

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1. Name of Property

historic name Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
other names/site number "Bomont" Branch and Exchange

2. Location

street & number 2654 Locust Street [n/a] not for publication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

12/27/05

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 of Action
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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 building
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0 sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0 structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0 objects
		0	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing.
 (n/a)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register. 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

INDUSTRY: Communications Facility

Current Functions

WORK IN PROGRESS: _____

Multiple Dwelling _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification

CLASSICAL REVIVAL _____

Materials

foundation Limestone _____

Granite _____

Brick _____

walls Brick _____

Steel _____

Concrete _____

Terra Cotta _____

roof Asphalt _____

other _____

see continuation sheet []

see continuation sheet []

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet [x]

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

title

St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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

COMMUNICATIONS

Periods of Significance

1902-1955

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Eames & Young/architect

R. Timlin/architect

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: _____

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

title

St. Louis (Independent City), MO

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	742 340	4279 860			
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 Doug Johnson/Researcher

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis date August 4, 2005

street & number 917 Locust Street, 7th floor telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63101

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 Bick Corporation

street & number 11902 Lackland Avenue telephone (314) 933-3355

city or town St. Louis state Missouri zip code 63146

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Summary

The Beaumont Telephone Exchange, located at 2654 Locust Street in St. Louis, Missouri, is a multi-story office building primarily of steel and concrete construction, sheathed in brick with white-glazed terra cotta embellishments. The rectangular footprint of the original 1902 building, situated at the southeast corner of Locust and Beaumont Streets, grew into an E-shaped footprint through a string of additions. The earliest construction (west wing) exhibits plank and beam mill construction, sheathed in brick with terra cotta adornment and a granite watertable; a later addition extended the building southward, but incorporated original façade treatments. A mosaic-tile window was also incorporated into the structure in a later alteration. Subsequent additions take visual cues from the earlier construction, albeit with less detail and ornamentation. The three-story center wing and the larger six-story addition (east and main wings) are of steel and concrete, fireproof construction, enveloped by brick courses upon a granite watertable. White-glazed terra cotta detailing complementary to the original building, though not as elaborate or as pervasive, unifies all wings. Likewise, window size and fenestration is congruous across all elevations of the exchange, though the encasements found on later additions are without embellished surrounds. The E-shaped plan creates two courtyard spaces which open to Locust Street. Each is presently gated and predominately paved or filled with gravel. Recessed into each is an entryway. The easternmost entry is recessed within a glass and brick projected vestibule, while the westernmost entry is considerably more elaborate, with a limestone and terra cotta door surround.

Exterior

The original telephone exchange at Beaumont and Locust was built from plans by St. Louis architects Eames and Young in 1902. Situated at the southeast corner of Locust and Beaumont Streets, the building measured 33 ft 4 in by 100 ft upon completion (Figure 1). The first major expansions by Bell Telephone Company of Missouri to its Beaumont facility occurred in 1921 and 1925. In 1921, the result was an extension of the building along the west (Beaumont) elevation, and in 1925, the introduction of a 32 ft by 85 ft. single-story addition to the roof. This roof addition connected to the upper story of a major, 130 ft by 130 ft addition designed by architect R. Timlin and constructed in 1927. The four-story addition introduced both a main and east wing and drastically

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

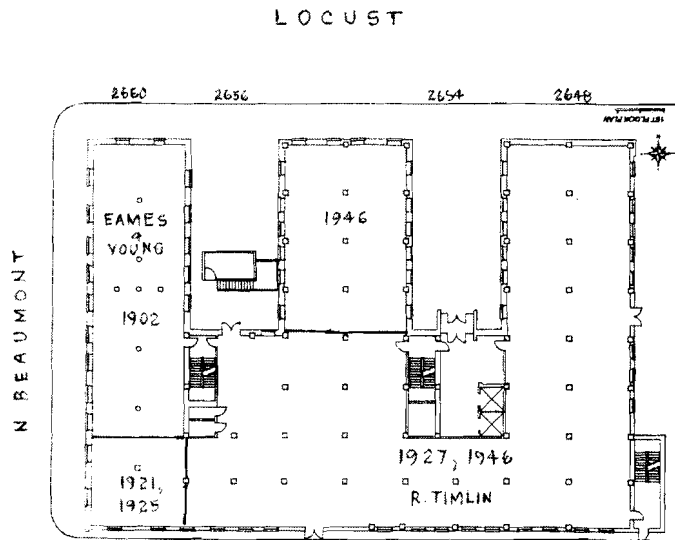
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

increased the size of the telephone exchange. The new construction was L-shaped, and its union with the earlier building created a U-shaped footprint that opened toward Locust Street. A three story center wing was built in 1946, congruent with the addition of two stories to the east and main wings. This resulted in a short, L-shaped tower upon this portion of the building. The main entrance to the exchange was situated along the Beaumont Street elevation in 1902 (Figure 2). As subsequent additions and alterations reoriented the building along Locust, the primary point of entry shifted to two doorways recessed with the courtyards along the front façade.

Figure 1: Beaumont Telephone Exchange Floorplan



Along the Locust Street (front) façade of the original Beaumont Exchange wing, a cut pink granite watertable is followed by two white-glazed terra cotta string courses at basement level that run continuously along two elevations (Image 1). Immediately above

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

the foundation at this level are four rectangular windows asymmetrically located, one of which is an infill. The granite foundation provides a continuous sill for these windows while the upper of two string courses at basement level serves as a continuous lintel. This arrangement extends at basement level in the courtyards and additional wings of the front façade as Locust Street slopes to the east. A third white-glazed terra cotta string course is introduced to the pattern, however, to compensate for the gradient. Across the front façade of the east wing, the courses are broken by a terra cotta-encased storefront, presently with brick infill. Its two bays extend the height of the raised basement story and are surrounded and divided by ornate white-glazed terra cotta panels. The east wing storefront rests beneath a segmented terra cotta cornice which projects from the upper string course at this story. The basement levels of the eastern, center, and main wings are above-ground and are considered first stories. The eastern and alley elevations at this level are free of terra cotta embellishments, save for a single bay at the northeast corner of the building, which carries over the string courses and watertable arrangements from the abutting façade.

At the first and second story, the front elevation of the original wing is a single bay wide. The arms of the projecting wing additions are also a single bay wide, but cut with four windows at each level. Along the front façade, the first story of the original building is anchored by a white-glazed terra cotta string course with ridges that wraps around three elevations of the wing and provides a sill for a two-story, shaped transom window. White-glazed terra cotta surrounds the lower grouping of three, one-over-one and double-hung windows. Terra cotta panels with a centered medallion delineate the first from second floor. At the second story, the bay also consists of a three window grouping (one-over-one and double-hung (Image 2)). These are recessed with a semi-circular encasement of elaborate terra cotta, accentuated with a scrolled keystone that connects the window to an additional string course. The windows are composed of irregular, colored mosaic tile, an alteration from later in the building's history. A white-glazed, projecting terra cotta cornice above the second story includes a corona embellished at intervals with ten gargoyles in the shape of lion heads. Terra cotta coping extends the length of the roof along the front elevation and continues along three elevations. The cornice is not continued along the additional wings. While the center wing features white-glazed terra cotta coping, the east and main wings have none.

The west elevation along Beaumont contains at basement level eleven larger rectangular windows that interrupt the cut pink granite foundation and the lower string course at

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 4

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

symmetrical intervals; the building originally featured nine windows until an addition in lengthened the west façade and introduced two windows on each story (Image 3). The second, terra cotta string course mimics limestone and constitutes a continuous lentil for the windows at the above-ground basement level. A terra cotta string course anchors the first story and provides a continuous sill for eleven windows along the west façade. Bays on both the first and second floor, at the north and south ends of this elevation, are surrounded by terra cotta encasements that span the height between the two floors. The terra cotta paneling repeats the work of Locust Street façade, but replaces the semi-circular terra cotta surround with a flat terra cotta head and a simplified keystone. The bay of the northernmost set includes two three-over-three windows, while the complementary southern bays are four-over-four. Between the terra cotta end bays, three-over-three windows are recessed within pilasters. These windows are symmetrically arranged, one over the other. The windows found on additional façades are also rectangular and six-over-six, and are distributed uniformly. On the eastern elevation, the windows of the upper three floors are slightly recessed within pilasters and simple, rusticated is evident in brick patterning between floors.

The main entryways are each tucked into two courtyards. An image from 1927 indicates that the placement of these doorways precedes the construction of the center wing (Figure 3). The image also reveals that the easternmost entry has been befuddled by alteration at date unknown, but likely beyond the period of significance. Presently, this glass and brick entry surrounds a commercial double-door which projects toward Locust and serves as a vestibule for a second double-door (Image 4). The 1927 photograph suggests that this altered arrangement was once similar to the extant western entryway. This second primary door with ribbon transom is deeply recessed within a decorated, white-glazed terra cotta surround (Image 5). The entryway is bracketed by two pilasters, each with fluted projections as capitals. The surround entablature features a centered keystone, as well as two lionhead grotesques within the frieze. The entryway is capped with a broken, scrolled pediment accented with wreath ornamentation. Within the western courtyard is a concrete massing that obscures this doorway from the street.

At alley elevation, a two story, enclosed bridge projects southward and connects the Beaumont exchange with a later telecommunications facility on the block. The passageway is only visible on the alley façade and is closed-off from use in the interior.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Interior

Interior spaces of the Beaumont Telephone Exchange are open and adaptable, as was necessary for the switchboard equipment used within the building. No floorplan exists for the original structure, but the absence of load-bearing walls and the functionality of the building indicate that the exchange was conceptually always a series of open spaces across all stories. "The switchboard at which you are looking is very likely over two hundred feet in length," notes marketing material used by the Bell Telephone Company at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. "It extends along three sides of a large room."¹ As a contemporary and up-to-date exchange, this brief description likely applies to Beaumont. The open floorplan of the original structure was repeated in subsequent additions.

In the original wing of the building, seven Doric columns are distributed on each floor, some of which have egg-and-dart patterned capitals (Image 6). Less-elaborate rectangular columns exist elsewhere in the exchange. Load-bearing walls are found primarily around stairwells and two elevators, with only a few subdivisions by non-bearing walls scattered elsewhere in the building. These occur primarily within the first story of the center wing and on the first and second stories of the east wing.

A mosaic-tiled window occupies the bay at third story across the Locust Street façade of the original building. Irregularly cut blue, green and clear glass segments are pieced together to form an image of the earth, surrounded by numbers that suggest a rotary telephone dial. This window was likely added after the period of significance, but enforces the historical use as a communications facility. Drop ceilings exist throughout, but like smaller alterations are not permanent.

Integrity

The building is in good condition despite a decade of vacancy. Cosmetic changes at the eastern entryway and in the western courtyard are minor given the size of the building and do not compromise its historic significance as a telephone exchange. The mosaic window at the third story of the original wing does not detract from the integrity of the

¹ Bell Telephone Companies. "Operating. The Bell Telephone Companies. Behind the Scenes in a Telephone Exchange." 1904. Pamphlet. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis. 2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 6

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

building, but reinforces its use as a communications facility. Elsewhere, the interior of the building retains integrity, largely because the simplicity of its arrangement, lack of detail and subdivisions, made later alterations superficial. The Beaumont Telephone Exchange conveys integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Figure 2: Beaumont Telephone Exchange. Circa 1903. Courtesy of SBC Archives and History Center, San Antonio, Texas.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 7

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Figure 3: Beaumont Telephone Exchange. Circa 1927. Courtesy of SBC Archives and History Center, San Antonio, Texas.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 8

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Summary

The Beaumont Telephone Exchange Building, located at 2654 Locust Street, in St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A as a Communications facility. The original building was erected in 1902 at the southeast corner of Locust and Beaumont from plans by St. Louis architectural firm Eames & Young. Constructed as a branch office and exchange, the building housed the company's long distance toll board, in addition to periods of duty as a local exchange, throughout the period of significance. Beaumont was one of several exchange branches constructed by Bell in the few years prior to the 1904 World's Fair. The building is a historic representative of a period of great growth of the telephone industry in the United States and in St. Louis, as epitomized by the competition between Bell and the Kinloch Telephone Company. Telephone branches and offices operated by these companies were uniquely integral to the rapid development of telephone communications and thus dotted the urban landscape of St. Louis in the first decade of the Twentieth century. Very few remain standing today. The Beaumont Telephone Exchange is the only extant Bell Telephone long distance toll branch in St. Louis and is one of the city's earliest surviving examples of a local exchange. The period of significance, 1902-1955, reflects the year of construction through the arbitrary cutoff date for National Register listing, although the resource continued to serve a telecommunications function through 1994.

Background

Prior to Alexander Graham Bell's patent of the telephone, the only means of instant communication available to the American public was the telegraph. During the 1870s, the American District Telegraph Company (ADT) local office provided a dispatcher service in St. Louis. With the turn of the dial on a home machine, customers could relay through electronic impulse a specific, prearranged message. Upon receipt of the signal, a dispatcher would send out a runner to call and complete the requested task.

In November of 1877, Alexander Graham Bell's American Telephone & Telegraph company granted a license to ADT to expand the existing service with the introduction of the commercial telephone in St. Louis. At first, general manager George Durant leased equipment for customers' private lines, which usually connected only two locations. He then went into the business of connecting telephone lines for direct communication

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 9

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

between two or more points. By the following February, after a visit from a Bell representative, Durant decided it would be more efficient and profitable to route all calls through a central switchboard. Opened in April 1878 with twelve subscribers, the exchange was the first in what would become the Southwestern Bell territory (including present-day Missouri, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas).²

Like all early exchanges, the St. Louis service used a modified telegraph board to connect calls. Switchboard and operators were located in the Third National Bank at 417 Olive (demolished) until an 1885 fire destroyed the office. Exchange headquarters were moved to the southeast corner of Fourth and Pine, but within a few short years rapid growth led to the commission of a new signature building. Designed by Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, the Bell Telephone building at 902 Olive (NR 8-5-1999) was completed in 1891. The switchboard room was located on the sixth floor and the telephone company used half of an additional floor as offices.

Elaboration

The main exchange at 902 Olive also included a separate toll board for calls made beyond the existing Missouri Bell system.³ Long distance calls were not covered by the monthly telephone service fee and thus subscribers were charged an additional amount for these connections. For example, a five-cent toll rate was in effect between St. Louis and suburban Webster Groves at the turn of the century.⁴ The original Bell toll service in St. Louis did not cover great distances, however. Lines to Belleville, Illinois, were laid in 1885, with lines extended to St. Charles, Alton and suburban Kirkwood and Webster Groves by the end of the decade. A more aggressive expansion of toll lines emerged in the 1890s, as circuits to Troy and St. Clair in Illinois and towns including Wentzville, Farmington, Festus, Cuba and Poplar Bluff were developed.⁵ Toll calls to areas beyond required a third-party service, such as the Long Lines Company, which operated lines to the East from an exchange in Madison, Illinois. The Bell Telephone Company of

² A subsidiary of Western Union began to offer telephone service later in 1878, but Durant's company bought out its equipment in 1879.

³ George F. Durant chapter, Telephone Pioneers of America, comp. *History of the Telephone, St. Louis Metropolitan Area*, 1934. SBC Archives: San Antonio. 17.

⁴ Minter C. Moredock, *History of Webster Groves, Missouri (Telephone)*, ca. 1934. SBC Archives: San Antonio.

⁵ *History of the Telephone, St. Louis Metropolitan Area*, 24.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 10

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Missouri's growth in St. Louis City required additional space for a local switchboard at the main exchange. To create ample space for the new equipment, the long distance toll board was removed from 902 Olive and installed in the new Beaumont Exchange, in 1902.

“Beaumont exchange, at Beaumont and Locust streets, the last branch constructed, is said to be one of the best equiped [sic] of modern exchanges,” proclaimed a 1903 St. Louis Republic article.⁶ The rapid advancement in telephone communications at the turn of the century necessitated a state-of-the-art facility, and St. Louis architects Eames & Young were qualified to design such a building. William S. Eames, FAIA (1857-1915), and Thomas C. Young, FAIA (1858-1934), both studied architecture at Washington University in St. Louis before travel and further study in Europe. Eames was Deputy Commissioner for Buildings in St. Louis from 1883-85, during which time he designed the landmark Bissell Street Water Tower (NR 6-5-1970) north of Hyde Park. Young worked for the Boston office of Ware & Van Brunt and E. M. Wheelwright before he and Eames formed their St. Louis partnership in 1886. The firm quickly developed into a lucrative practice including houses for the elite in St. Louis' new private places. Robert S. Brookings, owner of the land at Seventh and Chestnut and a partner in the Samuel Cupples Woodenware Company, was a consistent client of the firm commissioning two houses (1888 and 1897) and the massive warehouse complex known as Cupples Station (1894-1915). Cupples Station (NR 6-26-1998) represented advancement in distribution efficiency, its buildings noted nationally for functionality and mechanical features. The particular machinery and equipment found within a telephone exchange, along with the miles of coil and wire implicit in its operation, likewise required careful consideration of space and function, albeit on a smaller scale than the Cupples project. The gap between the industries served by the architects is filled with a declaration from the Bell Company itself: “The railway and the steamship have seemed to annihilate distance; the telephone obliterates both distance and time together.”⁷

Eames & Young designed two St. Louis branch offices for the Bell Telephone Company of Missouri. In addition to the Beaumont branch, the architects submitted plans for the

⁶ *St. Louis Republic*. “Switchboard Telephone System First Operated in St. Louis.” 1903. Clipping Files, SBC Archives: San Antonio.

⁷ Bell Telephone Companies. “At Expositions. The Bell Telephone Companies. Three World's Fairs Mark the Progress of the Greatest American Invention.” 1904. Pamphlet. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis. 7.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 11

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Forest Branch at 5144 Delmar constructed in early 1904. The new exchanges were built to accommodate growth in the western end of the city, though the Forest office housed a local switchboard only.⁸ Each was built to alleviate volume at the Lindell exchange (later Henry L. Wolfner Library, NR 2-18-2005), downtown offices and exchanges, and in anticipation of the 1904 World's Fair.⁹ Coupled with the earlier Lindell exchange, the Eames & Young branches created a discernible main artery direct from the heart of downtown and into the burgeoning, more-affluent areas of western St. Louis. The Forest branch is no longer extant. The Beaumont exchange remains as the only known, surviving example of the work of Eames & Young within this commercial building type.

In late 1879, when ADT became the Bell Telephone Company of Missouri and the following year, the company counted about 600 subscribers to the new technology. A decade later, Bell claimed some 2885 subscribers. By 1898, there were approximately 5,000 Bell subscribers in St. Louis; in 1904, there were over 20,000.¹⁰ The rapid increase in customers necessitated quick dissemination of phone lines through local exchanges. Bell branch offices multiplied profusely. The Sidney and Riverside exchanges opened in existing buildings in 1897. The Lindell exchange board was cut into service in 1899 in a Bell-commissioned building on Olive. In 1903, a local office and exchange opened on south Grand Boulevard, and the following year the Benton and Ferguson exchanges opened, each in rented buildings. To further assist the rapidly increasing volume, the toll board in the Beaumont exchange was joined by a local switchboard upon branch opening. The open floorplan assured ample space for the equipment required for each, as the length of the exchange was obstructed only by support columns.

Spaciousness was a necessity: marketing pamphlets used by the Bell Companies at the 1904 World's Fair indicate that a typical board could run for over two hundred feet and along three sides of a room. The elongated floorplan utilized by architects Eames & Young in the design of the Beaumont building provided excellent accommodation for the switchboard, and also offered the appropriate space in the center of the room required for

⁸ Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. *Historical Data: St. Louis-Forest Office*. SBC Archives, San Antonio.

⁹ Eames & Young's Post Office Annex (NR 9-26-1985) also anticipated the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. Immediately adjacent to Union Station, the annex building expands upon the concept of the Beaumont telephone branch in its adaptation of a simple, elongated rectangular floorplan formatted for efficiency of exchange. One function of the building was to expedite the exchange of baggage and mail via freight train, as opposed to verbal communications.

¹⁰ *History of the Telephone, St. Louis Metropolitan Area*. Attachment 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

monitors. At the Fair, Bell claimed emphatically that the most up-to-date boards could manage lines from 9600 telephones and might include 4000 miles of wire, or "enough if stretched in one long line to reach from St. Louis to Liverpool."¹¹ Most wires were hidden between panel and wall. A contemporary telephone exchange also included a terminal room from which outside wires and lines were fed through a distribution rack, sorted and arranged, then sent to the appropriate switchboard. Each exchange also included a power room with generators that supplied electrical energy for telephone transmissions via storage batteries.¹² Space within a branch building was devoted to employee welfare, as well, with rest and recreation rooms provided for employees. The relatively compact size of early telephone switchboard stations allowed flexibility of building space, but in twenty-five short years the acceleration of telephone technology required a thoughtful, complementary physical plant in which to house machinery.

The up-to-date facility and equipment of the Beaumont exchange articulates not only the extensive improvements in technology in the several decades since George Durant's introduction of the telephone to St. Louis, but also the brief, and at times fierce, competition between the Bell Telephone Company of Missouri and upstart Kinloch Telephone company. The new company capitalized on the expiration of Durant's original patents and began subscriptions in 1897. For over two decades, it operated a separate service and aggressively sought to have 6,000 of its telephones to the ears of subscribers within five years. The Wainwright Building (NR 5-23-1968) downtown was the first wired for the emerging competitor in 1897.¹³ Such a prestigious early client indicates the threat posed for Bell by the rival company. Furthermore, Kinloch introduced a new, multiple switchboard that provided the possibility of capacity four times larger than the boards used by Bell. The concept was thought to decrease the need for branch exchanges in its initial phases, though developments proved this impossible within a few years.

Subscription prices for the new service undercut those offered by Bell and though difficulties emerged in the alternative switchboard design, Kinloch developed rapidly. By 1899 its Executive Committee authorized expansion into long distance with the

¹¹ Bell Telephone Company of Missouri. "Switchboards. The Bell Telephone Companies. Development of the Switchboard." 1904. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis. Pamphlet. SBC Archives, San Antonio. 8.

¹² Bell Telephone Company of Missouri. *The Pulse of a Metropolis*. 1909. Bell Telephone Company of Missouri, St. Louis. 5.

¹³ James Harrison. *History of the Kinloch Telephone Company*. July, 1933. SBC Archives, San Antonio. 2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 13

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

associated, but independent, Kinloch Long Distance Company of Missouri. The long lines branch contracted for exchanges as far away as Springfield, Illinois, and Jefferson City by early 1904. The reach in distance over its own lines of Kinloch Telephone's long distance arm quickly acceded that of Bell Telephone Company. By 1905, the Kinloch Long Distance Company consolidated with the Kinloch Telephone. As the Beaumont Branch was placed into long distance service, the threat of competition between long distance providers was very palpable. The importance of a modern toll telephone exchange was considerable to a company susceptible to this direct competition.

In 1902, a Kinloch branch was constructed at 4400 Delmar—ahead of the Bell Company of Missouri's nearby Forest exchange. Kinloch also established an exchange on the World's Fair grounds the following year, high-profile positioning for its services.¹⁴ The Kinloch and Bell lines were not connected; both companies had independent services and subscribers. A customer of one company could not communicate with those of the other service. While a few businesses subscribed to each, that arrangement was expensive and not practical. This escalated the rivalry. Hugh Harris, contract agent for Bell Telephone Company, identified the West End of St. Louis (currently Central West End) as the battleground for war with Kinloch.¹⁵ His weapon-of-choice in combat was class consciousness: he sought "to make the Bell directory the social directory of St. Louis."¹⁶ The Bell Company had exceptional infrastructure in the West End, with Forest connected to the Central Exchange via Lindell and Beaumont, and toll service provided through the latter.¹⁷ These western exchanges both followed and anticipated the growth in that area of the city. Company history credits Harris in the suppression of the Kinloch competition, but the slower and more deliberate growth pattern followed by Bell undoubtedly was a key component to success.

Though Kinloch Telephone absorbed smaller services such as Suburban Telephone and Sedalia Home Telephone by the end of 1905, the company never achieved dominance within the City of St. Louis. The Beaumont exchange, an integral component to the strategically located east-west Bell telephone artery in West St. Louis, was an important factor in the continued dominance of the company in St. Louis. A centrally located (with

¹⁴ Ibid. 10.

¹⁵ *The Growth of a Service: History of the Bell Telephone Company*. SBC Archives, San Antonio. 6 ix.

¹⁶ *History of the Telephone, St. Louis Metropolitan Area*. 21.

¹⁷ Kinloch Telephone Company's toll exchange was in East St. Louis. Though telephone technology was advancing considerably, distance from a subscriber to a branch could affect quality of service.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 14

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

respect to customers) long distance office was very important in an era in which communication quality suffered the further a subscriber was from the toll board. Phone battery power, generated at an exchange, and communication clarity were directly affected by distance. Hugh Harris assured that the influential West End customers would be only one or two exchanges removed from the Bell long distance branch, which optimized service.

By 1920, Kinloch counted over 30,000 subscribers, fewer than a third of the phones in St. Louis. In 1923, a merger with Southwestern Bell was consummated. The number of telephone stations in the city approached 170,000. Major additions to the Beaumont exchange 1925 and 1927 reflect the impact of this merger, as the subscription increase required a larger facility in which to operate. The expansion of the building is also an expression of the 1926 introduction of the dial system in St. Louis, which contributed to the boost in telephone lines.¹⁸ Additions immediately post-War in the 1940s occurred at the dawn of direct dialing, yet another advance in the industry that led to a half-million St. Louis customers by the early 1950s.¹⁹ The physical growth of the building reflects these general advances in communications during the first half of the Twentieth century, as well as the consolidation and expansion of Southwestern Bell companies.

The name of the Bell Telephone Company of Missouri was formally changed to the Southwestern Telephone & Telegraph Company on March 22, 1913. This move was preceded by the transfer of exchanges operated by the Missouri and Kansas Telephone Company and others in southeast Missouri to the St. Louis service. Over the next twenty years, Southwestern Bell continued expansion with the purchase of additional telephone companies. During the same period, the telephone industry across the nation experienced similar growth, particularly the Bell Companies. As the areas covered by the companies grew to cover not just a city and its closest suburbs but a state or a region, the Beaumont Telephone Exchange likewise grew physically, with major additions to the Eames & Young building in 1921, 1925, 1927 and 1946. The Beaumont branch was retired from use in the early-1990s. It only served the Communications industry during its long history. When long distance toll operations completely vacated the exchange after the period of significance, the building still served as a telephone company office, operator-training center and even regional headquarters for the Telephone Pioneers, a Bell-

¹⁸ Missouri Historical Society. *The Telephone Comes to St. Louis*. October, 1953. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 15

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

affiliated philanthropic and cultural organization. Current owners plan to convert the adaptable building space into apartment condominiums. The Bell Telephone Company of Missouri, in its liting 1909 corporate history, *The Pulse of a Metropolis*, remarked that the "Bell system not only gives to the people of St. Louis the power to converse with another, but it puts them in communication with the outside world."²⁰ Telephone subscribers passed on that long distance journey through the portal of the Beaumont exchange.

²⁰ Bell Telephone Company of Missouri. *The Pulse of a Metropolis*. 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9-10 Page 16

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Bibliography

Bell Telephone Companies. "At Expositions. The Bell Telephone Companies. Three World's Fairs Mark the Progress of the Greatest American Invention." 1904. Pamphlet. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis.

Bell Telephone Companies. "Operating. The Bell Telephone Companies. Behind the Scenes in a Telephone Exchange." 1904. Pamphlet. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis.

Bell Telephone Companies. "Switchboards. The Bell Telephone Companies. Development of the Switchboard." 1904. Pamphlet. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis. Pamphlet. SBC Archives, San Antonio.

Bell Telephone Company of Missouri. *The Pulse of a Metropolis*.

City of St. Louis building permit records. St. Louis City Hall, Office of the Assessor.

City of St. Louis deed abstracts. St. Louis City Hall, Office of the Assessor.

George F. Durant chapter, Telephone Pioneers of America, comp. *History of the Telephone, St. Louis Metropolitan Area*. 1934. SBC Archives: San Antonio.

The Growth of a Service: History of the Bell Telephone Company. SBC Archives, San Antonio.

Harrison, James. *History of the Kinloch Telephone Company*. July, 1933. SBC Archives, San Antonio.

Missouri Historical Society. *The Telephone Comes to St. Louis*. October, 1953. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

Moredock, Minter C. *History of Webster Groves, Missouri (Telephone)*. ca. 1934. SBC Archives: San Antonio.

St. Louis Daily Record. St. Louis Public Library, microfilm department.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9-10 Page 17

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

St. Louis Republic. "Switchboard Telephone System First Operated in St. Louis." 1903. Clipping Files, SBC Archives: San Antonio.

Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. *Historical Data: St. Louis-Forest Office*. SBC Archives, San Antonio.

Boundary Description

The nominated parcel is located at 2654 Locust on City Block 928 in St. Louis, Missouri. The site is legally known by the Assessor's Office as parcel number 09280000150. The parcel is part of lot A of AT&T Communications Locust Street Subdivision. The property measures approximately 200 feet by 134.77 feet. The nominated parcel is indicated by a dashed line on the map entitled "Beaumont Telephone Exchange Boundary Map."

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel includes all of the property historically associated with the Beaumont Exchange of the Bell Telephone Company of Missouri, later Southwestern Bell Telephone Company.

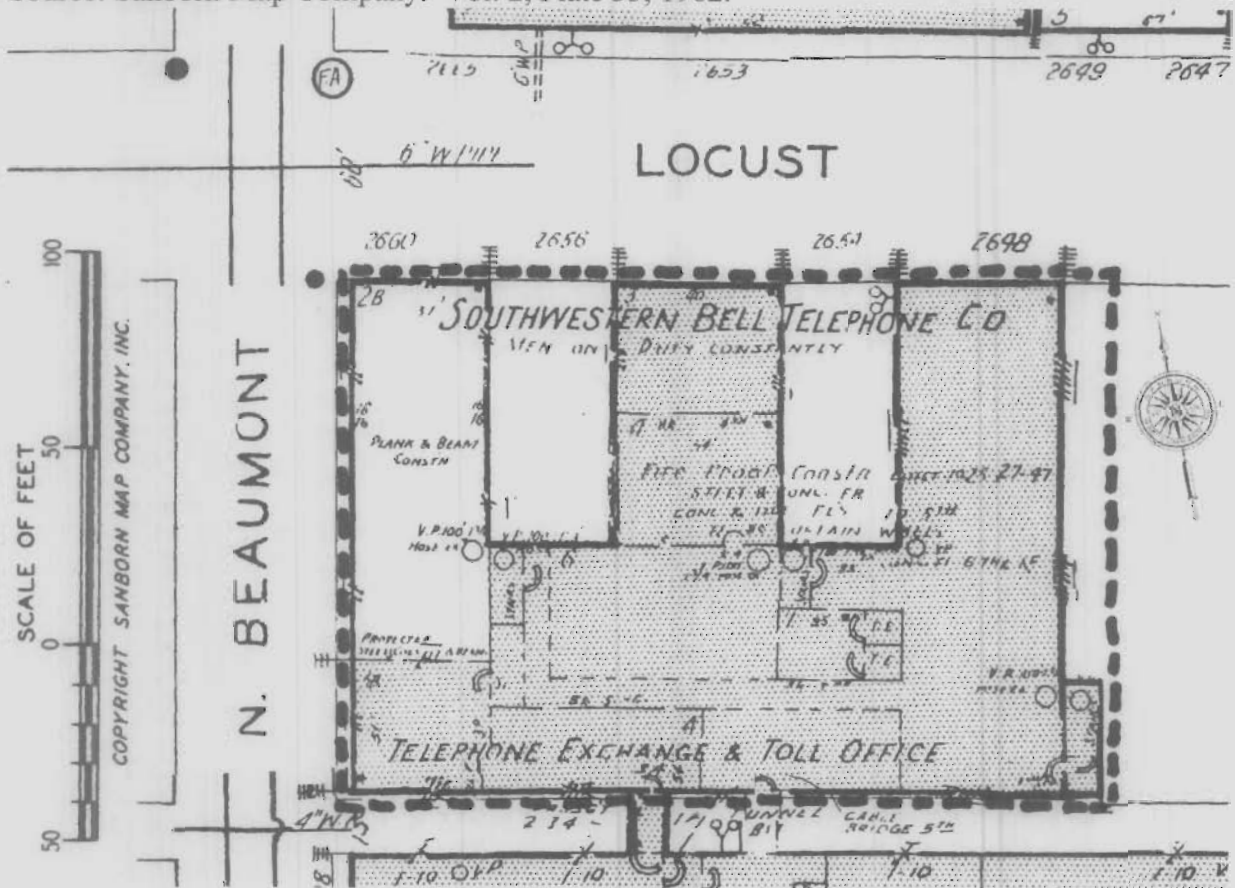
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

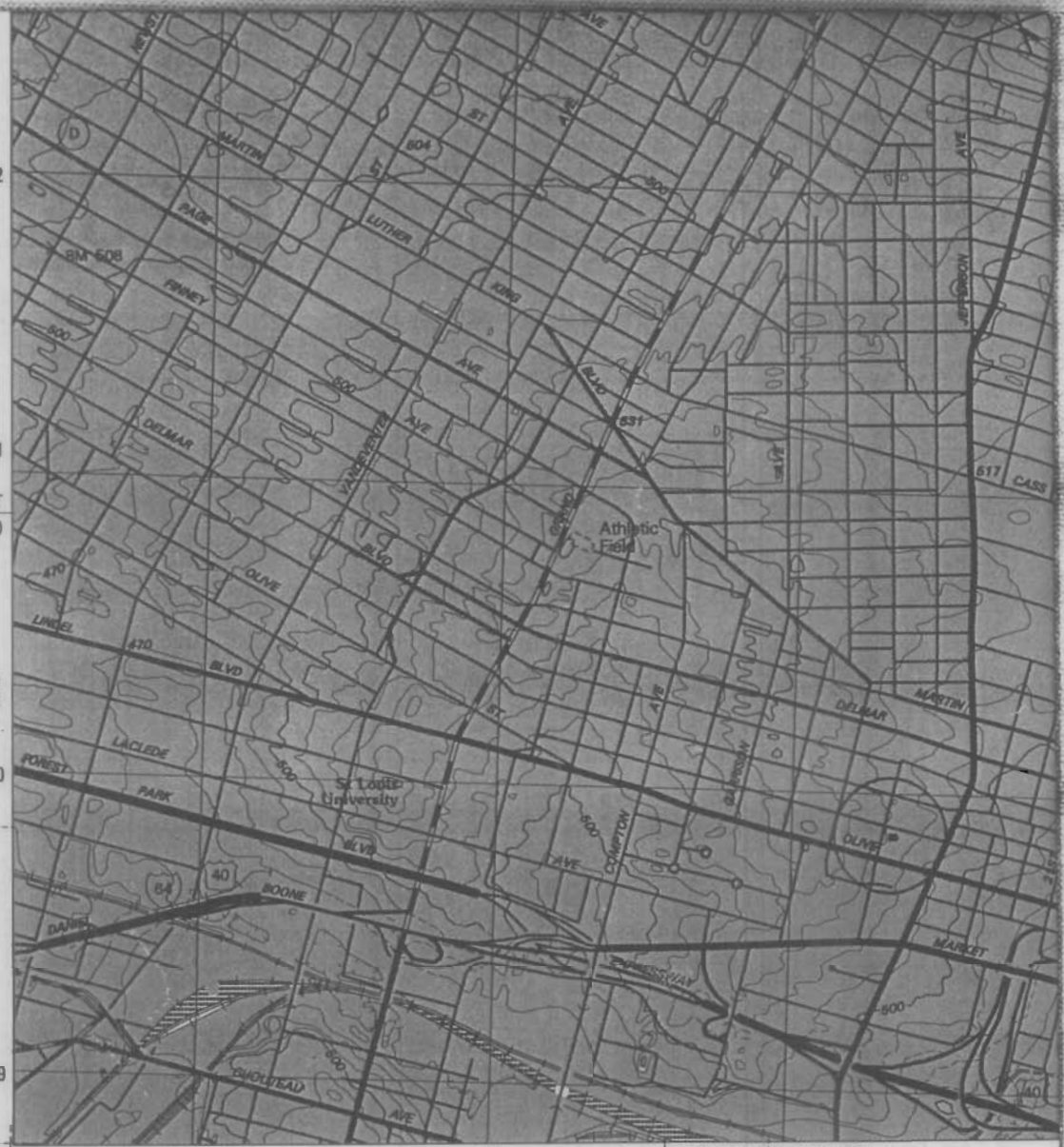
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9-10 Page 18

Beaumont Telephone Exchange
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Beaumont Telephone Exchange Boundary Map
Source: Sanborn Map Company. Vol. 2, Plate 33, 1962.





720 000 FEET
(IL WEST)

82

81

80

79

38°37'30"

90°15'

'40

'41

2 280 000 FEET (IL WEST)

Beaumont Telephone
Exchange Building
2654 Locust Street
St. Louis [Independent City]
MO
Zone 15
Easting 742 340
Northing 4279 960

Produced by the United States Geological Survey

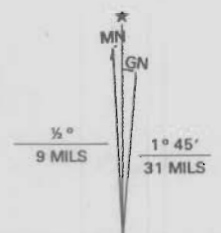
Topography compiled 1952. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1993 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1998; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1954. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15
10 000-foot ticks: Illinois (west zone) and Missouri (east zone)
Coordinate Systems of 1983

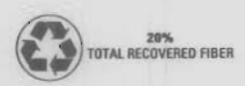
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software

Contours that conflict with revised planimetry are dashed

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map



UTM GRID AND 1999 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET





Permanently

20th Level

St Louis (Indy) [Indy] [City] [St]

D. Johnson

8-2005

Landmarks Association

Lockst St Elevation Looking SE

#1 & 6



Heumont Telephone Exchange

2654 Locust Street

St. Louis [Independent City] MO

D. Johnson

D-2005

Landmarks Association

Locust St Elevation, detail

#2 of 6



Beaumont Telephone Exchange
2627 Locust Street
St Louis [Independent City] MO
D. Johnson
6 2005
Landmarks Association
Beaumont St Elevation
#3 of 6



Beaumont Telephone Exchange
2654 Locust Street
St. Louis [Independent City] Mo
D. Johnson
9-2005

Landmarks Association
Locust St Elevation, East Courtyard
#4 of 6



75

Hillmont Telephone Exchange

2654 Locust

St. Louis [Independent City] Mo

D. Johnson

9-2005

Landmarks Association

Locust Street Elevation, West Courtyard

#5 of 6



Beaumont Telephone Exchange

2054 Locust Street

St. Louis (Independent City) MO

D. Johnson

8-2005

Landmarks Association

Original wing, Interior

6 of 6