

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

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Beckley-Ralston Company  
 Other names/site number Alemite Lubricator Company of St. Louis, Diamond T. Truck Company  
 Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO

## 2. Location

Street & number <u>3306-3314 Washington Boulevard</u>	N/A	not for publication
City or town <u>St. Louis</u>	N/A	vicinity
State <u>Missouri</u> Code <u>MO</u> County <u>Independent City</u> Code <u>510</u> Zip code <u>63103</u>		

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
 I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local  
 Applicable National Register Criteria: X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

Toni M. Prawl 11/22/2016  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO Date  
 Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
 State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
 Signature of commenting official Date  
 Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 \_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
 \_\_\_ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Beckley-Ralston Company  
Name of Property

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

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		<b>Total</b>

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

COMMERCE/TRADE/Automotive Retail  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

foundation: Stone/Limestone  
walls: Brick  
Concrete  
roof: Asphalt  
other: Terra Cotta  
Concrete (foundation)

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

Beckley-Ralston Company  
Name of Property

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Landmarks Association of St. Louis

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

**Areas of Significance**

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1922-1931

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Bradshaw, Preston/Architect

Beckley-Ralston Company  
Name of Property

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

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** Less than 1 acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 38.637525° -90.226743° 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

\_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Matt Bivens/Historic Preservation Director

organization Lafser & Associates, Inc. date 2-22-2016;final 11.11.16

street & number 1215 Fern Ridge Pkwy., Suite 110 telephone 314-560-9903

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63141

e-mail msbivens@lafser.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Beckley-Ralston Company  
Name of Property

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

### Photographs

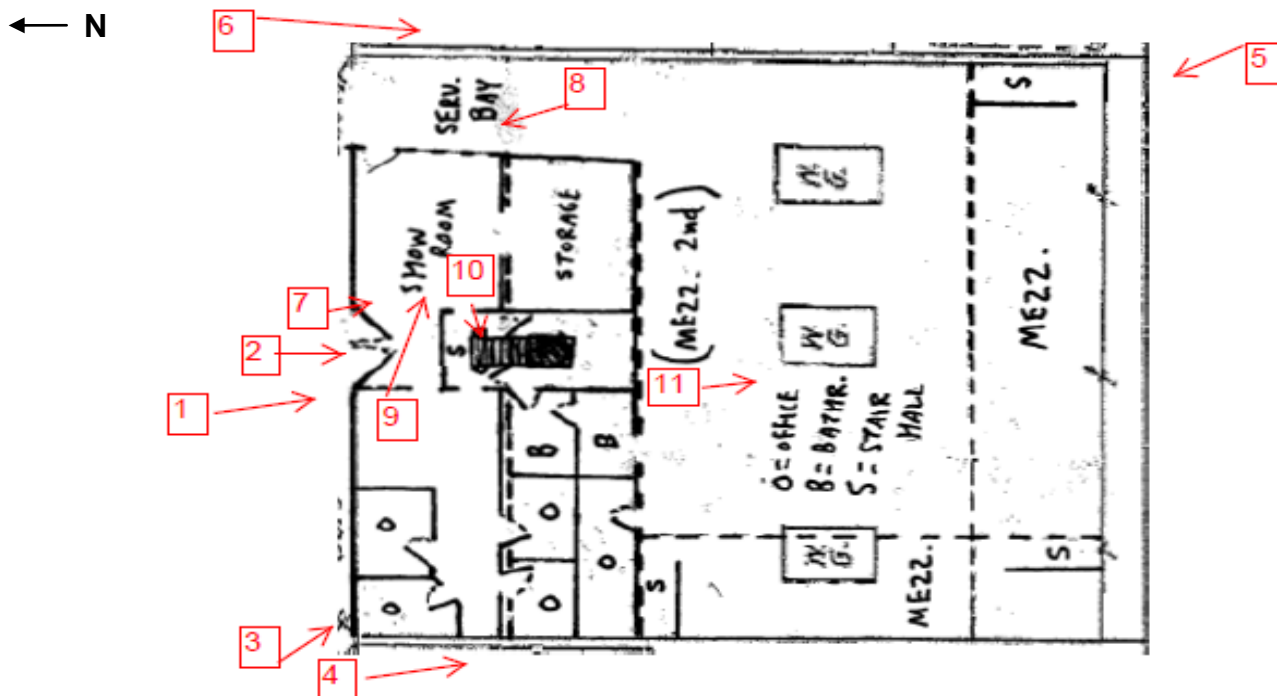
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log:

Name of Property: Beckley-Ralston Company (3306-3314 Washington Boulevard)  
City or Vicinity: St. Louis  
County: (Independent City) State: MO., 63103  
Photographer: Matt Bivens  
Date Photographed: 7-2016 (photographs retaken)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 11: Primary elevation facing north; camera facing south.
- 2 of 11: Primary elevation entrance detail facing north; camera facing south.
- 3 of 11: Primary elevation cornice detail facing north; camera facing southeast.
- 4 of 11: Side elevation facing west; camera facing southeast.
- 5 of 11: Rear elevation facing south; camera facing northwest.
- 6 of 11: Side elevation facing east; camera facing southwest.
- 7 of 11: Primary elevation garage bay and interior space facing north; camera facing southeast.
- 8 of 11: Interior, service garage bay from primary; camera facing northwest.
- 9 of 11: Interior, showroom at primary; camera facing east.
- 10 of 11: Interior, original central stair and upper mezzanine; camera facing southwest.
- 11 of 11: Interior, open warehouse/service area from front mezzanine; camera facing south.



Beckley-Ralston Company

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

### Figure Log:

- Figure 1 (page 3):** Interior side of front windows covered by boards. Original fabric is intact. Source: Matt Bivens, 6-2016.
- Figure 2 (page 4):** Existing floorplan; see key within for letter identification. Source: Matt Bivens drawing over *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, volume 2, plate 27, 1932 base. Arrow indicates north.
- Figure 3 (page 5):** Original fabric above and behind contemporary modification. Source: Matt Bivens, 2016.
- Figure 4 (page 6):** Warehouse and service area. Source: Matt Bivens, 2016.
- Figure 5 (page 7):** Original storage scattered throughout building. Source: Matt Bivens, 2016.
- Figure 6 (page 8):** Despite later cover-up conditions to front bays, original 6-light transoms and a multi-light round arch window are intact and in good condition. The building exterior (minus the metal and wood panels) looks exactly as it did at the end of the period of significance in 1931.
- Figure 7 (page 10):** Condition of site previous to construction of present day, nominated building. Source: *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*, v2, p26, 1909. Site is outlined in dotted line below. Arrow indicates north.
- Figure 8 (page 14):** Proposed building as drawn by Preston Bradshaw, 1922. Source: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. Real Estate and Want Ads Section. "New Auto Accessory Plant." June 18, 1922, fourth section, page 1.
- Figure 9 (page 15):** The Beckley-Ralston building basic footprint; note space divisions of store, warehouse, and service areas as used in 1930. No historic floorplan is available showing offices, stair, or service bays. Source: *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*, v2, p27, 1932. Building is outlined in dotted line below. Arrow indicates north.
- Figure 10 (page 16):** Opening announcement. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. November 5, 1922, page 70.
- Figure 11 (page 17):** Although this Beckley-Ralston shop is not St. Louis, management was consistent with interior design in all of their shops and it is highly likely the St. Louis shop would have been similar. Source: *Automobile Trade Journal*. (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., vol. XXVI, no. 12, June 1, 1922, p. 30).
- Figure 12 (page 21):** Although this Beckley-Ralston shop is not in St. Louis, management was consistent with interior design in all of their shops. Based on the design of the St. Louis branch building the effect would have been similar with wide storefronts along the front, a service counter separating the display floor from the general stock, and wall-lined shelving units which held available products; additional items were stored on the mezzanine levels and in the warehouse. Source: *Automobile Trade Journal*. (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, vol. XXVI, no. 12, June 1, 1922, page 31).
- Figure 13 (page 24):** Alemite advertising (above). The company made obvious strides to say that not only men could perform maintenance of their vehicles. Source: *American Motorist Magazine*. January 1921, page 31.
- Figure 14 (page 25):** Rear, south-facing elevation of the building. Loading dock at far left side is original to the building's design; the garage bay near the center was added by Bradshaw for Frier-Sturgis in 1926. Source: Matt Bivens, 6-2016.
- Figure 15 (page 26):** Interior evidence of location of 1920s equipment installations; there are two identical details still extant in the rear warehouse floor. Source: Matt Bivens, 6-2016.
- Figure 16 (page 27):** NO-MO-NOX advertising. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. May 23, 1926, page 65.
- Figure 17 (page 28):** Period advertisement (right). Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 5, 1928, page 67.
- Figure 18 (page 29):** Company advertisement. Source: 1928 *Gould's Red-Blue* directory under automobile service.
- Figure 19 (page 31):** "Cozytown" steel doll house manufactured by Frier Company while in the building. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. December 9, 1928, page 112.
- Figure 20 (page 33):** Historic floorplan. Source: *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*, v2, p27, 1950. Building is outlined in dotted line. Arrow indicates north.
- Figure 21 (page 35):** Period advertisement. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 17, 1936, page 6.
- Figure 22 (page 37):** Chicago plant of Diamond T. Trucks during war production circa 1941. While the Chicago plant was converted for war time production, the St. Louis outlet was used for selling trucks and parts as well as servicing vehicles during 1941. Source: National Automotive History Collection, Washington D.C.
- Figure 23 (page 43):** Beckley-Ralston Company Building Boundary Map. Source: Google Earth and Matt Bivens, 2016.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

**Summary**

The Beckley-Ralston Company building located at 3306-14 Washington Boulevard in St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri is a Classical Revival style, rectangular shaped, one-story, brick commercial building with ornate white glazed terra-cotta and red brick cladding, a flat roof with faux balustrade, and a rubble limestone foundation built in 1922. Featuring highly stylized decorative terra-cotta detail at the primary façade, the building retains original and historic features indicative of an automotive property including multi-light wood and metal sash windows, wide storefront bays with original transoms (boarded), a primary entry bay with double wood doors and oversized round arch, multi-light window above (boarded-see Figure 6), a formal open rail wood staircase, interior storage and office mezzanines, and paneled and glazed mezzanine partitions; portions of the original black and white checkerboard style tile showroom floor are visible and original wood storage systems are scattered throughout the building. The nominated building meets the registration requirements set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled, "Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis [Independent City], MO." both architecturally and historically as a good representative example of an automotive retail business and service property type. Although storefront openings at the primary elevation have been covered with removable metal and wood panels, the bays retain their original dimensions, detailing and depth as well as retaining their divided light transom windows above. A garage bay cut into the primary elevation in 1926 is the result of an historic change that was completed during the period of significance. Despite some common alterations (such as wood or metal panel coverings, drop ceilings, and later office partitions)—details that are shared with the majority of the National Register eligible and listed MPDF-associated properties—the building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Although the physical building environment has changed over time via some demolitions resulting in vacant lots, the building retains sufficient integrity of setting. The building shows signs of its age and use but is in good condition overall and is currently occupied by a service and repair type business.

**Site**

The Beckley-Ralston Company building faces north along Washington Boulevard and is situated between two vacant lots to the east and west (the sites of former structures). The building sits directly at the sidewalk and extends the full lot back to an alley at the south. The mixed-use character of the neighborhood is representative of the historic evolution from residential to commercial over the past 125 years. The nominated

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

building is two blocks east of the Midtown Historic District (NR 7-7-1978), northwest of the Locust Street Automotive District (NR 9-15-2005 and boundary increase 2-19-2008) and just north of the Locust and Olive Street Commercial and Industrial District (NR 9-6-2006). Although the business has shifted away from automobiles, the commercial character of the street has been retained via new businesses which continue to contribute to the economic legacy of the area.

**Exterior**

This one-story red brick and terra cotta-detailed building at 3306-14 (historic 3310-12) Washington Boulevard in St. Louis, Missouri was constructed in 1922 as a speculative commercial building that immediately became associated with the automotive industry; today the building reflects its original and historic uses related to automobiles (Photo 1). The primary elevation faces north and contains a central entrance bay set within a tall semi-circular arch opening including original double wood doors with sidelights; the upper portion of the arch contains a multi-light, semi-circular arch window that is covered with removable wood board (Photo 2 and Figure 1). Flanking the entry are paired terra cotta pilasters with simple bases and ornamental capitals which support the edges of an entablature at either side that continues to the building edges. Immediately above the entry and wide arch with massive keystone is a field of brick that is framed by a triangular pediment with dentils that is supported above the pilasters set upon the entablature and continues into the cornice; the angle of the pediment is mirrored above in the parapet.

Flanking the entry bay at either side is a wide storefront with soldier brick header course above a boarded opening; a second pair of terra cotta pilasters separates these bays from the next, outer bays. A double-wide bay is at the far right side closest the building edge; a portion of the foundation is cut away indicating a former door opening. Opposite, at the left side is a smaller bay similar to those which flank the entry. Adjacent to the left and closest the building's northeast edge is a high garage bay opening dating to 1926 and within the period of significance. Storefronts sit upon a stone base that spans the majority of the street elevation. Visible at the interior above a recent drop ceiling are the original six-light, wood transom windows set in combinations of three per storefront (Figure 1). Above each storefront there are single windows with nine lights each: from left to right there is one, one, one (converted to house a vent), and then three—all placed just below the terra cotta entablature.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 1:** Interior side of front windows covered by boards. Original fabric is intact. Source: Matt Bivens, 6-2016.



The garage bay at the primary elevation is an historic change significant to the building's period of significance as an automotive

service type. The modification corresponds to a 1926 alteration which allowed the building to service vehicles entering from the front and exiting through the back via another extant garage bay (explained later). Above a highly ornamental terra cotta entablature, sitting upon pilasters, a brick parapet with terra cotta faux balustrade is divided into six primary sections, three per side (Photo 3); balusters are set under a rail that seconds as a parapet cap.

The west-facing, side elevation is exposed brick set above a raised limestone foundation. Portions of older signage painted on the wall are visible as is modern graffiti. Tar residue from an earlier structure's roofline is embedded in the wall (Photo 4). The rear, south-facing elevation has an exposed limestone foundation with first floor fenestration in-filled with concrete block (Photo 5). Although in-filled, the original bay depth, sills, and lintels are clearly evident and intact. A pedestrian entrance nearest the southeast edge is reached by concrete steps and is boarded. A loading dock at the south west edge has a metal overhead door with pedestrian size opening cut in. A drive-through garage bay with boarded opening is from the 1926 modification. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor are paired as well as tripartite, original multi-light, metal sash windows set on brick sills (Photo 5). The bulk of these window assemblies are fixed and contain twenty-four lights with center operators. The east side wall of the building is painted stucco parging and contains a pedestrian entrance; a fenced parking lot adjoins this east side elevation (Photo 6). The roof has intact skylights. The building occupies the whole

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

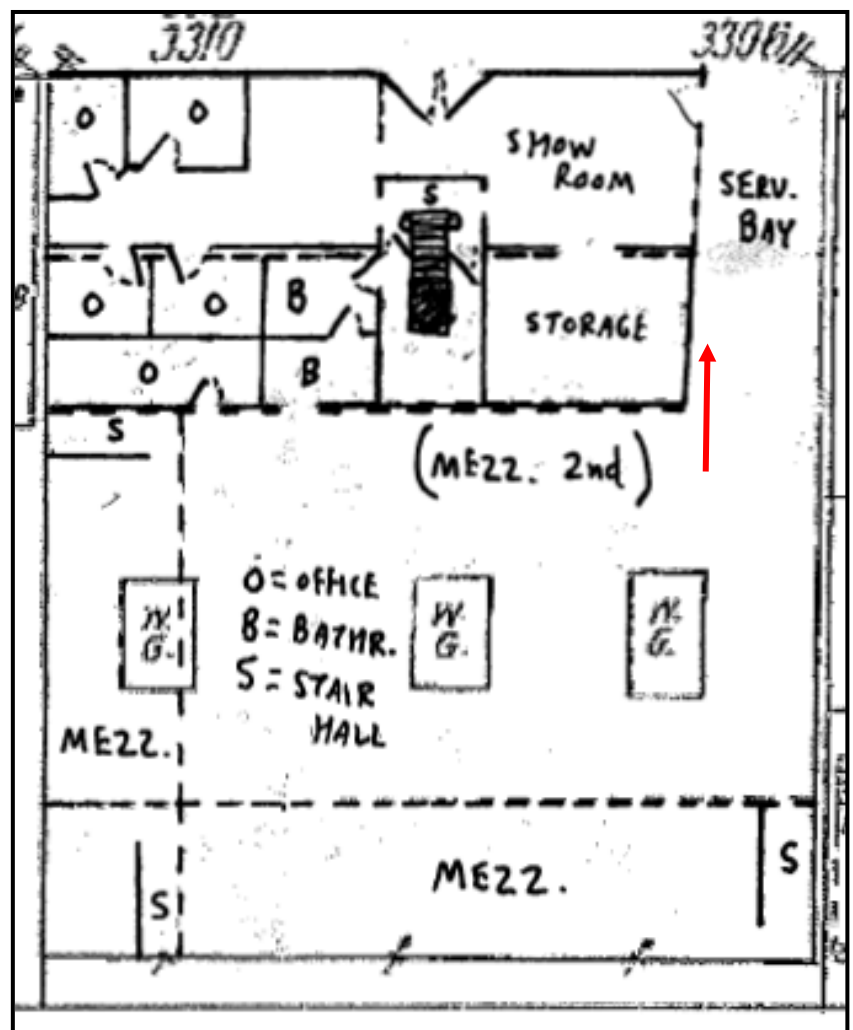
building lot and is situated up to the sidewalk at the north, a parking lot to the east, an alley to the south, and a vacant lot to the west.

**Interior**

The interior of the building is comprised of a front office space with a commercial warehouse/service area at the rear (Figure 2). Beyond the primary elevation garage bay, portions of the original black and white checkerboard ceramic tile floor are intact; it is currently unknown if similar flooring is extant below the current office flooring veneer. Plaster walls are mostly intact nearer the front but are in poor condition near the exterior wall (Photo 7). Corresponding to a 1926 interior change, a multi-light overhead wooden door was installed nearest the eastern building edge and accessible via the exterior garage access (Photo 8). This wall continues up to separate the office space from the 1926 service area (Figure 1, right side). Beyond the garage entry is an open warehouse and service space towards the center and rear of the building; through the interior garage door is a finished showroom and office space.

**Figure 2:** Existing floorplan; see key within for letter identification. Source: Matt Bivens drawing over Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, volume 2, plate 27, 1932 base. Arrow indicates north.

Through the intact, original, primary entry bay is a finished office space that corresponds to a 1976 building permit that was issued to owner Medart Automotive. This permit included the installation of drop ceiling, some interior wall divisions, and wood paneling to cover plaster walls (Photo 9); original finishes such as window casements, crown molding, pilasters, borrowed lights at the mezzanine, and other details are intact above the drop ceiling (Figure 3). Existence of these features illustrates the building's use as an automotive-oriented business.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

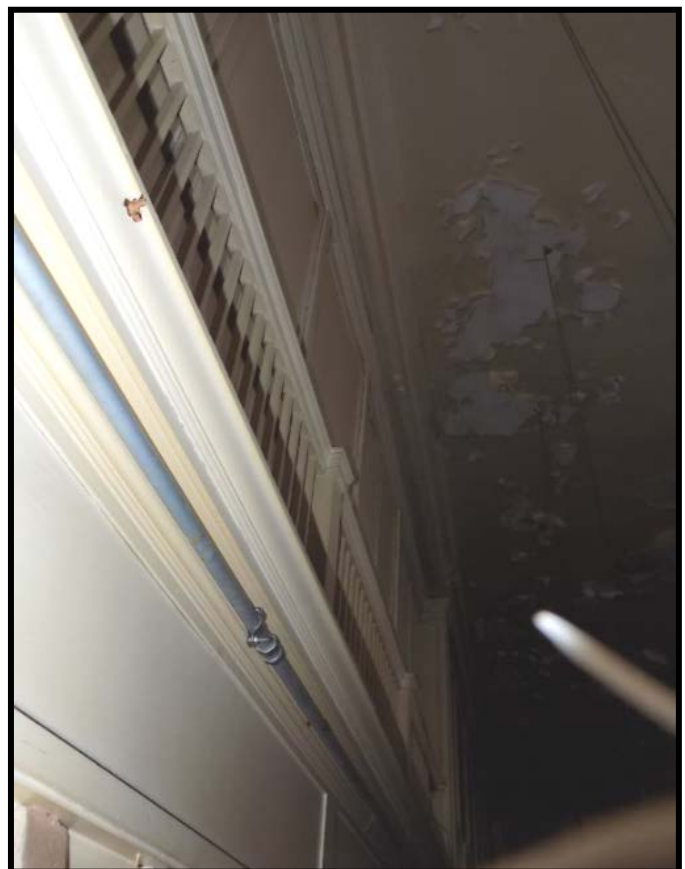
Section number 7 Page 5

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The floor has composite or vinyl tile that may cover original tile beneath (tile is however exposed in several areas throughout the front half of the building). Included within the space are four offices, a reception area, a large storage room, a showroom, and an enclosed stair hall (see Figure 2 floor plan; stair is near center at top). Through a door at either side of the stair hall is the intact, centrally-located wood stair assembly with original with original architectural features such as balusters, a curved rail, and newel posts; original stair trim, base and door casings, ceramic tile floor, and other details are intact (Photo 10).

Up the stairs is a mezzanine floor with intact, original borrowed light partitions with full casing, brackets, and wood railing that faces the original front showroom space (Figure 3); a drop ceiling hides the majority of these details (Photo 10). The mezzanine includes an original bathroom with intact ceramic tile floor, an office with skylight, and a storage area with pair of skylights. Over the mezzanine rail and towards the rear of the structure is an open warehouse which is currently used for service and storage (Photo 11).

**Figure 3:** Original fabric above and behind contemporary modification. Source: Matt Bivens, 2016.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Within the rear service and warehouse space, the roof joists, steel structure and columns are exposed but painted—typical characteristics of a local historic automotive business (Figure 4 and Photo 11). Back down the mezzanine stairs and through an entrance at either side of the rear of the stair is a door which accesses the warehouse space. At the right is a second original bathroom and storage room. The warehouse has a concrete floor; a second original mezzanine is located to the rear of the structure while a third, more recent mezzanine was added for storage along the west wall. The space is full of equipment and parts associated with the repair and servicing of printing industry machinery (Photo 11). Original Beckley-Ralston storage systems are also extant in several locations (Figure 5). A sub-basement level is situated at the building rear and originally housed a sizable boiler (since removed). Portions of finished original or early ceiling include suspended metal lathe with concrete parging. The majority of interior brick is exposed, especially beyond the showroom.

**Figure 4:** Warehouse and service area. Source: Matt Bivens, 2016.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 5: Original storage scattered throughout building. Source: Matt Bivens, 2016.



### Integrity

The building retains historic integrity and meets the registration requirements of the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled *Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri* under Criterion A in Commerce as an automotive retail business (1922-1931) and service property type (1926-1931), preserving essential characteristics from the period in which it served that industry. Specifically, the building retains its original massing and construction materials as well as decorative details; its design is both original and historic with contributing alterations that correspond to significant changes in the building's use as a commercial enterprise (beginning in 1922) and as a service building (beginning in 1926 and thus requiring the front garage door opening) during the period of significance (Figure 6). Original exterior details that helped to attract customers to the business are intact and in excellent condition and include Revival-style terra cotta ornament, an elaborate terra cotta faux balustrade along the roof parapet, multi-light wood transoms and arch window (behind reversible panels; visible in Figure 1 and drawn in Figure 6), nine-light wood sash at the primary elevation, metal sash and multi-light windows with central operators on the rear elevation, and a double entrance door at the primary elevation (Figure 6); skylight openings are also intact and used for interior light today.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

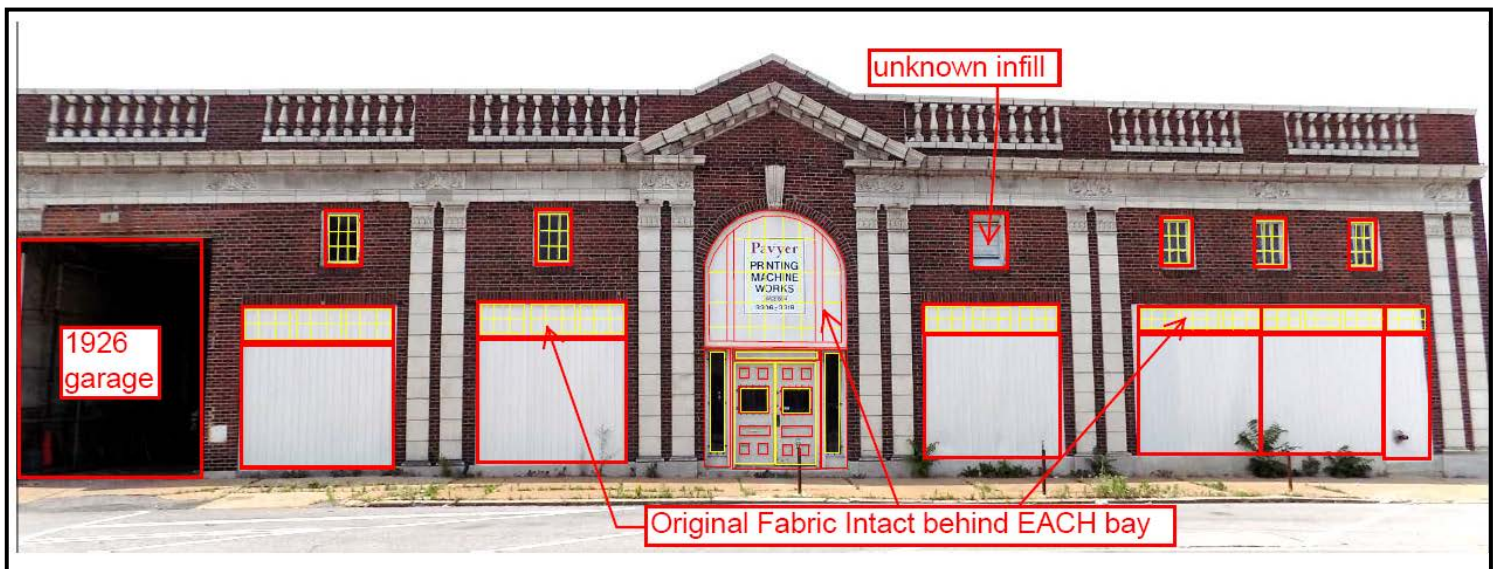
Section number 7 Page 8

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Historic changes including the primary façade garage door of 1926 are typical of the MPDF-listed or eligible buildings; this modification illustrates the continued relevance of the building in context of the development of the automotive industry in St. Louis during an important transition from store to service building. Original display windows are immediately evident despite removable panels; the current showroom (now office and showroom) is similar to the original and is used much like it was during the period of significance. Original interior design and details including a ceramic tile showroom floor (exposed in multiple places and likely intact under contemporary vinyl flooring), a pair of mezzanines, tiled bathrooms, a central open rail wood stair case with original parts, parts storage areas and bins, and borrowed light partitions add further integrity.

The building is used today much as it was during the period of significance despite the automobile being traded for printing equipment. The front showroom is still used as such and also provides small offices as well as display space and a retail outlet; the front garage bay still allows access through the building for large deliveries of equipment. The rear warehouse still provides storage as well as space for the service of equipment; the front and rear mezzanines still provide an overlook onto the warehouse floor in addition to storage and office space. The building's association with the Beckley-Ralston Company and varied Frier-Sturges enterprises (described later) as well as to the subsequent automotive business owners represents over five decades of local automotive industry history.

**Figure 6:** Despite later cover-up conditions to front bays, original 6-light transoms and a multi-light round arch window are intact and in good condition. The building exterior (minus the metal and wood panels) looks exactly as it did at the end of the period of significance in 1931.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary**

The Beckley-Ralston Company building located at 3306-14 Washington Boulevard in St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri is eligible for local listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in COMMERCE due to its historical association with the automotive industry of St. Louis through the contributions of two significant historic tenants—the Beckley-Ralston Company between 1922 and 1926 and Frier-Sturges and subsidiaries between 1926 and 1931. Designed and owned by prominent local architect Preston Bradshaw—the architect responsible for multiple key buildings associated with St. Louis’s automotive industry—the building retains its physical construction materials and interior design plan and is clearly illustrative as an automotive resource today. The property is associated with the historic context of “Marketing and Servicing the Automobile in St. Louis, 1900-1955 ca.” set forth within the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled *Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri*. It meets the MPDF registration requirements for both an “Automotive Retail Business” and as a “Service Garage” property type. As an automotive retail business, the building was originally used by the Beckley-Ralston Company of Chicago—an inventor, manufacturer, and distributor of auto accessories—as its “one-stop-shop” St. Louis home beginning in 1922; Beckley-Ralston was the largest automobile parts and tool distributor in the city at the time and would occupy the building until 1926. Also during the period of significance (1922-1931), the property served as a service garage beginning in 1926 under the occupation of Frier-Sturges; equipped in that period with a front garage bay, it served as a service and parts building until 1931.

The period of significance begins in 1922—the year the building was completed and first occupied as an automobile retail business—through 1931— when one of the last historic occupants, a service-oriented business, closed its doors and the building sat vacant. Although the building continued to serve the automotive industry beyond the period of significance into the mid-1970s—seeing multiple tenant turn-over in those decades—it is the association with the earlier two tenants that most clearly defines the important role automobile sales and service played in St. Louis’s economic growth and development. The building has been used by a printing company since 1976 both as a storage warehouse and as a service center—respectful of the historic use. The building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Despite historic and modern changes in the surrounding area, the building still retains integrity of setting.

National Register of Historic Places  
 Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

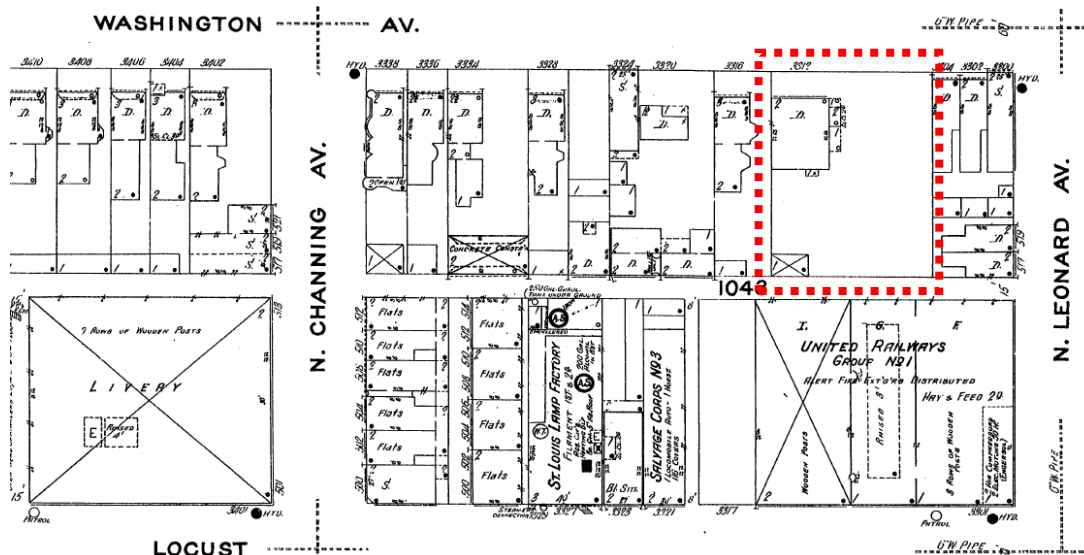
Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Background – Washington Boulevard**

Washington Boulevard at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century had been built out as a commercial core in proximity to downtown St. Louis. Moving westward along the street from downtown, land use changed to include single-family residences and some multiple-family flats and apartments. Churches and light industrial as well as commercial structures were spaced out along city blocks farther west towards Midtown (the general intersection of Grand and Washington Boulevards; NR 7/7/1978), which was one of the first major business and entertainment districts established outside of downtown. Livery stables, carriage houses, streetcar garages, and early automotive businesses were generally situated along the first street south of Washington at Locust Street between 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Grand Boulevard. Locust Street quickly developed into St. Louis’s “Motor Row” by the 1920s and most of the expanse of the street had been built out to support the automobile industry. Additional automotive businesses in the immediate area were scattered on Washington, Olive, and Delmar as well as on intersecting cross streets. Soon the mixed-use character of Washington Boulevard would include a number of automotive businesses that complimented those found on Locust—in both architectural style and variety of product offered.

The north and south sides of the 3300 block of Washington Boulevard in particular contained a variety of two and three-story brick and stone residences at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century—many with small rear private garages; a large livery stable was immediately south at Locust and Channing (recently demolished for a parking lot). The south side of the city block eventually had two shops by 1909 and a few dwellings had been built upon large lots. One particularly large lot at 3312 Washington Boulevard contained a massive two-story brick dwelling constructed by 1890 (Figure 7).

**Figure 7:** Condition of site previous to construction of present day, nominated building. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, v2, p26, 1909. Site is outlined in dotted line below. Arrow indicates north.





National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Under a decade later many streets in the area were altered or widened in response to the change from horse-drawn carriages to automobile traffic. Then, in June of 1917, the City Plan Commission of St. Louis presented its official street report to the Board of Public Service. In it, defects relative to the “rectangular” system creating unnecessary traffic divisions were pointed out and compared to certain diagonal arteries which were then being used at Locust Street near Grand Avenue (later Boulevard) in support of the rising importance of the automotive district there.<sup>1</sup> In the same report, street widenings were recommended to be completed along Washington Avenue from Jefferson to Grand Avenues—creating the third major east to west thoroughfare in that stretch (the other two were Locust and Olive)...also corresponding to the change of use from residential to commercial and especially in response to the influx of automobile transportation. Locust Street began to flourish as the center of focus on selling and servicing automobiles.

#### Elaboration - Construction History

St. Louisan Margaret Kehoe purchased the property at 3312 Washington Boulevard in May of 1922 (on behalf of architect and nephew Preston Bradshaw) and the extant residential structure was soon demolished to provide a large, empty, building lot for new construction.<sup>2</sup> Kehoe was subsequently issued a building permit by the City of St. Louis on June 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1922 for a one-story brick mercantile building then estimated to cost \$20,000.<sup>3</sup> Designed at first for speculation by Kehoe’s nephew, prominent architect Preston J. Bradshaw, the base design would soon be modified by Bradshaw in order to suit the needs of secured tenant, the Beckley-Ralston Company of Chicago.<sup>4</sup> Bradshaw had already established himself as a popular architect for automobile-related buildings in the immediate area beginning in 1913—designing over fifteen buildings there before 1922. Now he was taking on the role of owner and developer of property in association with St. Louis’s “Auto Row;” Bradshaw would retain the property until selling it to an investor in 1939.

The building’s first tenant, Beckley-Ralston, had originally planned on moving into another building designed by Bradshaw then under construction nearby at 3000-3008 Locust Street—some sources indicate that the company had even engaged Bradshaw

<sup>1</sup> Harland Bartholomew. City Plan Commission. “Problems of St. Louis.” (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co., 1917). And Engineering News-Record, volume 79, number 1, page 46, July 5, 1917. (NY: McGraw-Hill).

<sup>2</sup> City of St. Louis. Assessor Office Deed transcriptions. 1200 Market Street, Suite 1, St. Louis, Missouri, 63103.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Building Division, Building Permits.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Kehoe was the sister of Preston’s mother Anna Kehoe Bradshaw. *St Louis Post-Dispatch*. “List of Large Building Work Under Way or Soon to be Started.” June 13, 1922, page 13.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

to design that building for their specific use.<sup>5</sup> Arriving for the first time in St. Louis during 1920, Beckley-Ralston had bought out the Missouri Auto Specialty Company (MASC), a local accessory house at 1907 Locust Street—likely to eradicate any local competition. MASC would retain this space as well as lease another building at 3003 Locust for about two years while a permanent building was being constructed in which they could house their full enterprise.<sup>6</sup> It is currently unknown why Beckley-Ralston did not occupy 3000-08 Locust Street; however Bradshaw, the businessman that he was, apparently had another option for them. His large lot at 3306-14 Washington Boulevard was available; a lease deal was ultimately sealed, and Bradshaw redrew the building plans in close consultation with Beckley-Ralston company President W. L. Beckley in Chicago as well as George Ammerman here in St. Louis, resulting in a custom-made automotive accessory and specialty house that would serve as the exclusive St. Louis branch for Beckley-Ralston.<sup>7</sup> Washington Boulevard had just been widened in the immediate area based on the 1917 Plan, enabling new buildings to be constructed including Beckley-Ralston's, the Brockmann Auto Service Company, and the original location of the Alemite Lubricator Company—each along the 3300 block.<sup>8</sup>

Ground for the new building at 3306-14 Washington Boulevard was broken in June of 1922; Bradshaw made a personal guarantee that construction would be completed within 60 days.<sup>9</sup> Publicized in the June 18, 1922 edition of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the headline "Auto Accessory Firm's New Building Begun-Structure of Beckley-Ralston Company Being Erected on Washington Avenue"<sup>10</sup> confirmed the company's intentions. Rival *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* provided an illustration of the proposed building (Figure 8) and had interviewed local manager George Ammerman who had

<sup>5</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. June 11, 1922, page B 17 (55). According to the newspaper source, "a new building now being erected at 3004 Locust Street by Preston Bradshaw, architect, will be occupied within the next 60 days by the local branch of the Beckley-Ralston Co., according to an announcement made by G. S. Ammerman, branch manager." One of the key features of the building was an elaborate balcony that spanned the entire primary façade, at 100 feet long. For reasons currently unknown the Locust Street building was instead occupied by the Nash Saint Louis Motor Company (NR Listed as Locust Street Automotive District on 9-15-2005.) That NR document suggests the building was constructed in 1920; the building permit could have been acted upon two years later.

<sup>6</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. October 24, 1920, page A22. The "Auto News and Gossip" section. And *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. June 18, 1922, page A1B. According to the later newspaper source, work had just begun on a new building for the company on Washington Avenue. The temporary home at 3003 Locust Street was the historic Diamond Rubber Company/B. F. Goodrich Rubber Company designed by Albert Groves in 1914. (NR Listed as Locust Street Automotive District on 9-15-2005.)

<sup>7</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. "Automotive News and Features" section. June 11, 1922, page B5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. June 18, 1922, page A1B.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

stated that the increased business of the firm made the new quarters necessary.<sup>11</sup> The building was touted as the “largest of its kind in St. Louis devoted exclusively to automobile accessories”—research indicates that this was true during its time.<sup>12</sup> The *Manufacturer’s Record* of June 1922 also announced Beckley-Ralston’s occupancy and provided general information about the new building.<sup>13</sup> Catering to the needs of accessory dealers, service stations, and jobbers in Chicago, Beckley-Ralston continued its mission in St. Louis during the 1920s as a “jobber of automobile accessories and specialties.”<sup>14</sup>

Relative to the building design, the discrepancy between the initial \$20,000 estimate and the final \$50,000 construction budget was the result of Beckley-Ralston’s design requirements for the building. Designed to suit their distribution, servicing, storage, invention, manufacturing, shipping, and managing of automotive accessories, the building featured separate spaces for specialized purposes and general upgrades in the amount of \$30,000. In an interview with a Beckley-Ralston Company official (unnamed in the article but likely St. Louis branch manager George Ammerman), the building was “tailored at the first floor to contain specially designed racks and shelving for the storage of many thousands of different automobile parts of all manufactures and accessories (several are intact in the building-see Figure 5).”<sup>15</sup>

The structure was designed with a primary store which acted as a display area (now offices, but intact); a mezzanine reached by a grand staircase in the center (intact) provided office and storage spaces while restrooms were situated adjacent the stair (all intact). Beyond the stair was a massive warehouse with high ceilings and an additional mezzanine for storage (all extant); additional specially designed racks and shelving were installed throughout (many still extant). An area dedicated as a special department for displaying and demonstrating radio equipment (unknown location) was also constructed. Open storage space and pathways for the movement of goods was also provided for in the warehouse.

<sup>11</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. “Real Estate and Want Ads” section. “New Auto Accessory Plant.” June 18, 1922, fourth section, page 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* The existing National Register listed districts and individual properties associated with the automotive industry in St. Louis were analyzed for data to prove or disprove this point; based on findings it was the largest of its time.

<sup>13</sup> *Manufacturer’s Record*. (Baltimore: Manufacturer’s Record Publishing Company), Volume LXXXI, number 25, June 22, 1922, page 76.

<sup>14</sup> *Gould’s St. Louis City Directory, 1922-1923*.

<sup>15</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. June 18, 1922, page A1B.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 8:** Proposed building as drawn by Preston Bradshaw, 1922. Source: St. Louis Globe-Democrat. Real Estate and Want Ads Section. "New Auto Accessory Plant." June 18, 1922, fourth section, page 1.



Bradshaw's design for Beckley-Ralston's new home included a 100-foot wide front with ornamental balcony (intact today) similar to that designed by Bradshaw at 3000-3008 Locust Street (also intact). The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* described the new edifice as a "building of a very ornamental nature..." with an "elevation comprised of terra cotta and matt brick..." and "large plate glass show windows that would afford ample view of (the) show room (covered with removable panels but intact)...a room with a tile floor and interior trim of mahogany."<sup>16</sup> Today the millwork is extant but painted; tile is exposed in several areas and likely intact beneath later floor finishes. Figure 9, next page shows basic building footprint in the early days.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

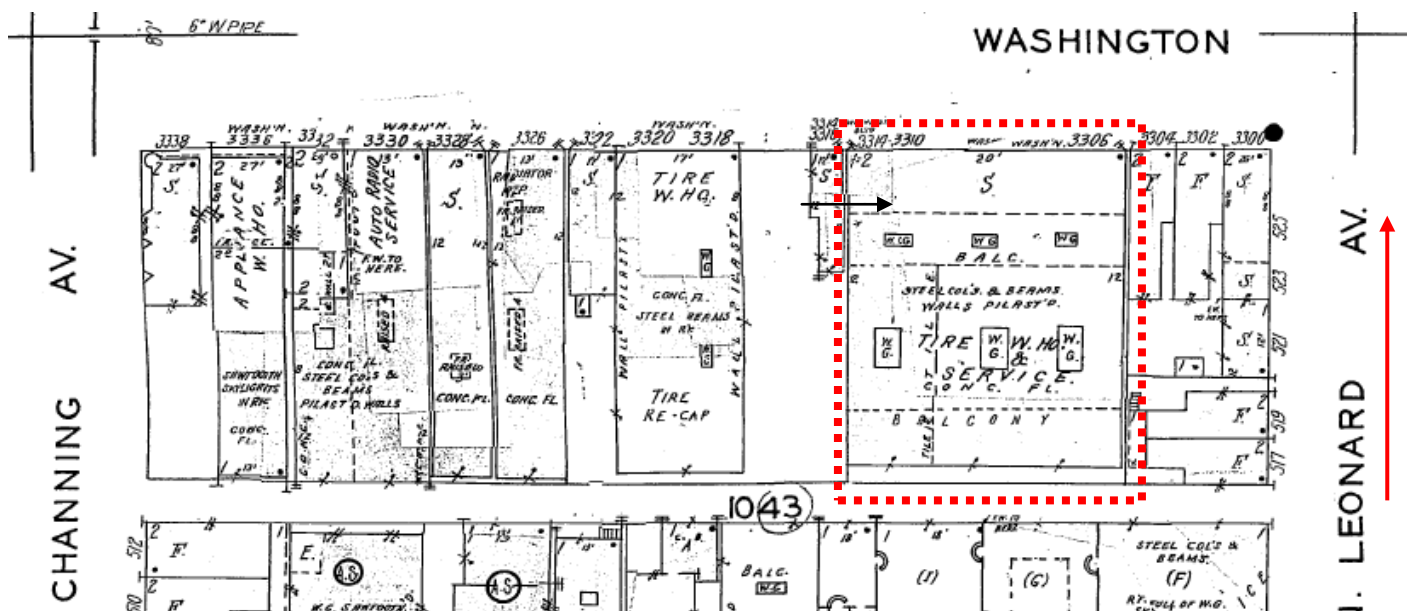
National Register of Historic Places  
 Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

By November of 1922, the building was fully equipped with varied products and experienced sales representatives; an announcement (Figure 10, next page) was posted in the newspaper inviting the public to attend its formal opening the week of November 6<sup>th</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup>. The invitation declared that the erection of the building was a direct result of "the tremendous increase in motor registration in the Great Southwest coupled with the accompanying expansion of trade, and the consequent increasing demands upon a need for unexcelled service in automobile parts, tools, and equipment."<sup>17</sup> The grand opening was timely and complete with special exhibits, demonstrations, and radio broadcasts. Within, a large showroom (extant) occupied the ground floor with private offices (windows and wood partitions intact) and salesmen's desks above on a mezzanine (intact) overlooking the showroom and reached by a "wide staircase of ornate design" (intact).<sup>18</sup> The showroom during the opening was devoted to exhibits of heavy machinery including automobile shop equipment; demonstrations of the equipment were conducted for the public.

**Figure 9:** The Beckley-Ralston building basic footprint; note space divisions of store, warehouse, and service areas as used in 1930. No historic floorplan is available showing offices, stair, or service bays. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, v2, p27, 1932. Building is outlined in dotted line below. Arrow indicates north.



<sup>17</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. November 5, 1922, page B30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* November 12, 1922, page 37.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 10: Opening announcement. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. November 5, 1922, page 70.

**THE BECKLEY-RALSTON COMPANY**

*Announce the Formal Opening  
of Their New Home Located at*

**3310-12 Washington Boulevard**

The tremendous increase in motor registration in the great Southwest, the accompanying expansion of trade, and the consequent increasing demands upon us for an unexcelled service in automobile parts, tools and equipment, have been the compelling factors behind the erection of this building, which we invite you to visit during

**OPENING WEEK NOVEMBER 6 to 11**

Special exhibits will be on display this week and your special attention is called to the completeness of our comprehensive stock of

*Auto Supplies and Parts—Demonstration Stands, Garage  
Machinery, Equipment and Tools, Radio  
Apparatus and Supplies*

On Wednesday evening, November 8th, and Thursday evening, November 9th, from 7:30 to 10:30 o'clock, we will feature Radio Apparatus and Supplies during the broadcasting hours.

**THE BECKLEY-RALSTON COMPANY**

*Strictly Wholesale*

NEW YORK    CHICAGO    ST. LOUIS    PITTSBURG    DETROIT    SAN FRANCISCO

### The Beckley-Ralston Story and its St. Louis presence 1922-1926

Originally founded by W. L. Beckley in Chicago in 1893 as a warehousing firm handling bicycle parts, the business expanded to include the buying and selling of automotive accessories, equipment, parts, and supplies; officially established as the Beckley-Ralston Company (B-R) in 1897, B-R reincorporated in December of 1912.<sup>19</sup> In the beginning, the company distributed finished material for experimental automobiles and early flying machines and in 1905 the company manufactured Ariel, Ariel Special and Colonial bicycle brands. Founded by company President W. L. Beckley, his brother

<sup>19</sup> John Moody. "Moody's Analyses of Investments." (New York: Moody's Investors Service, 1922).

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

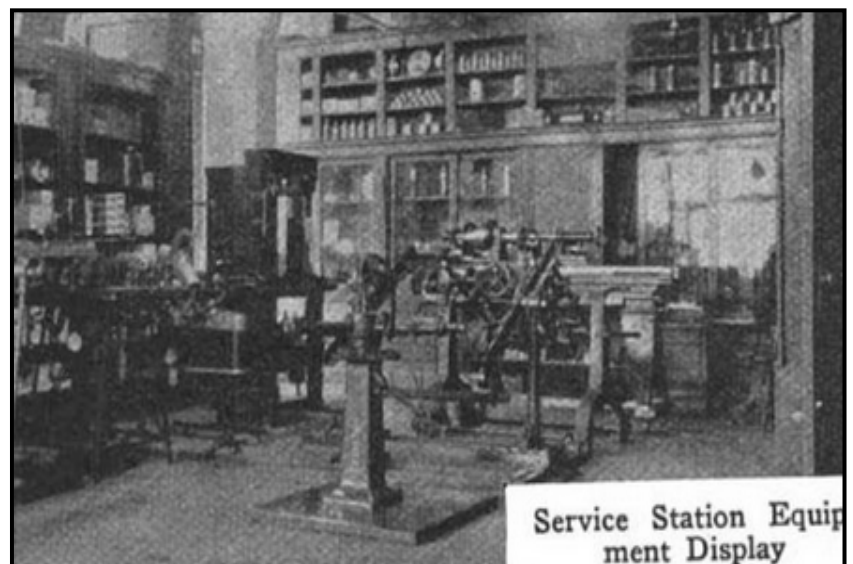
Section number 8 Page 17

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

G. D. Beckley was Treasurer and friend J. C. Ralston was Secretary when the company began at 80-84 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. A pioneer in the automotive field during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, B-R expanded to include radio supplies in the 1920s—this is important locally as well because B-R was one of the largest and most equipped suppliers of radio equipment and servicing at the time.<sup>20</sup> Manufacturing both loud speakers and receivers in the early 1920s, B-R had patented the Blue Ribbon Regenerative Receiver (a long-range receiver for radio listening) and Amplifier in 1923 and a loop antenna in 1925.<sup>21</sup> These significant activities that enhanced the evolution of radio technology occurred during occupancy in the nominated building however there is little evidence to what degree these or other inventions were completed here.

Until 1920, Beckley-Ralston manned branch offices in Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Kansas City, Indianapolis, and San Francisco; St. Louis was added to the portfolio in that year. A force in the varied automobile businesses, St. Louis had already established a swath of land just west of downtown as a mecca for automobile manufacturing, parts distribution, servicing, and automotive sales with streets lined with ornate buildings to attract customers—known early on as “Automobile Row.”<sup>22</sup> Beckley-Ralston was first drawn to the popular Locust Street but with road improvements adjacent streets contained lots that were ripe for development; ultimately the company would locate a street to the north of Locust Street along Washington Boulevard in 1922. After opening week in November of 1922, Beckley-Ralston was ready to conduct business; its organized shop would be visited by thousands of consumers (Figure 11).

**Figure 11:** Although this Beckley-Ralston shop is not St. Louis, management was consistent with interior design in all of their shops and it is highly likely the St. Louis shop would have been similar. Source: *Automobile Trade Journal*. (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., vol. XXVI, no. 12, June 1, 1922, p. 30).



<sup>20</sup> *Gould's St. Louis City Directories, 1920-1924.*

<sup>21</sup> Internet source: [http://www.radiomuseum.org/dsp\\_hersteller\\_detail.cfm?company\\_id=11213](http://www.radiomuseum.org/dsp_hersteller_detail.cfm?company_id=11213). Accessed 9-4-2013.

<sup>22</sup> One of the earliest references to the area being referred to as “Automobile Row” was in 1907 in reference to a section at the 3900 block of Olive Street. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. April 2, 1907, p 16.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Beckley-Ralston was one of the few distributors of “AMBU” service station equipment—touted by automobile experts as the industry’s most modern equipment and a sign of the most efficient station.<sup>23</sup> Leading the market over at least nineteen other competing automobile supply companies during 1923, Beckley-Ralston was one of seven the following year in 1924.<sup>24</sup> The company continued as a manufacturer and a wholesale distributor of automobile equipment, parts, tools, and radio supplies in the subject building through 1925 and into 1926 (based on City Directory research) after which the Beckley-Ralston name began to be associated with radio equipment outside of St. Louis (as the wholesale distributor for the Radio Corporation of America: later RCA). Then in the 1930s, Beckley-Ralston was associated with sporting goods, especially golf equipment and then the name disappeared from local directories altogether.<sup>25</sup> At this time the number of competitors dealing in automobile supplies jumped from ten firms during 1925 to over two-hundred firms by the beginning of 1926<sup>26</sup>—it is not known how this affected Beckley-Ralston. The company left St. Louis and focused attention on its original store in Chicago—nothing is currently known about the firm after it left St. Louis.

**Significance of Beckley-Ralston under the MPDF as an  
“Automotive Retail and Service-Oriented Business”**

Although the history of Beckley-Ralston (B-R) within the context of automobile development extends back to the beginning of the industry, their role in St. Louis was as a significant automotive retail and service business during the first half of the 1920s. Back in Chicago, B-R contributed to the early development of the automobile through their inventions of experimental vehicles (electric and battery powered) as well as early flying machines during the 1890s (see earlier section beginning on page 16). Here in St. Louis, B-R contributed directly to the invention and distribution of multiple components, equipment, and tools essential to making the automobile run. The foresight of the company directors to buy out the Missouri Auto Specialty Company at 1907 Locust Street (extant today but with modified primary elevation) in 1920 allowed B-R to corner

<sup>23</sup> “AMBU” refers to a patented trouble-shooting system that located electrical trouble “quickly and unfailingly” as advertised in the 1920s period publications. To be able to advertise as an “Official AMBU Service Station” was a sign that your garage or service station had the newest and most accurate technology in the industry.

<sup>24</sup> *Gould’s St. Louis Directory and Gould’s Red-Blue Book*. (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, various dates 1920-1930).

<sup>25</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Advertisement, April 17, 1931, page 18. And Gould’s St. Louis City Directories 1926-1940.

<sup>26</sup> *Gould’s St. Louis Directory and Gould’s Red-Blue Book*. (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, various dates 1920-2001).



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

the market by removing all local competition.<sup>27</sup> Needless to say, B-R was the city's largest automotive accessory and tool distributor between 1922 and 1926, handling the greatest variety of storage battery parts, automotive tools and supplies, and service station equipment.<sup>28</sup>

Beckley-Ralston (B-R) was not simply a supplier, they were also innovators in the automotive technology field, inventing and improving numerous automobile components and tools as well as designing some of the equipment by which automobiles could be monitored and maintained. Specifically, in the nominated building, B-R improved its "Radiometer," an advanced tool that the company invented earlier in 1920 (while in St. Louis) to test radiator solutions (especially important to prevent freezing during the winter), as well as made great strides in increasing the overall efficiency of hydrometers—an instrument used to measure the density of liquids—another tool necessary to the automotive industry.<sup>29</sup> The ability to house and display thousands of parts and tools as well as to provide in-house service to vehicles resulted in B-R having a "one-stop-shop" for the consumer and especially service station owners. B-R's shops nationwide were models of efficiency (Figure 12) and total assets of the company were over \$2 million annually during the early 1920s.<sup>30</sup>

### Registration Requirements

Beckley-Ralston contributed to the commercial growth surrounding the rise and expansion of the automobile in St. Louis history. Based on its significance under National Register Criterion A in COMMERCE, the Beckley-Ralston Company building at 3306 Washington Boulevard retains much of its original design as well as historic fabric, resulting in its ability to clearly convey its automotive-related history. Like other MPDF-listed properties, this building was slightly modified over time; however, exterior (and some interior) changes were completed during the period of significance. The building meets the registration requirements because it retains its exterior wall cladding, general

<sup>27</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. October 24, 1920, page A22. The "Auto News and Gossip" section. The Former Missouri Auto Specialty Company at 1907 Locust was sold by company president L. E. Allmon and included "the stock, book accounts, and good will" of the company. At this point Beckley-Ralston had branch offices in Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Kansas City, Indianapolis, and San Francisco.

<sup>28</sup> *Gould's St. Louis City Directories, 1920-1927*.

<sup>29</sup> *Farm Machinery – Farm Power*. (St. Louis: Midland Publishing), number 1480-81, April 15, 1920, page 77. And "Motor World." Volume LXVI, number 7, February 16, 1921, page 29.

<sup>30</sup> John Moody.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

massing, and exterior details.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, all of the exterior building materials are extant and in good to excellent condition including on the primary elevation: face brick; terra cotta ornamentation (pilasters, capitals, entablature, cornice, balustrade, pediments, and other details); the original front doors (with sidelights and transom); storefront and window fenestration (four storefronts are covered with panels and one window has a vent); and an arched, multi-light façade window (also covered with a panel). Despite wood and metal panels covering these storefront windows, all of the original storefront openings are readily apparent—meeting the registration requirements. Specifically, storefronts remain as designed in size and depth and exterior detail; the original multi-light transoms above are also entirely intact—being original six-light wood sash (Figure 6). Although not modified by Beckley-Ralston during their occupancy, the primary façade garage entry was completed during the period of significance in 1926 by an important, subsequent tenant of the building.

The side elevations had a simple wall plane design (also intact from original) and the rear was reserved for servicing and supply access. Specifically at the rear there is a pair of historic period garage bays: one is reached by a high loading dock and was associated with the original design; the second was installed during 1926 when the building was converted to a drive-through service facility during the period of significance. Although the first floor window bays at the rear have been infilled with recess concrete block, their design has not been altered—thus meeting the registration requirements. The second floor windows remain intact and are generally operable steel sash industrial windows. A pedestrian access door (now boarded) is original.

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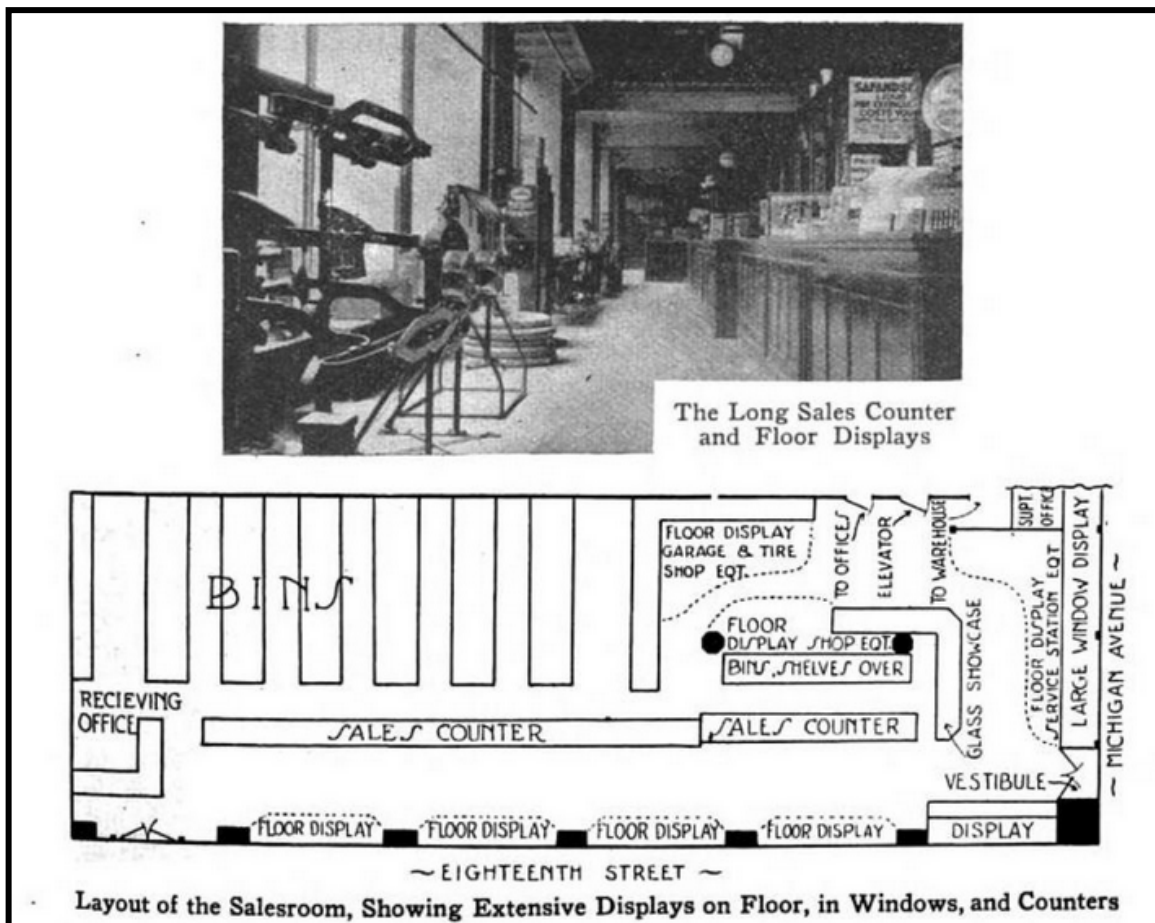
<sup>31</sup> Keenoy, Ruth and Karen Baxter, Timothy Maloney and Mandy Ford. *Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri*. Multiple Property Documentation Form and historic context *Marketing and Servicing the Automobile in St. Louis, 1900-1955 ca.* Section F, page 35.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 21

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 12:** Although this Beckley-Ralston shop is not in St. Louis, management was consistent with interior design in all of their shops. Based on the design of the St. Louis branch building the effect would have been similar with wide storefronts along the front, a service counter separating the display floor from the general stock, and wall-lined shelving units which held available products; additional items were stored on the mezzanine levels and in the warehouse. Source: *Automobile Trade Journal*. (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, vol. XXVI, no. 12, June 1, 1922, page 31).



The building's architect, Preston Bradshaw, used elaborate architectural detailing to distinguish this building from its neighbors. This was especially important for the time because the building was one of the first automobile businesses in this section of the Washington Boulevard city block face outside of the Automobile Row situated along Locust Street. Being the first "new" design on this portion of the city block, surrounded by the traditional red brick Victorian residential structures of former decades, this Revival style commercial building was a physical sign of change on the street. Just as Beckley-Ralston was drawn to Bradshaw's building (and may have had some influence on the amount and character of the architectural detail executed there), the large

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 22

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

storefront windows (extant), providing maximum exposure of goods contained within, ultimately drew hundreds of costumers to the business weekly.

Regarding the interior, the building meets the registration requirements because it is recognizable from its association with the automobile and especially from the period of significance as it retains the majority of those related features. Specifically within the interior, where all of the significant historic activities took place, the garage bay doors are extant as are the original skylights, decorative tile floor in the showroom and stair hall, and the separation of "clean" office and "dirty" service at the front and rear respectively. Today, the building is used similarly to how it was used originally. The front portion still contains a large display space (with open space and portions of the tile floor), separated from the rear warehousing and service space. A few private offices are located here. The original central stair is still used to access the front mezzanine level where products and parts are stored and offices are carved. Many of Beckley-Ralston's storage systems are extant in the building and few contain new parts associated with the company located there. The raw, utilitarian expanse of the rear portion is much like it was when originally built and used by Beckley-Ralston and subsequent tenants. The garage door cut by a later historic tenant (described later) is still separated from the main showroom by a permanent wall as well as sliding glass-in-frame service door and leads into the warehouse space and out the rear exit door. The rear mezzanine level, originally used for storage of parts and then for customers viewing the servicing of their automobile is still extant. Typical of other MPDF-listed properties, subsequent retail businesses occupied the building after the significant original and early tenants. However, the feeling of an automotive business is preserved within despite the automobile equipment being replaced by printing paraphernalia; the association to the former is preserved.

Based on the MPDF, the automobile retail business type is the most common building resource associated with marketing and servicing the automobile and it serves as evidence of the important role automobile sales played in St. Louis's economic growth and development.<sup>32</sup> These resources also provide evidence of the increasing importance of the automobile to the general public as a major consumer product purchase. The building is eligible under Criterion A in COMMERCE first due to its association with Beckley-Ralston. Beckley-Ralston was involved with the early development of automobiles but perhaps more importantly, they had cornered the parts and service equipment market for St. Louis automobiles during the "Roaring

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Twenties," a period that saw a shift in automobile ownership from the rich to almost anyone who could reach the pedal. In the nominated building, the company became the largest local parts distributor. The nominated building was their longest-occupied as well as last home and is the most significant building associated with them in St. Louis—no other local property represents their place in the story of the automobile. Located in the nominated building between 1922 and 1926, Beckley-Ralston provided crucial accessories for automobiles, trucks, and tractors in addition to garage and shop equipment, automotive hardware and tools, and ultimately automotive repair parts for most cars in production.

### Subsequent Automotive Businesses Contributing to the Historic Record

The significance of the building did not terminate once Beckley-Ralston's lease expired, but rather, it saw new life under subsequent tenants who performed similar business within the building. It was also post-1925 when the building was converted to a more intensive automotive service building—corresponding to the primary elevation garage bay cut in to the front wall. In 1926, building owners, Margaret Kehoe and Preston Bradshaw entered into a new lease brokered by the Isaac T. Cook Company with tenant, the Frier-Sturges Company.<sup>33</sup> Frier-Sturges was a business machine—managing several smaller subsidiaries, many of which were moved over to or established within the nominated building (and comprising the end of the period of significance) between 1926 and 1931.

Little is known about Frier-Sturges except that they had incorporated in Missouri in 1924 with a capital of \$50,000 in order to sell automotive supplies and accessories.<sup>34</sup> It is expected that Frier-Sturges may have bought the remaining stock of Beckley-Ralston in 1926 in order to maintain some "old stock" parts necessary to maintain those autos already on the road but no proof has confirmed this suspicion. The business comprised president J. H. Frier Jr., vice-president M. G. Boylan, secretary Mary Frier, and treasurer Jas. Frier. Needing a larger facility than the one they occupied at the time at 3321 Washington Boulevard (extant but altered), Frier found a "near-perfect" home in the nominated building. Then on August 12, 1926, a building permit was issued to Preston Bradshaw for a \$2,000 alteration to "suit the needs" of the new tenants.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> City of St. Louis. Deed transcriptions.

<sup>34</sup> *Polk-Gould St. Louis City Directory*, 1924-1926.

<sup>35</sup> City of St. Louis. Building Division, Building Permits.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 24

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Frier-Sturges owned and operated the Alemite Lubricator Company (Figure 13, next page) as well as a branch of that concern, the Alemite Super Service Company—a firm specializing in the greasing and washing of cars—both established in the building during 1926.<sup>36</sup> Formed in Missouri with a capital of \$12,000 in 1926, Alemite Lubricator Company was incorporated by a group of local businessmen including brothers S. G. and W. A. Stickney, and partners H. M. Bixby and J. H. Frier (owner of Frier-Sturgis).<sup>37</sup> Given the new use of the building as an automobile servicing facility (greasing and washing of cars), a primary elevation alteration including the extant garage door opening was required (Photo 1 and Figure 6, left side). This access continued through the building and out a second exit bay at the rear (Figure 14). The new tenants were ready to conduct business and began to advertise on the building just three weeks after Bradshaw's permit.<sup>38</sup> Official announcement of the relocation of Alemite to the nominated building "for the account of Beckley-Ralston" was issued on August 15, 1926.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 13:** Alemite advertising (above). The company made obvious strides to say that not only men could perform maintenance of their vehicles. Source: *American Motorist Magazine*. January 1921, page 31.



<sup>36</sup> *Polk-Gould St. Louis City Directory, 1925-26*. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Alemite Lubricator Co. Leases Larger Quarters." August 15, 1926, page 75.

<sup>37</sup> *Polk-Gould St. Louis City Directory, 1925-26*. Incorporated business listing.

<sup>38</sup> City of St. Louis. Building Division, Building Permits. Permit for Alemite signage.

<sup>39</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. "Real Estate and Want Ads" section. "Alemite Lubricating Co. Leases Larger Quarters." August 15, 1926, page 1.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 25

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 14:** Rear, south-facing elevation of the building. Loading dock at far left side is original to the building's design; the garage bay near the center was added by Bradshaw for Frier-Sturgis in 1926. Source: Matt Bivens, 6-2016.



Frier-Sturges also required interior modifications to enhance their servicing capabilities; comprised of two massive rotary lifts for automobiles (Figure 15), courtesy of the Automobile Rotary Lift Company of Memphis of which they were the local distributor for,<sup>40</sup> additional models were exhibited within the primary storefronts for sale to service men. One purpose of the installation was a means of advertising the systems to service station owners (Alemite and Beckley-Ralston's primary customers) and providing a means of demonstrating their capabilities. The new garage entrance at Washington Boulevard in 1926 allowed a motorist to drive his or her car into the building and "upon one of these lifts and by means of the new automatic Alemite air-guns, the automobile is lubricated in 18 minutes."<sup>41</sup> Alemite was earlier adopted in 1921 as standard equipment by many leading makes of cars, trucks, and tractors and Frier-Sturges held distribution and servicing rights into the late 1920s.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. "Autos and Radio" section. "Frier-Sturges, Inc. Lease New Building." August 22, 1926, page 6A.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "New Distributor for Alemite Lubricator." July 17, 1921, page 48.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 26

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 15:** Interior evidence of location of 1920s equipment installations; there are two identical details still extant in the rear warehouse floor. Source: Matt Bivens, 6-2016.



Frier-Sturges also built a modern car washing system (equipped with an automatic air compressor, water heaters, air hoses, and washing racks)—accessible via the front or rear garage bay. Together both systems were considered as new models of efficiency enabling Alemite to expedite lubricating and washing of automobiles on a then claimed, unprecedented scale.<sup>43</sup> The exhibits of these systems were open for inspection by service station owners “at all times” and “intensive co-operation” was given to those contemplating installation.<sup>44</sup> The period of significance includes Frier-Sturges because they introduced this business innovation to the St. Louis automotive scene in 1926 and at the time had no local competition.<sup>45</sup>

Frier-Sturges also sold its “No-Mo-Nox” service (Figure 16)—a service using a fluid for “eliminating poisonous carbon monoxide from the exhaust of automobiles by obtaining complete gasoline combustion.”<sup>46</sup> Demand for these modern services continued to rise during 1926 and plans were being made to provide for access to buses and large

<sup>43</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. August 15, 1926.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. “Autos and Radio” section. August 22, 1926, page 6A.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 27

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

trucks—potentially explaining the large, uncased opening at the front that could physically allow access to larger vehicles.<sup>47</sup>

Figure 16: NO-MO-NOX advertising. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. May 23, 1926, page 65.

**NO-MO-NOX**  
TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

**The Safe Way to Improve Gasoline!**  
*NO-MO-NOX is non-poisonous! Non-inflammable! Non-injurious to metal or Skin!*

For years the automobile industry has been searching for some safe method of conquering carbon troubles in engines and eliminating the deadly menace of carbon monoxide in exhaust gases. Now No-Mo-Nox is the final and complete answer to these vital problems of motoring.

1. It will remove all carbon deposits.
2. It will prevent carbon forming.
3. It will prevent fouled plugs.
4. It will remedy oil pumping.
5. It will eliminate exhaust poison.
6. It will increase power pick-up.
7. It will increase gasoline mileage.
8. It will stop engine knocks.
9. It will give longer life to oil.

These almost unbelievable results are due to the fact that No-Mo-Nox eliminates incomplete combustion, which is the cause of carbon troubles in the engine and the cause of deadly monoxide gas in the exhaust.

The following test on exhaust gas, made by a prominent St. Louis industrial laboratory, shows how completely No-Mo-Nox eliminates carbon monoxide.

Per cent without	Per cent with
NO-MO-NOX	NO-MO-NOX

The interior character of the nominated building was generally preserved by Frier-Sturges in 1926 from the earlier occupancy of Beckley-Ralston. Specifically, the automobile washing and polishing area was situated in the extant space within the eastern portion of the rear warehouse while the front, western half was retained as separate office and commercial space to be used for the retail sale of Alemite lubricating equipment (including oils and greases, hand and power grease guns, and lubrication equipment).<sup>48</sup> In addition, in keeping with the original design, the mezzanine floor above the front showroom was retained as office and storage space while the rear mezzanine was preserved as a customer viewing area awaiting automobiles in service. In a period publication, further elaboration of the building's features discussed the large front display room (extant) as complimented by a "finely furnished waiting room" (non-extant) with offices and quarters for both parts and service located above on the mezzanine floor (extant).<sup>49</sup> The new garage entry at the

<sup>47</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Frier-Sturges Inc. Will Move to Larger Quarters." September 5, 1926, page 44.

<sup>48</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. "Autos and Radio" section. August 22, 1926, page 6A. Alemite was made by the Basick Alemite Corporation of Chicago.

<sup>49</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Lubrication Concerns Move into New Building." October 31, 1926, page 57.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 28

Beckley-Ralston Company  
Name of Property  
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri  
County and State  
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO  
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

front elevation had a door that could be operated by the front desk person upon signal of a visiting automobile.

The Alemite Super Service Company provided an unmatched complete lubricating and washing service for automobiles, trucks and busses (Figure 17).<sup>50</sup> Frier-Sturges placed this company at the rear of the building with access through the rear garage door (extant) and secondary access via Washington Boulevard through the new front entrance. Alemite installed two rotary hydraulic lifts as previously mentioned; these lifts took the place of the traditional service pit where a worker “burrowed” underneath the car.<sup>51</sup> The lifts also allowed a customer clear view of their automobile while it was being serviced—no doubt a source of wonder to the untrained eye.

Figure 17: Period advertisement (right). Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 5, 1928, page 67.

In the nominated building, Alemite established one of the earliest methods of providing service records to auto owners and presented owners who lubricated their vehicle on a scheduled basis with certificates which “proved valuable when it came to disposing of their cars.”<sup>52</sup> Alemite, innovators in the field, also invented a system where it was possible to recycle oil which was drained from crankcases and reused it as fuel in their car-washing plant within the building. During the late 1920s Frier began assessing his assets and considered additional business options in the building. Meanwhile on January 29, 1927, owner Margaret Kehoe transferred the property to the Kehoe Realty and Investment Company—likely comprised of herself and Bradshaw.<sup>53</sup>

**You Can Be Making Profits Now**  
With  
  
**The Alemite AIRLINE LUBRIGUN**  
Only **\$15.00** Down  
THE "GUN" PAYS A PROFIT FROM THE FIRST DAY. WHY DELAY?  
For Further Information Mail the Coupon or Phone Us  
NOTE! To Service Station Operators.  
**The New 100% R.A.S. STATION**  
(Recorded Alemite Service)  
Is a Money Maker. Send Coupon or Phone Us for R. A. S. Franchise Facts.  
**ALEMITE**  
LUBRICATOR CO.  
3306-12 Washington  
Phone: JEFFERSON 2400  
PLEASE: Send Me Facts On  
(1) Alemite Lubrigun  
(2) 100% R.A.S. Franchise  
Name .....  
Street .....  
City .....  
State .....

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> City of St. Louis. Building Permits and Data Engineering Building Cards. St. Louis Comptroller's Office; City of St. Louis Assessor Office Deed transcriptions. 1200 Market Street, Suite 1, St. Louis, Missouri, 63103.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 29

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Frier-Sturges began operating the Triplex Safety Glass Company, touting "the glass that will NOT shatter" in July of 1927 in order to distribute and install safety glass in windshields as well as within "closed automobile body windows."<sup>54</sup> Then, in 1928, both the Alemite Lubricator and the Alemite Super Service Companies were reorganized and eventually operations were taken over by J. H. Frier completely. At this time the business expanded to include Frier-Sturges Incorporated, a specialist in automobile rotary lifts and other supplies. Advertisements touted that the company "Erects and Finances Filling Stations and Automobile Laundries" (Figure 18). Especially significant was that the company referred to the building at 3306-10 Washington as their "Model Service Station." Business was booming for Frier and business ventures were bound only by his imagination.

Figure 18: Company advertisement. Source: 1928 *Gould's Red-Blue* directory under automobile service.



Frier-Sturges also manufactured steel products and sold portable buildings from 3306 Washington Boulevard; their directors went as far as creating miniature size houses for children sold at Famous-Barr and other fine local retailers (Figure 19)! Period

<sup>54</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Frier-Sturgis to Operate Triplex Safety Glass Co." July 10, 1927, page 49. And October 25, 1927, page 22 ad. By 1929, Triplex appointed F. S. Wiemeyer Company as the local distributor at 2625 Locust Street (Source: *SLPD*, October 13, 1929, page 55). In 1935 the United States Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company to pay \$2,805,509 to Triplex for patent infringement (source: *SLPD*, December 15, 1935, page 3).

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 30

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

advertisements touted the houses could be "washed inside and out... the one toy that always keeps the little folks busy."<sup>55</sup>

By the end of March, 1929, Alemite was reorganized with Jack Frier as the new head; former director, Jack's brother James, became chief of the steel company founded by the outfit.<sup>56</sup> At the time Alemite Lubricator had the franchise for the sale of Alemite products in Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois. Frier Steel continued to manufacture and sell their unique line of steel playhouses which were seeing a wide distribution both locally and nationwide. Frier's enterprises, including Alemite occupied the building through 1930, but by 1931 had been replaced by the Midwest Equipment Company, a specialist in lubricating services. Interestingly, Midwest was an organization of the Frier-Sturges folks; the company then focused exclusively on lubricating vehicles and selling garage equipment under the new name.<sup>57</sup>

Also at this same time the Kehoe Realty and Investment Company transferred the property to a William Jackson on May 26, 1931; for reasons unclear, Jackson transferred the property back to Kehoe on the same day.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps losing steam or maybe a result of the Great Depression, Frier's new firm dissolved by the end of 1931 and the building sat vacant between 1932 and 1936. The year 1931 thus marks the end of the period of significance as it corresponds to the most significant occupants of the building: Beckley-Ralston and Frier's varied enterprises. The period of vacancy marks a time during which other similar MPDF-listed or eligible buildings also saw bouts of inactivity. After sitting empty for five years, the building was occupied by several short-lived automotive-oriented businesses—this change of tenants and periods of vacancy are typical of the MPDF-listed properties in St. Louis.

<sup>55</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. December 9, 1928, page 112.

<sup>56</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Jack Frier New Head of Alemite Co." March 31, 1929, page 46.

<sup>57</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "February 1, 1931, page 46 ad.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 31

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 19: "Cozytown" steel doll house manufactured by Frier Company while in the building. Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch. December 9, 1928, page 112.

**COZYTOWN**  
**ALL-STEEL DOLL HOUSES**

Little girls, you will get a world of happiness, pleasure and wholesome occupation and knowledge through possession of one of these lovely little "Cozytown" All-Steel Doll Houses.

They are made entirely of steel. They are sturdy and strong: heat or water will not harm them. Painted like a real grown-up house with durable colors that remain attractive indefinitely.

The interior partitions divide the upstairs and downstairs into rooms, with a real stairway. The front opens to permit arrangement of furniture and then closes and you have a real house even to the tiny electric lights which really light.

There are three sizes, each different in appearance. With any one of them your little girl can be kept busy and happy all day, in doors or out, playing the many fascinating games that are a part of "playing house."

*If your department store or neighborhood dealer does not carry "Cozytown" All-Steel Doll Houses, write us for free "Adventures in Cozyland" showing the houses in their actual designs and colors.*

**FRIER STEEL COMPANY, INC.**  
3306 Washington Boulevard,  
St. Louis, Missouri.

Please send me, without cost, "Adventures in Cozytown," and literature describing the "Cozytown" All-Steel Doll Houses.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State.....

My dealer's Name Is .....

**DEALERS**  
Write for Name,  
Introductory Offer

**JOBBERS**  
Write for

**FRIER STEEL COMPANY**  
3306 Washington Bl. ST. LOUIS, MO.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 32

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Additional Significance Including the Frier Businesses under the MPDF as an  
“Automotive Retail and Service-Oriented Business” and as a “Service Garage”**

The nominated building’s period of significance which began in 1922 continues through the 1920s and terminates in 1931 corresponding to the two most significant occupants—automobile companies that made tremendous contributions to the industry in both parts and service offerings. Some aspects of the MPDF were addressed earlier in this document relative to the first occupant, Beckley-Ralston. The period of significance includes the occupation of the second occupant, Frier-Sturges between 1926 and 1931. Frier-Sturges came in at the tail end of the 1920s, had survived the Stock Market Crash in 1929, and had reinvented itself prior to the Great Depression that followed. These two events directly impacted the automotive industry where sales of new cars dropped a shocking 75%.<sup>59</sup> When these numbers dropped, demand for parts and service also dropped. During this period the MPDF verifies that many smaller firms went out of business and were subsequently replaced by another firm. Potentially Frier attempted to circumvent this scenario by starting new companies in the building during those “trouble” years and then transferring their assets upon issue.

The building meets the registration requirements under tenure of Frier-Sturges as an automobile retail business as well as service garage because it retains integrity from the period when it served as both. Despite changes in lease structure as well as specific automotive-related uses, the building retains all of its exterior wall cladding—an elaborate façade of white terra cotta in addition to its massing and other exterior details. It was at this time in 1926 when the historic occupant contracted with Preston Bradshaw to include a primary elevation garage door entry as well as a second rear exit. The display windows at the first floor are readily apparent although covered with removable wood boards; as explained earlier, all of the original transoms are intact above the storefronts behind the boards. Each of Frier’s products for sale or demonstration would have been highly visible through these windows; the front garage door would have allowed direct access into the building for service. Exterior stylistic details and upper level fenestration is intact. Further, character defining features from the period of the nominated building’s use as an automobile business are evident inside the structure and include such details as a pair of rear garage door bays as well as the historic primary elevation garage entry (as discussed earlier). The showroom is apparent and front offices are part original; former service jacks set within the floor (Figure 15; since removed) have left evidence of their placement and some sections of the warehouse contain the original or early product shelving.

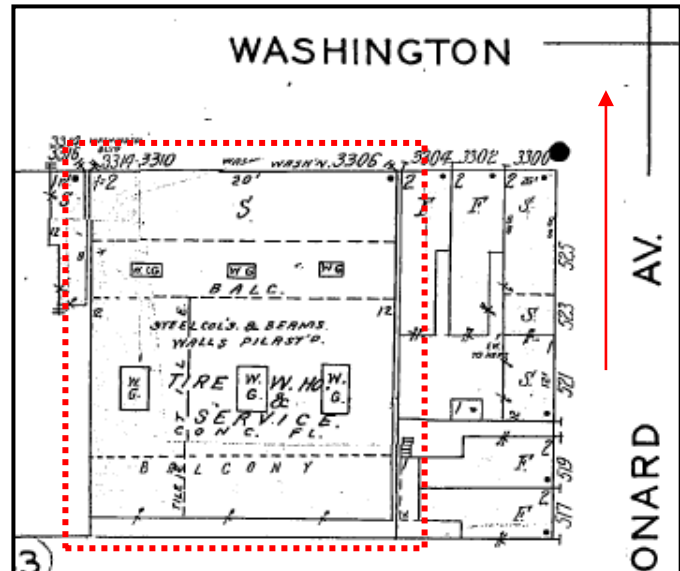
<sup>59</sup> Keenoy, Ruth and Karen Baxter, Timothy Maloney and Mandy Ford. Section E, page 11.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 33

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The nominated building served two major historic automotive supply and service entities between 1922 and 1931 and it is clearly recognizable from this period of association with automobile parts sales and service; subsequent automotive firms through 1950 retained the front store and rear service areas which enhances the interior integrity in association with the earlier firms (Figure 20 adjacent shows historic footprint of general use in 1950; note the separation of store from warehouse and service area). Like the MPDF states, businesses, especially those that manufactured cars or parts or that acted as dealerships were short-lived, often lasting just a few years thus the turn-over was a natural event in St. Louis auto business.<sup>60</sup>



**Figure 20:** Historic floorplan. Source: *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*, v2, p27, 1950. Building is outlined in dotted line. Arrow indicates north.

Historically converted to a service garage by Frier-Sturges for its Alemite Lubricating Company in 1926, the building's importance to the development of the service garage property type adds additional significance in association with the automobile industry locally.

Although the building is not being listed with architectural significance, it is a good example of a commercial, Classical Revival style structure which retains its entire original, ornamental terra cotta detailing, face brick, and historic fenestration at its primary elevation. In particular, the building retains its primary and rear garage bays, storefront and entry bays (with original door assembly), front wood and rear metal windows and front transoms (behind reversible in-fill), original mezzanines and borrowed light framework, the original formal stair assembly, and several portions of the interior black and white checkerboard ceramic tile floor. The building is also the design of a prominent St. Louis architect, Preston Bradshaw. Besides being designed by him, the building was also owned by him and his family through the period of significance.

<sup>60</sup> Ruth Keenoy, Karen Baxter & Tim Maloney. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. "Autocar Sales and Service Building." Section 8, page 5.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 34

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Regardless, it is this level of physical integrity that supports the material retention required to fulfill Criterion A in Commerce under the MPDF.

Additionally, the MPDF explains that an automotive retail business building initially was similar in appearance to a dealership building, with the exception of a garage door entry. While not immediately necessary to Beckley-Ralston, the original retail business located with the building (the rear elevation still had a large garage bay for deliveries), the garage door became an essential feature of the building when it was converted to a service garage in 1926, during the period of significance.<sup>61</sup> This building type also has the characteristic display spaces along the primary elevation in addition to a second rear garage door entry corresponding also to the 1926 service area modification accessible via the alley or through the building from Washington Boulevard.

### Later Tenants

After Frier-Sturges closed its doors sometime in 1931, Bradshaw and Kehoe apparently had no new leases or tenants under contract until the end of 1935 when the Merry-Krauss Motor Company expressed interest in the building.<sup>62</sup> With the waning of the impact of the Great Depression, several new companies moved into the vacant buildings in Automobile Row and adjacent streets from other locations, often sharing larger spaces, and after 1935 this is true of the nominated building. The period of significance thus corresponds to the last significant occupant, Frier-Sturges in 1931, after which there was a long period of vacancy, then subsequently occupied by various, minor automotive companies.

Conducting their business from 3920 Lindell Boulevard between 1935 and early 1936, Merry Krauss entered into a lease arranged by Kehoe Realty and Investment Company in late 1935.<sup>63</sup> During early 1935, Merry-Krauss was appointed as the metropolitan St. Louis distributor of REO cars, trucks, and speed wagons and by December of that year had used the nominated building as an REO distributorship and service center.<sup>64</sup> Touting the building's 18,000 plus square feet of floor space for "complete sales and service," a "spacious tiled showroom" could hold up to 15 passenger cars and trucks

<sup>61</sup> Keenoy, Ruth and Karen Baxter, Timothy Maloney and Mandy Ford. *Historic Auto-Related Resources, City of St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri*. Section F, page 33. Similar to the property type examined in the MPDF, the Beckley-Ralston Company building also was historically adapted as types of businesses changed.

<sup>62</sup> City of St. Louis. Deed Transactions.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. March 3, 1935, page 10.



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 35

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

on display.<sup>65</sup> The large service department at the rear could be reached via the garage opening from Washington Avenue and was designed "to insure an abundance of day light."<sup>66</sup> The foresight of Beckley-Ralston in designing the facility furthered Merry-Krauss's business strategy resulting in substantial space to provide for a "large depot" of parts (primarily for REO lines) in order to "take care of the entire Mississippi Valley."<sup>67</sup>

Although specializing in both new and used REO cars and trucks, Merry-Krauss sold used Stutz, Studebaker, Windsor, Plymouth, Ford, and Nash automobiles from the building. During their occupancy in the nominated building interior modifications were made for the complete servicing of the REO and other lines. Excitement of the coming year in sales was achieved with the new 1936 complete line of REO passenger cars and trucks which was then on display in the building (Figure 21).

**Figure 21:** Period advertisement. Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 17, 1936, page 6.

A vintage advertisement for REO cars. The text reads: "America's Finest '6'" "REO \$895" "The 100,000-Mile Car" "DELIVERED HERE" "Completely Equipped". Below the text is a black and white illustration of a REO sedan. At the bottom, it says "Investigate Our Special Money-Saving TRADES." "MERRY-KRAUSS Motor Co. Distributors" "3306 Washington" "FR. 6771".

Meanwhile, the Automotive Equipment Supply Company, located next door at 3318 Washington Boulevard (NR listed Kellerman Motor Car Company 5-5-15) prior to 1936, arranged a sub-lease and had moved to "larger quarters" in the nominated building by October of 1936 in order to combine all of their stock under one roof.<sup>68</sup> With plenty

<sup>65</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. December 1, 1935, p. 14. "Merry-Krauss Co., Distributor for REO, Have New Quarters."

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* Officers of the firm H. C. Merry and George A. Krauss were long-time distributors of other automobile lines for over 20 years; the men hired experienced REO sales and service people to work in the new building including such men as H. F. Fahrenkrog, former president of the St. Louis Automobile Dealers' Association with 27 years' experience with REO..

<sup>68</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Automobile Equipment Co. Leases Washington Quarters." September 27, 1936, p. 32.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 36

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

of warehousing space in the nominated building, both companies conducted business there over the next few years. Incorporated in 1936 with a small capital of \$5,000 by President Fred A. Fox, Vice-President Dewey Koch, Secretary Elmer G. Hayden, and Treasurer Herman Giesecke, the firm occupied the nominated building until 1939.<sup>69</sup> Prior to Merry-Krauss moving out in 1940, fortune ran out for the Automotive Equipment Supply Company by the summer of 1939; a trustee's auction was held on the premises to liquidate all stock and interior fixtures.<sup>70</sup> Highlighting the sale was an extensive stock of automotive merchandise, garage equipment, replacement parts and accessories, as well as "modern" fixtures and equipment. The advertisement claimed that such a sale had not been made available to the public before. Also during the summer the property changed hands from the Kehoe Realty and Investment Company to Charles Winters on May 22, 1939; Winters held on for a bit but then sold out to Edgar Helbig on June 18, 1941.<sup>71</sup> Between the transitions, tenant Diamond T. Truck Company occupied the building in 1940 and remodeled the interior again to suit its needs.<sup>72</sup>

Chicago-based Diamond T. Truck arrived on the St. Louis scene earlier in 1922 when it opened its first direct factory branch then located in a one-story building at Locust and Leonard Streets.<sup>73</sup> The company was active in St. Louis during the 1930s and 1940s as well as back in Chicago (Figure 22) and sold its truck line as well as serviced vehicles from the nominated building between 1940 and at least 1943.

The history of the building after 1940 is sparse with several automotive businesses signing varied lease structures—this pattern however is very typical in St. Louis automotive-related resources. For instance, Fred Vincel Inc. occupied the building during the 1940s and sold used cars there until the property changed hands in 1943; they shared the building with Diamond T. during this period. Another bout of vacancy followed during the World War and then in 1947 the building was occupied by General Tire & Rubber Company through the 1950s as a tire warehouse, factory, & service building.<sup>74</sup> The London Motor Company occupied the building in 1958, and subsequently shared the space with the Walker Marketing Corporation, a dealer in automobile parts by 1961.<sup>75</sup> Continued association with the automotive industry followed into the 1960s and early

<sup>69</sup> *St. Louis City Directory* business incorporation information.

<sup>70</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. June 18, 1939, page 9 ad. The sale was conducted by local Selkirk auctioneers.

<sup>71</sup> City of St. Louis Assessor Office Deed transcriptions.

<sup>72</sup> City of St. Louis Building Division. Permit dated December 5, 1940; the permit did not provide specific information.

<sup>73</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Diamond T Truck Co. Opens Local Branch." February 5, 1922, page 51.

<sup>74</sup> City of St. Louis Assessor Office Deed transcriptions. 1200 Market Street, Suite 1, St. Louis, Missouri, 63103.

<sup>75</sup> *St. Louis City Directory* business incorporation information.

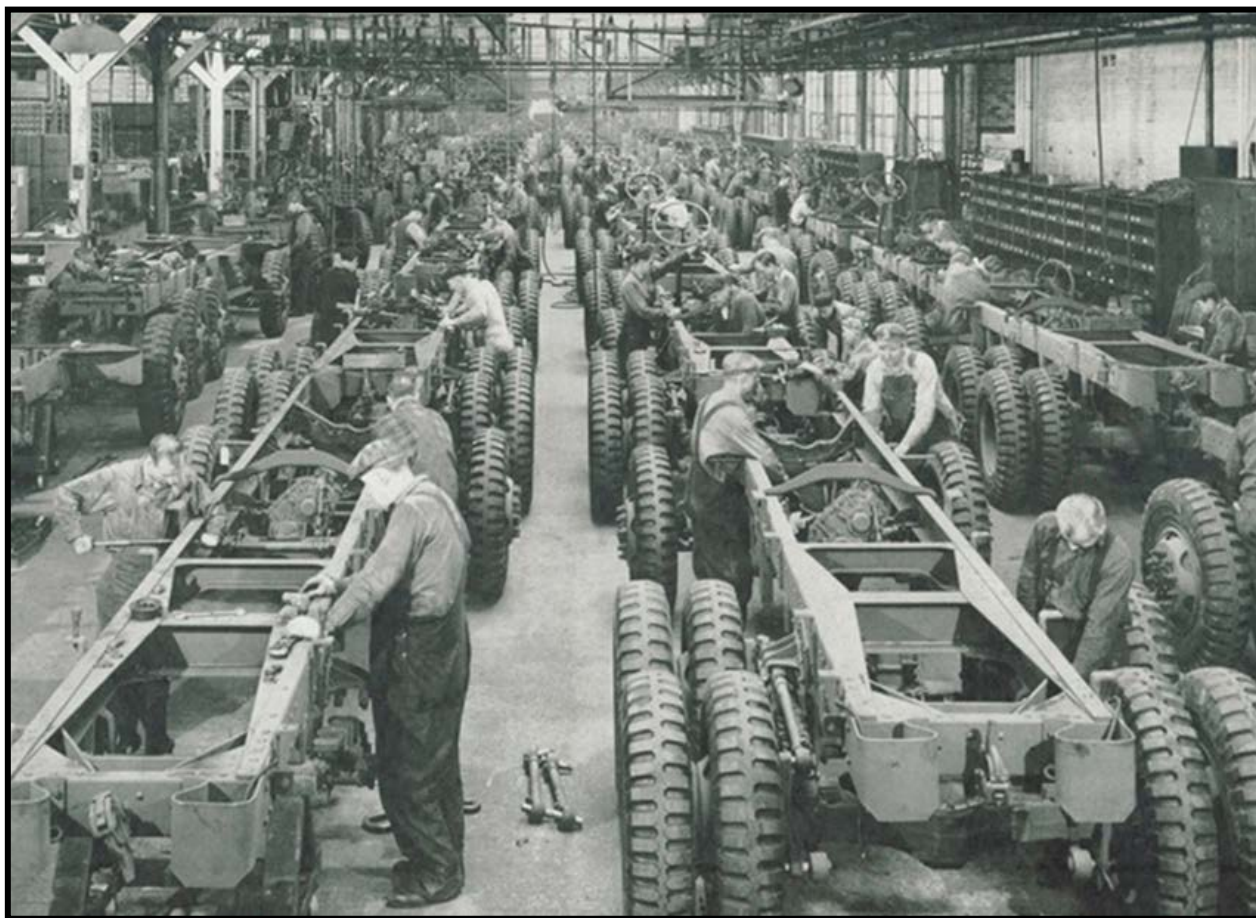
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 37

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

1970s with London Motors, the "Frisky Thrifty" dealer, selling Renault (*the "fashionable car for practical people"*) and other imported cars.<sup>76</sup> London had a complete sales, service, and parts headquarters in the nominated building and used it much like the historic tenants did. London touted itself as "one of St. Louis' oldest and largest authorized import dealers"<sup>77</sup> despite not being mentioned by name until the late 1950s.

**Figure 22:** Chicago plant of Diamond T. Trucks during war production circa 1941. While the Chicago plant was converted for war time production, the St. Louis outlet was used for selling trucks and parts as well as servicing vehicles during 1941. Source: National Automotive History Collection, Washington D.C.



<sup>76</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. January 17, 1960, p. 78.

<sup>77</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. January 24, 1960, p. 73.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 38

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The last tenant associated with the automobile industry was in 1976, the Medart Auto Supply—a dealer in both marine and automotive parts and service. This turnover of companies and uses of automotive related buildings is common as noted in the MPDF (discussed earlier). Finally after 1976, the building was sold to a printing company and it has remained in their hands ever since.

### The Building Today

The structure ceased to serve the automobile industry after 1976 and is currently used by a printing company as an office, supply, service, and storage facility. Although the automobile has left the premises, the building is still used similarly as it was during the period of significance as a center for sales of equipment (instead of cars) as well as parts (now for printing machines) and now offers servicing of printing apparatuses (instead of automobiles). The division of interior space is exactly as it was historically with the front section reserved for offices and displays of equipment while the rear warehouse is used for parts storage and maintenance of machines.

The Beckley-Ralston Company building is associated with an important period in St. Louis automotive history which begins in 1922 and ends in 1931—a brief but intense period marked by the occupancy of two noteworthy automobile parts and service companies that contributed directly to the economic and evolutionary development of the automobile industry in St. Louis. Meeting the registration requirements of the MPDF, the building retains physical integrity illustrative of the period of significance and is clearly recognizable as an automotive resource. Its exterior materials and decoration as well as wide storefronts and garage service bays (and some doors) are intact; within, separate spaces for offices, sales, storage, and service are retained as they were designed originally and are still used the same way today. Original millwork and interior decoration is extant and continues to tell the story of the association of automobile businesses with the building. The legacy of the automobile in the story of St. Louis during the 1920s and early 1930 is retained within the Beckley-Ralston Company building and no other property in St. Louis is extant that represents either Beckley-Ralston or the varied Frier enterprises which occupied the building during the period of significance.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 39

Beckley-Ralston Company

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 40

Beckley-Ralston Company

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 41

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 42

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 43

Beckley-Ralston Company
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis, MO
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Beckley-Ralston Company Building located at 3306-14 Washington Boulevard in St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri, is located on City Block 1043 measuring 100 feet by 124 feet 8 inches and comprising .28639 acres in midtown St. Louis, Missouri. The nominated property is legally known by the Assessor's Office as parcel number 104300080. The property was historically part of the re-subdivision of School Section 16 Addition and became Block 8, lots 14-15. A dashed line on the accompanying map (Figure 23) entitled "Beckley-Ralston Company Building Boundary Map" indicates the boundary of the nominated property.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated parcel includes only the building footprint. There were no related structures, additions, sites, parking lots, or landscaped areas historically-associated with the building.

Figure 23: Beckley-Ralston Company Building Boundary Map. Source: Google Earth and Matt Bivens, 2016





Pavyer  
PRINTING  
MACHINE  
WORKS  
SINCE 1914  
3306-3318

NO  
PARKING



Payer  
PRINTING  
MACHINE  
WORKS  
INCORPORATED  
3306-3318



Pavyer  
PRINTING  
MACHINE  
WORKS  
SINCE 1894  
3306-3318



Curry  
PRINTING  
MACHINE  
WORKS  
1884



No Parking  
TOW-AWAY ZONE





NO  
PARKING  
VIOLATORS  
WILL BE TOWED  
AWAY AT OWNER'S  
EXPENSE

Payer  
PRINTING  
MACHINE  
WORKS  
INCORPORATED  
3326-3318













HARTLEY PACKAGING

PARTS SERVICE



WELLS FARGO