. In 1927, Wilson Securities Company utilized the building, replaced in 1928 by the Tuthill Gardner Motor Corporation. The building was again vacant by 1930, and in 1931 Midwest Motors, Inc. utilized the property. By 1932, the property had yet another new tenant, L.M. Stewart, Inc., a dealership that used the space through 1934. In 1936, Fisk Tire Company moved into the building and would be the property’s last automobile-related tenant. In 1938 the property was vacant. In 1939 the property’s longest-lived occupant, Progressive Service Company -- a die maker -- used the building until 1959.<sup>10</sup>

The brief occupancy of 2745 Locust Avenue’s numerous tenants is not an unusual pattern. Automobile businesses – particularly those that manufactured cars or served as early dealerships – were extremely short-lived. Most early automobile-related businesses in St. Louis lasted, at most, two years. It is likely that few – if any – of the property’s early dealerships sold any cars. If so, they probably sold few during their time at 2745 Locust. Financing was one of the largest problems faced by auto dealers. Banks failed to secure loans for such businesses, fearing they were “risky investments.”<sup>11</sup> In most instances, early dealers put the money up themselves to operate their businesses, using deposits for new cars that helped to pay for the costs of manufacturing and/or assembly. This changed after 1905 when installment purchases began to gain popularity. Throughout the 1910s-1930s, operating a successful auto dealership was an extremely unstable undertaking.<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1920s, the character of Locust Avenue was firmly entrenched as a center for automotive dealerships, factories, repair shops, service stations, and supplies. The Autocar Sales and Service Building at 2745 Locust was within the heart of the automotive row. The property’s immediate environment further illustrates this fact. Situated immediately east of the Autocar Sales and Service Building at 2743 Locust Avenue was an auto repair shop. Across the street from 2745 Locust at 2736-2746 Locust Avenue was another automobile sales and service establishment (constructed in 1922) that was also used a service station. Situated at the northwest corner of Locust and N. Leffingwell at 2801 Locust Avenue was the More Automobile Company Building constructed in 1919 that served as a dealership until 1929. Southwest of the Autocar Sales and Service Building at 2800 Locust Avenue was a hotel (now a vacant lot) that served as a reminder of earlier days along Locust Avenue when numerous dwellings, hotels, and educational establishments dominated the neighborhood’s character.<sup>13</sup>

### BUSINESS HISTORY

Many businesses operated at 2745 Locust Avenue. Until 1938, all but one of these businesses was related to automobile marketing and/or service. The original occupant, Autocar Sales and Service, appears to have been an early truck dealership. The building’s design illustrates this original use. Very little information is available for the company. If the dealership did sell the Autocar as it was nationally known during the early 1900s, then its operation on Locust surpassed the company’s final year of production. Autocar was an automobile manufacturer in Ardmore, Pennsylvania that produced cars from 1901-1911 and trucks from 1907-present. The company originated as the Pittsburgh Motor Car Company in 1897 -- a collaborative effort between brothers Lewis S., John S. and James K. Clark, and their father, Charles Clark, who provided the financial backing for the business. The company reorganized as Autocar when production moved from Pittsburgh to Admore in 1899. By the end of 1901, the business had manufactured 27 automobiles that are believed to be the first shaft-driven cars produced in the United States. Autocar’s greatest year of automobile production was 1907, when 823 cars were manufactured.<sup>14</sup>

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Autocar was “exceedingly well made” and was a participant of the Automobile Club of America’s 1901 Endurance Run from New York to Buffalo. Its promoters advertised the vehicle as one that “cannot blow up or burn up” and in comparison to its competitors, it was relatively easy to handle. Costs associated with diversification soon outweighed the model’s popularity and initial success, which led to automobile production shut-down in 1911.<sup>15</sup> More successful was Autocar’s truck production, which began in 1907. Both of the Clarke brothers sold their interests in the company in 1929. In 1953, Autocar was purchased by White Motor Company and relocated to Exton, Pennsylvania. Autocar commercial trucks continue to be made today by Volvo, which purchased the White company in 1981.<sup>16</sup>

The property at 2745 Locust Avenue most likely served as an Autocar truck sales and service company during its years of operation, 1918-1923. It is not known when the company switched to the exclusive manufacture of commercial trucks. The first commercial truck model was introduced in 1908. Autocar was the first company to mass-produce four-cylinder engine trucks that featured forward-control engines.<sup>17</sup>

Victor Motors, Inc. may have served as a dealership for the Victor Automobile Manufacturing Company (also known as the Victor Motor Car Company). This St. Louis-based manufacturing firm initially operated at 171 Carroll Street where it remained at least through 1908. The company relocated at some point to 3936-3940 Laclede Avenue. Victor Automobile Manufacturing produced cars from 1905-1911, beginning with its single-cylinder, water-cooled engine and friction transmission known as a highwheeler. Initially “a bargain” priced at \$450, the design was changed in 1909 (and the price was elevated) featuring a two-cylinder, air-cooled engine. The initial design was seriously flawed -- noted by the company itself as “impossible to change the speed . . . without sharp, sudden jerks that are very annoying to the occupants, and constantly suggesting the motion of a freight train.”<sup>18</sup> The car was improved again in 1911, by which time it included a 40 horsepower engine and looked like a car – not a buggy. The price for the new design was, of course, much higher and led to the company’s demise, as did the death of its founder, Joseph F. Harrington in 1911.<sup>19</sup> Victor Motors, Inc. occupied the building at 2745 Locust Avenue from 1924-1926. As was true for the Autocar Sales and Service dealership, this business either sold post-production models of the Victor automobile and/or sold other styles of automobiles manufactured during the early 1920s.

The Tuthill-Gardner Motor Corporation was a dealership that specialized in the sales of Gardner trucks, taxicabs, and buses. The Gardner Motor Company is associated with Russell E. Gardner, who moved to St. Louis from Tennessee and began manufacturing Banner buggies (the largest horse-drawn vehicle manufacturer in the United States) at some time prior to 1900. Gardner began to build automobile bodies and soon landed a contract to produce the auto bodies for all Chevrolets manufactured in St. Louis. During the late 1910s, Gardner and his sons, Russell Jr. and Fred, sold the Chevrolet auto body business to General Motors and formed the Gardner Motor Company. By that time, Russell Gardner “was a millionaire several times over.”<sup>20</sup> The Gardner Motor Company manufactured its own automobiles; it did not assemble parts produced by other manufacturers as did most automobile producers. The first Gardner model was introduced in 1919. Initially sales were very good, and production jumped from 3,800 cars in 1921 to 9,000 cars the following year. The Gardner plant was capable of producing 40,000 cars per year, and the company’s models were popular in automobile tours/runs across the country.

[In 1930] the company announced a front-wheel drive car that was quite sensational. An 80 hp six on a 133-inch wheelbase, its Baker-Raulang body sported a long hood and distinctive low-slung lines. Lockheed hydraulic internal expanding brakes – rare in America – and two-way hydraulic shock absorbers were featured . . . the only Front Wheel Drive [priced] in the \$2,000 field . . . the reality was that only the prototypes would be built.<sup>21</sup>

By 1929, the Gardner Motor Company was struggling financially. In an effort to regain its hold in the auto-manufacturing market, the company landed contracts with Sears, Roebuck and Company to develop mail-order cars; and with New Era Motors to manufacture front-wheel drive cars. The stock market crash of 1929, however, would settle the issue of Gardner’s fate when both contracts were canceled. In 1931, the company was dissolved, having been in decline since 1927 due to the rise of major manufacturing companies such as General Motors and Ford.<sup>22</sup>

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Section number 8 Page 7  
Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Midwest Motors, Inc., (occupying 2745 Locust in 1931) and L.M. Stewart, Inc., (occupying 2745 Locust from 1932 to 1934) appear to be more modern types of independent dealerships in terms of the fact that they did not attach the name of any single manufacturer to the businesses. Regardless, these companies failed to endure for long at 2745 Locust. Established during the years of the Great Depression, they illustrate the struggle that all businesses experienced during that period of time. What is unique about this particular building and its occupants during the 1930s is that all occupants continued to conduct automotive-related businesses, including two dealerships and one tire retailer. Although Locust continued to operate as an automotive center until the mid-1950s, during the Depression era, most buildings on Automotive Row experienced lengthy vacancies or supported alternative businesses such as restaurants, retail establishments (unrelated to the automobile), and communications services.<sup>23</sup> The Autocar Sales and Service Building continuously supported automotive-related tenants until the end of the 1930s, by which time its use reflected a pattern that would continue along Locust Avenue throughout the 1940s-1950s.

## CONCLUSION

The Autocar Sales and Service Building was built to house an automotive dealership and it was used for automotive related businesses for twenty years, from 1917 through 1937, which is actually longer than many of these early automotive dealership buildings in St. Louis. Its historic association, especially its initial use for an automotive business is the primary registration requirements for listing in the National Register under the MPD, "Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of St. Louis" under Criterion A: Commerce. Unlike many of the other automotive dealerships and retail businesses along Automobile Row in St. Louis, especially those along Locust Street that were built in the early twentieth century, the Autocar Sales and Service Building managed to support an automotive business throughout the worst years of the Great Depression, but like its neighbors, the automotive businesses waned as the style of dealership buildings changed to the larger showrooms in locations nearer the growing residential suburbs.

Under the MPD, "Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of St. Louis," this building is also significant under Criterion C as a good example of the early twentieth century dealership designs, those that were constructed as two part commercial storefronts, but carefully positioned at an intersection to maximize the showroom's display windows. It retains a high level of integrity in its exterior design features (the decorative brick, terra cotta details and limestone courses and fenestration pattern) as well as its characteristic open floor plan with the obvious showroom floor area across the front of the building as well as garage doors on the side street elevation, one of which provides direct access into the distinctive auto freight elevator. In addition, it is significant as a good example of the many automotive-related buildings designed by the noted St. Louis architect, Preston J. Bradshaw, including at least 18 buildings along Locust Street in Automobile Row. While some of his automotive designs, especially those clustered at 3000, 3010, and 3016 Locust in the Locust Street Automotive District (NR listed 9/15/05) are more imposing in design, reveal more elaborate classical revival detailing, as well as larger in size, the Autocar Sales and Service Building is one of the best examples of his smaller dealership designs, the only known smaller dealership designed for a corner location as well as one of only two known examples of his automotive designs that are corner dealership buildings (the other being the Nash dealership building at 3000 Locust).

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ruth Keenoy, Karen Bode Baxter, Timothy P. Maloney and Mandy K. Ford, "Locust Street Automotive District," National Register of Historic Places -- Registration Form, St. Louis (Independent City), 2005 [NR listed 15 September 2005], sec. 8, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>3</sup>"People – Bradshaw, Preston J. - Mound City on the Mississippi a St. Louis History," (St. Louis: City of St. Louis Planning and Urban Design Agency), <<http://stlcin.missouri.org/history/people/detail.cfm>> 25 January 2006.

<sup>4</sup>Keenoy et. al., "Locust Street Automotive District," sec. 8, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>Ruth Keenoy, Karen Bode Baxter, Timothy P. Maloney and Mandy K. Ford, "Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO" National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2005 [NR listed 15 September 2005], sec. E, p. 9.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance (Endnotes continued)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>7</sup>Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company), 79-80.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>10</sup>*Gould's St. Louis Directory* (St. Louis: Gould Directory Co., 1917); *Gould's St. Louis Directory* (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1918-1922); *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory* (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1928-1956); *Gould's St. Louis Red-Blue Book* (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, 1918-1929); *Polk-Gould's St. Louis Directory* (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co, 1923-1927); *Polk's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directory* (St. Louis: R. L. Polk & Co., 1960). *Gould Directory Co., Gould's St. Louis Red Book*. (St. Louis, MO: Self-published, 1924); *Gould's St. Louis City Directory*, (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, Publishers, 1930); Polk-Gould Directory Co. *Gould's St. Louis Red-Blue Book*. (St. Louis, Missouri: Self-published, 1918-23, 1925-29); *Polk-Gould St. Louis Directory* (St. Louis: Polk Gould Directory Company, Self published, 1917-1927).

<sup>11</sup>Keenoy et. al., "Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis (Independent City), MO," sec. E, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>13</sup>Matt Bivens, "Survey Map," featuring Locust Avenue east of Jefferson Avenue and west of Grand Boulevard, October 2003. Courtesy of Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

<sup>14</sup>"America on the Move," Website (sponsored by The Smithsonian). Autocar Automobile. Available at: [http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object\\_1273.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_1273.html). Access date: 13 March 2006; <sup>15</sup>Beverly Rae Kimes, Henry Austin Clark, Jr., Ralph Dunwoodie, et. al., *Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1805 – 1942, third edition* (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 1986), 83, 1196.

<sup>15</sup> Kimes, *Standard Catalog of American Cars*, 83.

<sup>16</sup>"America on the Move;" "Autocar." Website – Company History. Available at: <http://www.autocartruck.com/history.asp>. Access date: 13 March 2006.

<sup>17</sup>"Autocar."

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 1500.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 626.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Keenoy et. al., "Locust Street Automotive District," sec. 8, p. 14.

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## Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 18 and 19 in Block 19 of Stoddard Addition and in Block 984 of the City of St. Louis, having an aggregate front of 55 feet 3 inches on the north line of Locust Street by a depth Northwardly of 134 feet 8 inches to an alley; bounded West by Leffingwell Avenue.

## Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description.

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### Photo Log

Photographer: Sheila Findall

January 2004

Negatives with preparer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

- Photo #1: Exterior, Locust Street façade facing north
- Photo #2: Exterior, looking northeast at west and south facades
- Photo #3: Exterior, looking southeast at north (alley) and west elevations
- Photo #4: Exterior, looking east at garage doors on west elevation
- Photo #5: Interior, first floor looking southwest toward garage door and elevator
- Photo #6: Interior, first floor, looking west inside elevator shaft
- Photo #7: Interior, first floor, looking up stairs
- Photo #8: Interior, second floor, looking southwest from northeast corner
- Photo #9: Interior, second floor, looking northwest from mid-east wall





Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO.  
Photo # 1





Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO.  
Photo #2



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo # 3



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO.  
Photo # 4



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO.  
Photo # 5



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO,  
Photo # 6



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City) Mo  
Photo # 9



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), Mo.  
Photo # 8



Autocar Sales and Service Building  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO,  
Photo #9