

**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 Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company  
Other names/site number C.E. Vincel Pontiac; Bowersox Insurance Company  
Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Auto-Related Resources in St. Louis [Independent City], MO

## 2. Location

Street & number <u>3537 S. Kingshighway 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	N/A	not for publication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>St. Louis (Independent City)</u> Code <u>510</u> Zip code <u>63139</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 x C      D

Toni M. Prawl

5/29/2015

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

Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company  
Name of Property

St. Louis Independent City, MO  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

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

### Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	<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: specialty store

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Work in progress

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Spanish Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete

walls: concrete, brick

roof: concrete

other: \_\_\_\_\_

☒

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**



Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

Name of Property

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## 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**

### Areas of Significance

Commerce

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1927 - 1944

### Significant Dates

1927

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Wunderlich, John Peter / Architect

## 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, Inc.

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 38.594657 -90.271675  
Latitude: Longitude:

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude:

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

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Ruth Keenoy, Preservation Specialist

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

date May 19, 2015

street & number 911 Washington Avenue, Suite 170

telephone 314-421-6474

city or town St. Louis

state MO

zip code 63101

e-mail rkeenoy@landmarks-stl.org

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **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.).

**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.

**Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company**

Name of Property

**St. Louis Independent City, MO**

County and State

## 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: **Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company**

City or Vicinity: **St. Louis**

County: **St. Louis Independent City** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Ruth Keenoy**

Dates

Photographed: **November 20, 2014, March 13, 2015**

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

- 1 (of 22). Facade (east) and south elevations; view northwest.
2. Facade (east) elevation; view west.
3. Detail, east elevation; view northwest.
4. Tower bay, east elevation; view southwest.
5. South elevation; view northeast.
6. West elevation; view northeast.
7. North elevation and parking lot; view southwest.
8. First floor, primary entrance; view northeast.
9. Detail, first floor terrazzo; interior floor west of entrance.
10. Detail of entry terrazzo pattern prior to removal of non-historic finishes.
11. First floor, south wall; view south.
12. First floor, northwest corner garage bay; view northwest.
13. Platform first floor with sunken room north end; view west.
14. First floor; view southwest.
15. First floor; view northwest.
16. First floor; southwest (including staircases).
17. Second floor; view southeast.
18. Second floor; view southwest.
19. Second floor; view west.
20. Second floor ramp; view northeast.
21. Ramp to roof; view east.
22. Penthouse on roof, northwest.

## Figure Log:

1. Area of concentration for most automobile dealerships on Kingshighway.
2. First-floor display windows; view northwest.
3. Second floor clerestory windows, original, south wall.
4. First floor clerestory windows, original, south wall.
5. Concrete columns, first floor, southeast.
6. Concrete ramp, second floor, northwest.
7. Second floor, ribbed concrete ceiling, southeast.
8. Original windows, west elevation.
9. 3600 S. Kingshighway.

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10. 4315 S. Kingshighway.
11. Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company in 1928.
12. Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company in 2014.
13. Sanborn Map, 1938, Volume 20, Sheet 2020.
14. Northwest intersection of Locust and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets, c. 1915 (courtesy, Campbell House Museum).
15. Plan for Kingshighway Boulevard, redesigned in 1917.
16. Map illustrating where original owners and architect lived in relation to the dealership.
17. Kingshighway Hills' business district, southwest.
18. Kingshighway Hills' business district, northwest.
19. 3647 S. Kingshighway.
20. Sanborn Map, 1950, Volume 20, Sheet 2020. Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company.
21. Full page advertisement, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 May 1928.
22. 3435 S. Kingshighway.
23. 3500 S. Kingshighway.
24. 3345 S. Kingshighway.

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

Name of Property

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Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Property Summary**

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is located at 3537 South Kingshighway Boulevard (S. Kingshighway, preferred) in the Independent City of St. Louis. The property consists of two contributing resources – an automobile dealership constructed in 1927 (C) and an asphalt covered parking lot (C) that bounds the building on the north. The associated building is a two-story Spanish Revival style automobile dealership constructed in 1927. The building has a flat roof, exterior brick walls and a poured concrete foundation. Centered on the primary elevation is a two and a half-story hipped tower bay with arched windows, a hipped metal roof and terra cotta detailing – features that reflect the building’s Spanish Revival influence (**Photo 1**). The ground floor area covers 8,965 square feet and the associated parking lot is 10,278 square feet. The dealership faces east toward Kingshighway, a major five-lane north/south connector. The south (side) elevation is flanked by Pernod Avenue, a residential street. An alley, leading to a rear garage opening at the building’s northwest corner, flanks the west elevation. The interior condition of the building clearly demonstrates its architectural integrity as an automobile dealership through original interior finishes such as terrazzo floors and decorative wrought iron railings in customer areas. Structural elements such as interior concrete ramps used to move cars from floor to floor, exposed concrete ceilings, walls and floors, as well as mushroom cap columns are all intact and visible. The property is in a commercially zoned area on S. Kingshighway that developed as an automobile row during the 1920s-1950s (**Figure 1**).

**Integrity Discussion**

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company building was converted from an automobile dealership to an office building in the early to mid-1950s. Recently, interior modifications that covered the building’s original features from 1954-2014 were removed. The current condition of the building demonstrates its present conversion into office/residential space. Restoration of original windows and finishes will be completed in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards of Rehabilitation. Original finishes and windows are intact, with exception of display windows on the facade and south elevation. These openings were partially infilled with brick when the building was converted for use as an office building in 1954.

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for auto-related resources in St. Louis provides guidelines for assessing whether former automobile-related buildings retain integrity, even with alterations, that render them eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Using the guidelines created for Automotive Distributorships, Dealerships and Retail Businesses (Associated Property Types, Section F: Pages 29-34), the following discussion clarifies that the property retains integrity for individual listing under the MPDF in relation to Criterion A: Commerce and Criterion C: Architecture.



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Based on the MPDF, automobile dealerships must retain sufficient evidence of their historic use, interior and exterior fabric, and features that illustrate the building's associations with automobiles, such as ramps or elevators used to transport vehicles from floor to floor within the building. Additionally, "window openings, whether in the original showroom area or upstairs must retain their original openings, even if boarded over or the windows replaced, providing a sense of the original fenestration patterns."<sup>1</sup> Criterion C, in particular, requires that properties "be a good example of a particular style . . . [and] retain predominant elements of its original design" and "the original functions of openings should be apparent, even if infilled."<sup>2</sup>

Interior modifications made after the period of significance (i.e., post 1944) have all been removed with exception of display window infill (as noted previously) on the east and south elevations (**Figure 2**). Plans are to restore these windows to their original appearance. Original fenestration openings are apparent in the building's current state. Original clerestory lights above the former display windows are intact (**Figures 3 and 4**). Structural columns are intact and visible throughout the building (**Figure 5**). Concrete ramps used to transport cars from the showroom floor and service area to the roof are intact, demonstrating the building's significance as an auto-related property (**Figure 6**). The only considerable interior alterations after the period of significance (that remain place) are window enclosures on the building's east and south elevations. Despite being partially enclosed, the openings are discernible and the sense of the original display windows is apparent. As stated previously, these bays will be reopened and restored to their original appearance as the project progresses.

As noted in the associated MPDF, most automotive dealerships were constructed of concrete to support the automobiles that they housed. This was true for the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company, which retains original concrete floors, ceilings, columns and ramps (**Figure 7**). Dealerships were typically altered soon after auto-related businesses left the buildings. The most frequent alteration was enclosure or infill of the dealership's large display windows. The MPDF states that "this [change] happened to all known distributorships [and dealerships] . . . most often it was accomplished by boarding over intact (or partially) intact windows. In some cases, however, masonry materials replaced the window units, within the original openings."<sup>3</sup> This was the case for the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company. On the facade and south elevation, large display windows were infilled with brick in the 1950s. However, original window fenestrations and openings above the display windows remain intact, demonstrating the original patterns of the windows on these elevations. The rear (west) elevation, second story, retains all of its original windows (**Figure 8**).

<sup>1</sup>Ruth Keenoy, Karen Bode Baxter, Timothy Maloney and Mandy Ford, "Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis [Independent City], MO, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form* (2005), F:30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, F:31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, F:30.

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A windshield survey completed in March 2015 of S. Kingshighway illustrates that former automobile dealerships have all been altered in recent years, even those that remain in use for auto-related purposes. Two examples constructed after the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership but within the period of significance are 3600 S. Kingshighway (Ackerman Toyota), constructed in 1929 (**Figure 9**) and 4315 S. Kingshighway (Rowland Auto Collision) constructed in 1938 (**Figure 10**). Both buildings remain in use as auto-related properties. Although both examples retain display window openings, most hold contemporary windows or have been filled with opaque non-historic materials.

Based on the MPDF requirements and the fact that most automobile dealerships in the City of St. Louis were modified following the departure of their original auto-related businesses, it is clear that the former dealership at 3537 S. Kingshighway retains integrity. The building demonstrates its period of significance and original use through location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. **Figures 11 and 12** illustrate the building's exterior appearance as it was in 1928 and 2014, further supporting that the property meets Criterion A (commerce) and Criterion C (architecture) in relation to the associated MPDF for Historic Auto-Related Resources in the City of St. Louis.

**Description of Property**

**Exterior Description**

**Setting**

The parcel is bounded by concrete sidewalks on the east (Kingshighway) and south (Pernod Avenue). A concrete walk leads from the primary entry on the east elevation to the public sidewalk flanking the west side of Kingshighway. Landscaping on the east side of the building abuts the primary walk. This area is flanked by concrete pavers that encircle low shrubs. A temporary "for sale" sign with wood posts is located north side of the sidewalk that leads to the building. Three trees are situated along the south side of the lot between the building and sidewalk. The west end of the building is offset by a concrete alley extending north/south (parallel to Kingshighway).

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East Elevation (Facade)

The facade (east elevation) of Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is clad with buff and red brick. Buff brick adorns most of the elevation and is an original building material. Centered on the facade is a two and a half-story tower that projects slightly from the elevation. The tower bay is capped by a hipped metal seam roof. Within the tower bay at the first-floor level is the building's primary entrance composed of a single-light glass and aluminum door with single-panel sidelights and a single-sash transom. The building's address (3537) is painted on the transom. Commercial style canister lights flank the entrance. An original flat canopy roof with supporting metal chains extends above the entrance. The canopy retains original egg-and-dart molding and decorative corner medallions. Above the entry at the second-story level, the tower bay holds an arched window with a replacement one-over-one window and arched transom. This window features an original metal balconet. A smaller arched window is within the upper half story of the tower bay. The fenestration holds a replacement one-over-one window and arched transom. Instead of a balconet, however, the upper half-story window has a fluted terra cotta flower box with decorative scrolled supports. Arched brick detailing caps the portion of the tower bay that rises above the roofline (**Photos 2 and 3**).

The remainder of the east elevation is divided into four bays, two on either side of the tower/entrance bay. The bays are divided by buff brick pilasters. The lower level of the elevation has red brick set within the building's original display windows. Above each in-filled window bay are continuous bands of what were originally clerestory lights. These windows are currently filled with contemporary one-over-one lights. Second floor windows are similar to those on the first floor, composed of one-over-one openings. These bays originally held multi-sash hopper windows. Canvas awnings are above the windows on each of the bays (i.e., four awnings on the first floor; four awnings on the second floor).

The upper portion of the facade near the roof retains original flat terra cotta coping and buff brick headers. Flanking the coping on either side of the projecting central tower bay are decorative scrolls. A decorative terra cotta egg-and-dart cornice adorns the facade just above second-story windows. Another band of fluted terra cotta spans the elevation above the egg-and-dart detailing (**Photo 4**).

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South Elevation

The south elevation of the building faces Pernod Avenue. This elevation is composed of five bays similar in appearance to the facade. Bays are divided by buff brick pilasters. With exception of the bay at the west end of the elevation, all first-floor bays are filled with red brick. As on the facade, these openings were originally filled with plate glass display windows. Clerestory window bays (first and second floors) hold one-over-one replacement lights. Awnings cap each of the bays, obscuring original hopper windows (covered with corrugated plastic), which are situated above the clerestory replacement lights. The west bay holds a band of six windows (first-story level). Each opening is filled with a one-over-one window. The bay immediately east holds a single-light glass and aluminum door set within a buff brick surround. This entry is offset at the west by a single window with a buff brick sill. The window opening is original and filled with a wood panel. Offsetting the door to the east are five clerestory windows with a single shared concrete sill. Fluted and egg-and-dart terra cotta bands (similar to the facade) span the elevation near the roofline (**Photo 5**).

West Elevation

The west (rear) elevation of the building faces an alley. The elevation is composed of four bays divided by buff brick pilasters. First-floor window bays are enclosed with red brick. Unlike the facade and south elevations, these bays did not originally hold clerestory windows but were filled with multi-light, steel sash windows (identical to those visible on the second story level). The northernmost first-floor bay holds a contemporary overhead track paneled door. Although the door is not original, the bay is an original feature of the elevation and framed in wood. The upper floor of the elevation retains original multi-light steel sash hopper windows. The elevation wall rises slightly above the roofline and is capped with terra cotta tile coping (**Photo 6**).

North Elevation

The north (side) elevation faces an asphalt-paved parking lot. The north elevation is composed of brick and concrete and void of any fenestration. A former door on the first-floor level near the center of the elevation has been filled and painted over. A brick chimney rises from the roof at the west end of the elevation. The chimney stack is composed of buff brick. East of the chimney and flush with the north elevation, the enclosed automobile ramp rises above the roofline. The original garage bay at the east end of the ramp enclosure is partially filled and holds a single pedestrian door (**Photo 7**).

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Parking Lot

Adjacent to the building on the north is an asphalt paved parking lot (Photo 7). The lot covers 8863 square feet and accommodates parking for up to 24 automobiles. Based on the 1938 Sanborn map (**Figure 13**), the lot dates to the same period of “construction” as the dealership.<sup>4</sup>

**Interior Description**

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company at 3437 S. Kingshighway is being redeveloped as a mixed use (office/residential) building. The property was originally an automobile dealership and the interior reflects the building’s historic use in this capacity with open spaces, concrete support columns with mushroom capitals, garage bays and concrete ramps that were used to move cars inside the building and to the roof. As discussed previously, there are no plans to alter the building in a way that does not comply with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

First Floor

The first floor is open in plan with concrete walls, concrete and wood beam ceilings and a concrete floor covered with terrazzo. The primary entry is centered on the east elevation and composed of a single-light aluminum frame door and surround. The door is flanked by single-panel sidelights. A single-light transom caps the entire entry bay. The entrance is set slightly lower than the remaining first floor. Three shallow steps lead from the primary door to the main showroom floor west of the entry. The sunken entrance area and steps are flanked by original wrought iron balustrades (**Photo 8**). The original terrazzo floor is visible (**Photo 9**). **Photo 10** illustrates the entry area prior to removal of interior non-historic finishes. This photograph provides a clear representation of the patterned terrazzo within the first floor entry/showroom area. The first floor walls are composed of display windows on the primary (east) and south elevations. Although single-light display openings have been filled, original clerestory windows are intact above these bays (**Photo 11**). The north wall has no fenestration. The rear (west) wall has an overhead garage door (**Photo 12**), which leads directly to the interior concrete ramps used to transport automobiles to the roof. Near the center of the north wall is an enclosed room constructed of concrete. The roof is sunken and offset on the east by a concrete platform (**Photo 13**). Original concrete columns are noted throughout the first floor space. Some of the columns are round with mushroom capitals (**Photo 14**). The others are square and faced with stucco (**Photo 15**). The south wall has a secondary entry near the west end of the fenestration. The door is single-light with an aluminum frame (visible in Photo 14). Concrete stairs leading to the

<sup>4</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1938, Volume 28, Sheet 2020. Note: The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map dates the building’s date of construction as 1928 which is when the project was completed. Construction began, however, in 1927.



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second floor are situated at the center of the first floor and near the secondary entry at the southwest corner (**Photo 16**).

Second Floor

In similar fashion to the first floor, the second floor is also open in plan with a concrete floor, brick and concrete walls and a concrete ceiling. The east and south walls are composed of continuous bays filled with brick, one-over-one windows and upper original multi-sash windows. The center of the east wall has an arched window bay with a replacement one-over-one window below a fixed transom (**Photo 17**). As noted in Photo 18, the ceiling in this portion of the second floor is ribbed, whereas the west end of the second floor has a smooth concrete ceiling (**Photo 18**). The west wall is composed of continuous steel multi-sash hopper windows (**Photo 19**). The north wall has no fenestration. There is a concrete staircase south of the north wall and an automobile ramp (**Photo 20**). This staircase and the ramp both lead to the roof. Unlike first floor stairs, this set of steps is flanked by original metal hand rails. The garage bay that leads to the roof has been partially enclosed to incorporate a single paneled pedestrian door (**Photo 21**).

Roof

A hipped half-story "tower" capping the facade's central bay is situated at the central east end of the roof. The raised half-story space encloses a utilitarian room capped by a metal seamed roof. The raised half-story has brick walls and original nine-light, steel-sash awning windows. Above the windows, exterior walls have decorative arched brick patterning. A chimney stack is visible at the northwest corner of the roof, as is the enclosed automobile ramp (noted previously). A low parapet brick wall surrounds the roof (**Photo 22**).

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**Statement of Significance**

Introduction

The **Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company** is a Spanish Revival style automobile dealership constructed in 1927. The property, located in St. Louis Independent City at 3537 S. Kingshighway Boulevard (S. Kingshighway, preferred) is **locally significant** for its commercial role (**Criterion A**) and its architectural contributions (**Criterion C**) under the associated **Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis** (NRL 2005). The **period of significance** extends from the building's date of construction, 1927 through 1944, the final year that the property was used exclusively as an automobile dealership. The building fits the MPDF context of **Marketing and Servicing the Automobile in St. Louis**. The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is located on South (S.) Kingshighway, which by the 1950s was St. Louis' premiere location for purpose-built automobile dealerships. More commonly known as "Automobile Row," Kingshighway's nickname had originally been associated with Locust Street in downtown St. Louis, where the city's first sales and service establishments cropped up during the early 1900s. Most of the businesses on Locust Street closed during or immediately after the Great Depression. After World War II, Kingshighway developed as the City's preferred location for auto-related businesses, in particular, dealerships. The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company was one of the earliest dealerships to be constructed on S. Kingshighway. The building is an exemplary example of its design and era of construction, reflecting the period of time when building owners and local architects – not automobile manufacturers – made design decisions about automobile dealerships. An adjacent asphalt paved parking lot north of the building (present by 1928) is considered a contributing component of the property.

Kingshighway as an Automobile Row, 1920 - 1950

St. Louis' earliest dealerships date to the beginning of the twentieth century when existing commercial buildings on Olive and Locust Streets (near downtown) were converted to house businesses supporting the city's rapidly growing automobile industry. St. Louis was an early and active center for automobile manufacturing. This was in large part due to the city's miles of improved roads, which drew attention from bicyclists and individuals involved in developing the "horseless carriage." Locust Street in particular was attractive because between the cross streets of 18<sup>th</sup> (east) and Channing (west), the route was St. Louis' "only street running west from downtown without a street car line."<sup>5</sup> Additionally, unlike many of the city's streets that were surfaced with granite and wood blocks or bricks, Locust Street was smoothly paved (**Figure 14**). In 1895, the League of American Wheelmen claimed that St. Louis had "changed its position from being the worst paved city to one of the best in the country," supporting more than 45 miles

<sup>5</sup> Norbury Wayman, "St. Louis – Early Automobile Capital," Unpublished essay, Wayman Collection, Series 2 St. Louis, Available at Mercantile Library (St. Louis, Missouri, no date), 3.

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of “surfaced” roads.<sup>6</sup> By 1909, the City had more than 2,000 registered automobiles on its books.<sup>7</sup> By that time, Locust Street was rapidly developing as St. Louis’ first “Auto Row,” supporting numerous distributors, dealerships, supply stores and repair shops.<sup>8</sup>

South Kingshighway did not develop as an automobile center of activity until after World War II but its reasons for doing so were similar. Like Locust Street, the road was smoothly paved and largely void of streetcar tracks. Although S. Kingshighway supported a streetcar line between Vandeventer (north) and Devonshire (south) Avenues, the route was discontinued in 1915.<sup>9</sup> Kingshighway was an undeveloped “outer road” created in the 1700s.<sup>10</sup> All of this changed after 1902, when Mayor Rolla Wells appointed a three-person committee to provide suggestions for improvements to the old road in preparation of the city’s 1904 centennial celebration. The commission published its report the following year, proposing a “crosstown boulevard” (**Figure 15**) that would connect all of the city’s parks, creating a city-wide “park and boulevard system.”<sup>11</sup> The road’s improvements north of Manchester Avenue were largely completed before St. Louis’ 1904 World’s Fair but the sector south of Manchester Avenue remained unfinished for nearly two more decades. South Kingshighway required widening and viaducts to carry the road above the city’s central industrial / railroad corridor, which bisected Kingshighway at its juncture with Manchester Avenue.<sup>12</sup> By the time South Kingshighway was completed in the 1920s, the boulevard had been re-designed as an automobile – not a streetcar – route, which was yet another incentive for auto-related businesses to find their way to Kingshighway.<sup>13</sup> Unlike Locust Street, physically bounded by downtown commerce (east) and its western terminus at Grand Boulevard, Kingshighway was re-designed to serve as a north/south connector for the entire City of St. Louis.

As noted in Table 2, the complete shift of auto-related business from Locust Street to Kingshighway did not become fully realized until the 1940s. The changeover was slowed initially by the Great Depression and afterward by World War II. It is clear, however, that once auto-related businesses closed on Locust Street during the 1930s and 1940s, they never returned. Slowly but certainly, Kingshighway began to take shape as St. Louis’ twentieth-century

<sup>6</sup> Keenoy et al, MPDF, E:5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, E:6.

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Keenoy, Karen Bode Baxter, Timothy Maloney and Mandy Ford, “Locust Street Automotive District,” *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (2005), 8:14

<sup>9</sup> St. Louis City Plan Commission, *The Kingshighway: A Report by the City Plan Commission* (St. Louis: Self-published, 1917), 4; Norbury Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Southwest* (St. Louis: St. Louis Community Development Agency, [1978]), 48.

<sup>10</sup> City of St. Louis, *Report of the Kingshighway Commission* (St. Louis: Self-published, 1903), 9; Tim Fox, *Where We Live: A Guide to St. Louis Communities* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1995), 100.

<sup>11</sup> City of St. Louis, *Report of the Kingshighway Commission*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> The Civic League of Saint Louis, *A City Plan for Saint Louis* (St. Louis: Self-published, 1907), 57; L.R. Bowen, “City Jail – Bellefontaine Farms – Fire Engine Houses and Equipment – Grade Crossings and Viaducts – Ellendale-Lindenwood Highway,” *Journal of the Engineers Club of St. Louis* (January-February 1919), 88.

<sup>13</sup> Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods*, 44.

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automobile row, surpassing all other major routes (including Delmar, Gravois, Grand and Manchester Avenues) in supporting a concentrated number of automobile sales and service establishments. In 1919, Kingshighway had no automobile dealerships listed in the city's business directory but the boulevard supported a filling station (2240 Kingshighway, Pierce Oil) and an automobile repair shop (2265 Goetz Motor Supply and Repair Co.). These were early signs that the highway was beginning to attract auto-related businesses.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 1. Automobile Dealerships on Locust Street and Kingshighway, 1919 – 1945\***

	1919	1923	1927	1931	1935	1940	1945
Locust Street	33	37	35	31	23	6	3
Kingshighway	0	2	2	5	9	26	32

\*Numbers reported in the table include Locust Street west of Jefferson and Kingshighway south of Oakland Avenue / north of Chippewa Street. Source: St. Louis City Directories (Gould), 1919 – 1945.

Kingshighway replaced Locust Street as the City's fashionable automobile row because by the 1920s, the buildings on Locust Street were proving less amenable to auto-related businesses, particularly dealerships. Dealerships evolved dramatically over the years in terms of how they operated, more so than supply and repair shops. The earliest dealerships on Locust Street were frequently small shops with catalogs from which customers selected their cars. Sometimes a dealership held a single automobile for display purposes, but this was not required to make a sale in the early 1900s. It was not until about "1920 when dealers began to demand that buildings be constructed to 'fit' the automobiles they demonstrated. This trend started even earlier in St. Louis, with several such buildings along Locust Street dating to as early as 1914."<sup>15</sup> As cars became more affordable, customers demanded not only to see what they were buying in advance but to drive what they thought they might purchase. This required dealers to display more than one or two cars. "Converted buildings [such as those on Locust Street] were problematic – automobiles could not be easily moved in or out of existing doorways, and interior supports limited movement inside the building."<sup>16</sup>

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company was one of the earliest "purpose built" automobile showrooms to be constructed on S. Kingshighway. Unlike the dealerships constructed after World War II, the building is more than a single-story and reflects a broad architectural movement – i.e., a popular style for many building types (i.e., residential, commercial, etc.), not just automobile sales and service facilities. Although the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership shares architectural similarities with some of the dealerships constructed on Locust Street during the 1910s-20s, there is one clear difference. The Brahm-Mitchellette building has an adjacent parking lot, constructed c. 1928 (and noted in Figure 13) which Locust Street dealerships lacked. This amenity became increasingly important for auto sales businesses over the ensuing years. While it is true that customers preferred to park adjacent to businesses they frequented, an

<sup>14</sup> Gould, St. Louis Red-Blue Book (St. Louis: Self-Published, 1919).

<sup>15</sup> Keenoy et al, MPDF, E:9.

<sup>16</sup> MPDF – E:9.

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adjacent lot also provided space to sell used cars. As illustrated on the city's 1938 Sanborn map for this area (Figure 13), the lot adjacent to the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership was in use as a used sales car lot at that time. During the Great Depression and the war years, it became critical that dealers sell used cars to stay in business.<sup>17</sup> Original owners Elmer Brahm and Joseph Mitchellette did not remain business partners long after the 1929 stock market crash, but the building continued to be used as a Pontiac dealership through the mid-1940s.

Oakland-Pontiac and the Brahm-Mitchellette Dealership

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company predates the building that its original owners constructed on Kingshighway in 1927. The business began in 1920, partnered by Elmer A. Brahm (1899 – 1972) and Joseph Mitchellette (1898 – 1961). Brahm and Mitchellette initially sold cars from a one-story garage at 1049 S. Boyle Avenue (not extant), approximately 2.5 miles northeast of 3537 S. Kingshighway.<sup>18</sup> The building on Kingshighway was designed by John Peter Wunderlich (b. 1899). All three men, Brahm, Mitchellette and Wunderlich, lived in close vicinity of the dealership on Kingshighway. Brahm resided at 3526 Lawn Avenue; Mitchellette at 5230 Tholozan Avenue; and Wunderlich at 4930A Tholozan in 1929 and 3524 Lawn in 1940 (**Figure 16**).<sup>19</sup> Where the business partners and their architect lived, as well as the movement of the dealership from a small garage on Boyle to a modern building on Kingshighway illustrate two important trends. One was the shift of Locust Street's Auto Row to busy automobile thoroughfares west of downtown. The second was the growing residential sector west of Kingshighway that attracted commercial development in the 1920s.

The Brahm-Mitchellette dealerships on Boyle and Kingshighway sold Oakland- Pontiac automobiles, which were manufactured by General Motors. Initially, Oakland was the name of an automobile produced by Edward M. Murphy, an incorporator of the Pontiac (Michigan) Buggy Company. In 1907, Murphy began assembling automobiles at his buggy factory to increase profits and changed the name of his business to the Oakland Motor Car Company.<sup>20</sup> The earliest Oakland was not manufactured but like most early automobiles, assembled using parts by a variety of makers. Murphy's first Oakland utilized a two-cylinder motor designed by a business associate, Alanson Partridge Brush (who initially pitched his motor to Cadillac, which declined the prototype). The first Oakland was slow to sell. Its replacement model, introduced in 1908, utilized a four-cylinder engine but likewise had few buyers.<sup>21</sup> The car did, however, catch the

<sup>17</sup> Robert Genat, *The American Car Dealership* (St. Paul, MN: Motorbooks International, 2004), 47.

<sup>18</sup> "The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Company's New Home," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (13 May 1928). Gould City Directories, 1925-1927; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, City of St. Louis, Volume 5, Sheet 104; United States Census, 1920, St. Louis Ward 13 (Roll T635\_951, Page 21A).

<sup>19</sup> Gould / Polk-Gould, St. Louis City Directories, 1929 and 1940.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur Pound, *The Turning Wheel: The Story of General Motors through Twenty-Five Years* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1934), 92-93.

<sup>21</sup> Beverly Rae Kimes, Henry Austin Clark, Jr., Ralph Dunwoodie and Keith Marvin, *Third Edition Standard Catalog of American Cars 1805 – 1942* (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 1986), 1050.



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attention of William C. Durant, originator of General Motors.<sup>22</sup> Durant purchased half of Oakland's shares in 1909, placing the automobile under General Motor's "umbrella" of offerings.<sup>23</sup> "Oakland Six" was the most successful line to date, a six-cylinder model introduced in 1913 but the sensation was short-lived. In 1926, General Motors introduced the Pontiac, a six-cylinder model that sold for the price of an Oakland four-cylinder. Afterward, both cars were manufactured as Oakland-Pontiac. "Pontiac was unique in GM [General Motors] history in being the only offspring ever to kill its parent. After [Pontiac's] smashing debut, the demise of the Oakland became only a matter of time."<sup>24</sup> After 1932, Oakland-Pontiac was no more but Pontiac endured.<sup>25</sup>

St. Louis had several automobile dealerships that sold Oakland-Pontiac models. As early as 1922, the Mississippi Valley Motor Company at 3137-39 Locust Street (until the business moved c. 1924 to 2801 Locust Street) was the only dealer/distributor listed as an Oakland sales agent. Two years later, Oaklands were being sold by Sperring Oakland Company at 3536-38 Lindell Boulevard, Angelica Automotive at 21<sup>st</sup> and Angelica (which moved to 4231 N. Grand Avenue c. 1927) and Brock Motor Car Company at 4418 Olive Street. After GM merged Pontiac and Oakland in 1926, additional Oakland dealers cropped up in St. Louis, including the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company, Burgdorf Motor Company at 2719-29 S. Jefferson Avenue, Goodloe Clay Auto Company at 5841 Delmar Boulevard and Sadlo-Faber Motor Company at 4933 Natural Bridge Avenue. The only "authorized" dealership on Kingshighway that sold Oakland-Pontiac automobiles was the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company.<sup>26</sup>

South Kingshighway was an ideal location for Brahm and Mitchellette's new Oakland-Pontiac dealership, which debuted as "one of many new enterprises located in Kingshighway Hills, developed by the Cyrus Crane Willmore Co." in the 1920s-30s.<sup>27</sup> Kingshighway Hills was largely residential but also supported a major commercial corridor extending along both Kingshighway (north/south) and the intersecting route of Chippewa Street (east/west), which served as St. Louis' southern alternate for Route 66 (**Figures 17 and 18**). Willmore's plan for Kingshighway Hills was singular in terms of when properties were constructed. That is, both commercial and residential properties were built at about the same time, at least until the Great Depression arrived, which substantially slowed completion of the residential sector west of Kingshighway. This was standard for all of Willmore's developments such as University Hills (developed in the 1920s in University City) and St. Louis Hills (developed in the 1940s in southwest St. Louis City).<sup>28</sup> Although the commercial development initiated by Willmore's

<sup>22</sup> Pound, 94.

<sup>23</sup> John Gunnell, *75 Years of Pontiac: The Official History* (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 2000), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Kimes et al, 1050.

<sup>25</sup> Scott Bailey, Marguerite Kelly, Griffith Borgeson, et al, eds. *General Motors: The First 75 Years of Transportation Products* (Detroit: General Motors Corporation, 1983), 43.

<sup>26</sup> Gould. *St. Louis Red-Blue Book*, 1922 – 1928; Gould. *St. Louis City Directory*, 1930.

<sup>27</sup> "The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Company's New Home."

<sup>28</sup> Fox, 167 and Wayman (1978), 42.

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subdivisions in southwest St. Louis (Kingshighway Hills and St. Louis Hills) resulted in a broad swath of commercial development along Chippewa Street, Kingshighway and (further west, parallel to Kingshighway) Hampton Avenue, it was only Kingshighway that attracted a large number of automobile dealerships.<sup>29</sup> Once again, this relates to the route's paved smooth surface that was void of streetcars, as well as the fact that the area was relatively free of any development – ideal for sprawling modern dealerships with adjacent parking and used sales lots.

Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company was one of the earliest auto-related businesses constructed on S. Kingshighway, three blocks north of the route's intersection with Chippewa Street. By 1929, at least two more automobile dealerships existed at 3600 S. Kingshighway (Grebe Motor Company, currently Ackerman Toyota, Figure 9) and 3647 S. Kingshighway (Hudson-Essex, currently AutoZone, **Figure 19**).<sup>30</sup> Despite the Great Depression, the commercial corridor on S. Kingshighway thrived although automobile dealerships did not become prevalent in this area until after World War II (**Figure 20**).

The Great Depression was, as noted in the MPDF, a great drain on the automobile industry as most individuals could no longer afford to buy automobiles.

Between the years 1929 and 1933, new automobile sales dropped 75%. Manufacturing fell to an all-time low in 1932; at its lowest since 1918 [and] one would expect the same to be true of automobile registration but quite the contrary. Registrations fell by a mere 10% between the years 1929-1933, indicating that 'the automobile was firmly rooted in American culture' by this period of time.<sup>31</sup>

The love-affair with the automobile was here to stay and this kept the doors open at many sales establishments, including the new dealership on Kingshighway. New cars may not have been available or affordable but used automobiles and service on used cars kept many dealerships open during and after the Depression era.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the Depression and war years took a toll on the Brahm-Mitchellette partnership. Before the end of the 1930s, the business was owned by another individual, Charles E. Vincel, who also sold Pontiacs. Brahm and Mitchellette continued to work at other automobile establishments, but not together.<sup>33</sup> Like the earlier dealership and illustrated on Sanborn maps (Figures 13 and 19), the dealership continued to use the adjacent north lot for used car sales even after it was no longer owned by Brahm and Mitchellette.

The pattern of activity at the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company reflects what was happening across the city in regard to automobile businesses during the 1930s-1940s. As

<sup>29</sup> Wayman (1978), 42-46.

<sup>30</sup> Gould, 1929.

<sup>31</sup> Keenoy et al, MPDF, E:11.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Gould / Polk-Gould, 1929-1939.

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businesses on Locust Street began to close or support additional activities to remain viable during the Depression, the dealership on Kingshighway also changed its operations by selling and servicing used cars. Vincel used the building at 3537 Kingshighway as a Pontiac dealership through 1944, after which time the building was simultaneously used by a toolmaker, Robert T. Landis, Paul Schulte Motors and the Missouri Tennis Table Club.<sup>34</sup> Thus, 1944 marks the end of the nominated property's period of significance. In 1954, the building was purchased by C.H. Bowersox and until 2014 was used solely by Bowersox Insurance Agency.<sup>35</sup>

Significance – Criterion A: Commerce

St. Louis' early automobile dealerships began as small storefronts that sold few automobiles. Initially, such businesses required little space. As long as storefronts provided walk-in customer access, not much else was necessary. This all began to change by the 1920s and even earlier in St. Louis, where automobile enthusiasts were attracted because of the city's numerous paved roads. Granite, brick and wood were all considered "paved" surfaces in the early 1900s and St. Louis had more than most cities. The quality of St. Louis' streets was an important reason why many automobile sales and service establishments were located on Locust Street and later on Kingshighway, particularly the stretch south of present day Interstate-64.<sup>36</sup> South Kingshighway continues to support numerous automobile sales and service buildings, though most have been converted to other uses. Few examples date to the period of construction that is represented by the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company. Most dealerships on Kingshighway were constructed after World War II. Within two blocks north and south of the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership (i.e., between the cross streets of Parker Avenue/north and Chippewa Street/south), S. Kingshighway currently supports ten buildings constructed as automobile dealerships/repair shops. These properties (including the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership) are identified in **Table 2**.

**Table 2. Automobile Dealerships (extant) within two blocks of the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company.**

Address (S. Kingshighway)	Date of Construction
3345	1949 & 1963 (2 bldgs)
3435	1946
3460	1977
3501	1956
3560	1977
3500	1952
<b>3537</b>	<b>1927 (Brahm-Mitchellette)</b>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 1939-1945.

<sup>35</sup> City of St. Louis, Active Building Permits. Available on Microfilm at the City of St. Louis' Comptroller's Office.

<sup>36</sup> MPDF, E:5.

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Address (S. Kingshighway)	Date of Construction
3538	1962
*3600	1929 (one-story)
*3636	1940
3647	1927

**\*Two addresses but currently the same owner/property.**

As noted in the MPDF, one of St. Louis' earliest purpose-built dealerships, located at 3900-3912 West Pine Boulevard (not extant), was owned by Vesper Buick Auto Company. Constructed in 1927, the year that a building permit was issued for the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company on Kingshighway, Vesper's "Spanish Colonial Revival style property was . . . was one of the largest in the nation, [providing] space to exhibit 16 cars at one time."<sup>37</sup> Considering that Vesper Buick's dealership was touted as one of the largest in the nation, the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership must have been spectacular when it opened, exhibiting 25 cars on its showroom floor.<sup>38</sup> Space, location and design were all part of the plan for marketing automobiles. During the 1920s, the design of the dealership became an important part of selling cars. The decade sponsored a limited period of time in which the building's owner – not the product's manufacturer – made all of the decisions about the building, including location and the builder/architect. This changed dramatically after World War II when big manufacturers like General Motors provided specific guidelines about building and designing dealerships.<sup>39</sup> This was not yet the case when the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership was constructed and its owners had a lot of influence in the building's design and location.

By the 1920s, the automobile was no longer a frivolous purchase for the well-to-do. Cars were designed with hard tops, heaters, doors and safety features such as mirrors and lights. They were driven year-round and becoming increasingly affordable. As more people could purchase cars – either because of affordability or financing options – customers began to make more demands, requiring that auto manufacturers provided a variety of styles, colors and pricing options. Marketing became important as competition increased between manufacturers. Part of the marketing process was, as mentioned previously, the dealership building itself. The more modern and attractive the dealership was, and the more cars a dealer had on his display floor to demonstrate, the more profitable the business.<sup>40</sup> Design, location and display options became critical to insure a dealer's success, particularly by the time the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership moved to its new location on South Kingshighway. The building's corner location on a busy thoroughfare was a marketing tool that served of great benefit for any commercial enterprise. The "store front [was] one of the dealer's best advertising mediums, because it" presented "the point

<sup>37</sup> MPDF, E:10.

<sup>38</sup> "The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Company's New Home."

<sup>39</sup> MPDF, E:13.

<sup>40</sup> MPDF, E: 8-9.

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of sale” and a corner site insured “a three-dimensional color merchandising panorama intended to arouse immediate customer interest.”<sup>41</sup>

One of the most important ideas about automobile dealerships, even before Brahm-Mitchellette was constructed, was that of location – where a business was located increased sales potential by attracting more customers. In this regard, the location of the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership was ideally situated on a busy commercial thoroughfare at the corner at S. Kingshighway (façade / east elevation) and Pernod Avenue (south elevation). Additionally the business was a mere three blocks north of Chippewa Street (Route 66), a major automobile highway. The location was attractive to local residents but more importantly, it drew customers who traveled Kingshighway via automobiles and buses, many of whom did not live in south St. Louis City. South Kingshighway quickly became a commercial corridor after its development as an automobile boulevard. Among the businesses attracted to the route were automobile dealerships, many of which continue to operate today.

Significance – Criterion C: Architecture

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is a Spanish-Revival style, two-story commercial property designed by John Wunderlich in 1927. The dealership is an exceptional example of its property type on S. Kingshighway. As indicated in the associated MPDF, the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company meets the registration requirements that “architecturally significant [auto-related] resources should . . . retain the location of the showroom and other distinguishing features” such as the “sense of openness and functionality provided by interior features” including walls, floors, ceilings and “exposed support elements.”<sup>42</sup> The building demonstrates its auto-related use through features such as interior/exterior concrete ramps, open floor plan, display windows, exposed mushroom cap columns and garage bays. Also significant is that Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company reflects a short period of time in St. Louis when automobile dealerships were designed per the specifications of individual business owners – not manufacturers. Such buildings reflect traditional ideas about how commercial buildings should appear. For example, many of the purpose-built dealerships on Locust Street that stand today are similar in design to other types of commercial buildings constructed downtown. These buildings reflect popular architectural styles and their structural components imitate other types of commercial properties. Some differences, such as oversized display windows and accessible features for getting cars in and out of buildings are present but overall, these buildings reflect pre-World War II era construction methodologies. The Brahm-Mitchellette dealership at 3537 S. Kingshighway bears many similarities to the City’s earlier Locust Street dealerships. The building was constructed during a time when purpose-built dealerships adapted modern ideas about location and access, while continuing to perpetuate traditional architectural styles. After 1946, dealerships looked different and they were constructed differently as well.

<sup>41</sup> Genat, 45.

<sup>42</sup> Keenoy et al., MPDF, F:36.



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Most of the examples of automobile dealerships on Kingshighway largely reflect mid-twentieth-century trends in St. Louis' automobile sales and service establishments. Very few were constructed that appear similar to the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company because shortly after the dealership opened, the nation's economy collapsed. The Great Depression stagnated investment and growth in the automobile industry for years. Afterward, though the nation's economy rebounded, automobiles were not manufactured as automobile companies began to support the war effort by producing bombs, airplanes and military-use vehicles. Few people bought new cars in the 1930s, and in the 1940s dealerships had no new model vehicles for sale. The lag in automobile industry-related services led to slow development of Kingshighway as a dealership row. By the 1950s, when Locust Street was no longer the city's most active center for automobile businesses, dealerships no longer resembled the buildings constructed prior to World War II.

The Brahm-Mitchellette dealership's stylistic influence, Spanish Revival, was frequently used for automobile dealerships constructed in the 1910s-1930s, though it was never as popular as Art Deco. Within the Locust Street Historic District (NRL, 2005), at least six buildings incorporate Spanish Revival and Mission influences, including 3043 Olive (constructed in 1929, Mission), 2920 Locust (constructed in 1916, Spanish Revival), 3100 Locust (constructed in 1927, Spanish Revival), 3027 Locust (constructed in 1917, Spanish Revival) and 3037 Locust (constructed in 1916, Mission).<sup>43</sup> The examples on Locust, as is the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership, are two-stories in height. Although on Locust this occurrence (a two-story, Spanish-Revival style dealership) is frequent; such is not the case for S. Kingshighway. Within the most prominent stretch of automobile dealerships (south of Arsenal and north of Chippewa Avenues) on S. Kingshighway, the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is the only example of its style and composition.

The Spanish-Revival style emerged following the California-Pacific Exposition of 1915, held in San Diego to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. The event's lead architect, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, introduced buildings at the exposition that incorporated a mixture of "Moorish, Byzantine, and Renaissance detailing, often based on prototypes in Spain."<sup>44</sup> Out of this came both Mission and Spanish-Revival style influences that were fashionable in the 1910s-30s and not just for housing.<sup>45</sup> Commercial architecture was also a popular form of demonstrating these eclectic movements, as demonstrated by the aforementioned dealerships on Locust Street, as well as the commercial buildings in Kingshighway Hills (south of the dealership), constructed during the late 1920s (Figures 17-18).

<sup>43</sup> Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation. National Register listings for the City of St. Louis. Available at: <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/StLouisCity.htm> (Access date: 27 January 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 196.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

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The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company was (as noted previously) designed by John Wunderlich, who is identified as an architect in city directories and census records. Little is known about Wunderlich's architectural contributions. To date, research has failed to associate him with any other commission, but it is likely he did a lot of work in south St. Louis City where he resided. It appears that he had a social relationship with Brahm (and possibly Mitchellette), as he lived next door to Elmer Brahm.<sup>46</sup> No expense appears to have been spared in Wunderlich's new design for the dealership on Kingshighway. The building's exterior embellishments include custom-made terra cotta embellishments (intact) that set off the modern display windows spanning the building's facade and south elevation. The interior was modern as well. Customer-service areas had terrazzo patterned floors (intact), bronze radiators (some intact) and decoratively painted ceilings. Automobile-service areas had exposed concrete floors and smooth concrete ramps (both intact) so that cars could be easily moved and the service areas easily kept clean.<sup>47</sup> The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is a unique and early example of the many automobile dealerships that were built along South Kingshighway (**Figure 21**).

Most automobile dealerships on S. Kingshighway remain in use as auto-related businesses today, as demonstrated by the buildings at 3435 S. Kingshighway (Bimmers R Us, constructed in 1946, **Figure 22**) and 3500 S. Kingshighway (Charles Schmidt and Co. Motors, constructed in 1951, **Figure 23**). As discussed previously, the Brahm-Mitchellette dealership's architectural significance is partially related to its physical demonstration of the city's older, multi-storied dealerships near downtown. In contrast, most dealerships on S. Kingshighway are typical of the building plan at 3345 S. Kingshighway (**Figure 24**) – massive one-story buildings with adjacent paved parking lots. Constructed in 1949 as a dealership, the property at 3345 S. Kingshighway is vastly different in style than the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company and remained in use as an auto-related business until very recently. The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is a clear example of the transition from pre- to post-war dealership design, as well as the relocation of St. Louis' Auto Row from Locust Street to S. Kingshighway.

### Conclusion

The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is an exemplary example of an early twentieth-century automobile dealership in St. Louis. Constructed at the advent of Kingshighway's transition to St. Louis' premiere location for automobile sales and service buildings, the property retains integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, location, feeling and association. The building meets Criterion A for its commercial importance as a premiere automobile dealership, meeting the requirements and associated context of Marketing and Servicing the Automobile in St. Louis under the cover Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis [Independent City], MO." The property at 3537 S. Kingshighway also meets Criterion C: Architecture under the MPDF cover document. The

<sup>46</sup> Polk-Gould, 1940.

<sup>47</sup> "The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Company's New Home," 1928.

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building, despite alterations, retains evidence of its original style, interior details, structural composition, automobile display window and garage bay fenestrations that illustrate its use. The building retains original features reflecting Spanish Revival architectural detailing. The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is locally significant. The period of significance extends from the date of the building's construction 1927, through its years of use as a Pontiac dealership, 1944.

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

Name of Property

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

Name of Property

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company, 3537 S. Kingshighway (Lat: 38.594657; Long: -90.271675)

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the property surround the lot addressed as 3537 South Kingshighway on City Block 6068. The parcel definitions are 80.96 FT/83.59 FT X 125 FT/125.03 FT. The property is located in Kingshighway Hills Addition, Block 5, Lots 10-11.

**Boundary Justification**

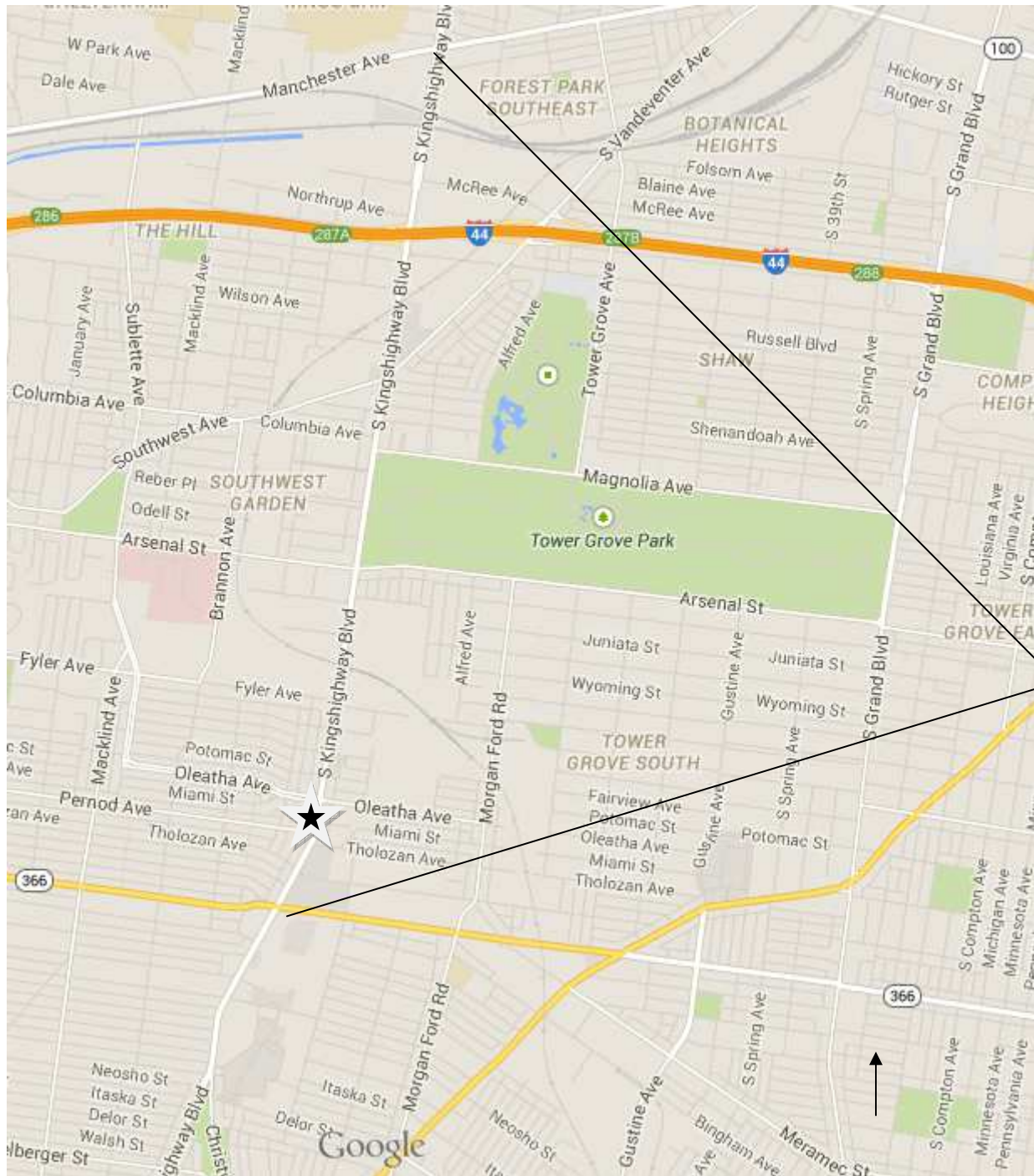
The property boundaries include the entire parcel associated with the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company constructed on the lot in 1927. The boundaries include both the building constructed in 1927 and the adjacent parking lot on the north side of the building.

# Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

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**Figure 1. Most automobile dealerships on S. Kingshighway were constructed south of Manchester Avenue and north of Chippewa Street (Route 366) though examples can be found in other portions of the route as well. The Brahm-Mitchellette dealership's location is indicated by the star on the map (Google map image not to scale).**



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**Figure 2. First-floor display windows have been partially infilled on the east and south elevations with brick and bands of one-over-one windows. View is northwest.**

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Figure 3. Original clerestory hopper windows, second floor, south wall.



Figure 4. Original clerestory four-light windows above infilled display window bays, first floor, south wall.

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Figure 5. Concrete columns are intact throughout the building. First floor view is southeast.



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**Figure 6. The building retains concrete ramps used to transport automobiles from the first floor to the roof. View is second floor, northwest corner.**

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**Figure 7. The building is primarily constructed of concrete, including the ceilings. View is second floor, southeast. Note the floor's ribbed concrete ceiling detail.**

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**Figure 8. Second story windows, west elevation, are original.**

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**Figure 9. The Toyota dealership at 3600 S. Kingshighway was constructed in 1931 but has been altered since that time. View is southeast.**



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**Figure 10. The former dealership at 4315 S. Kingshighway is still used for auto-related purposes. The building was constructed in 1938.**



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Continuation Sheet

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Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company

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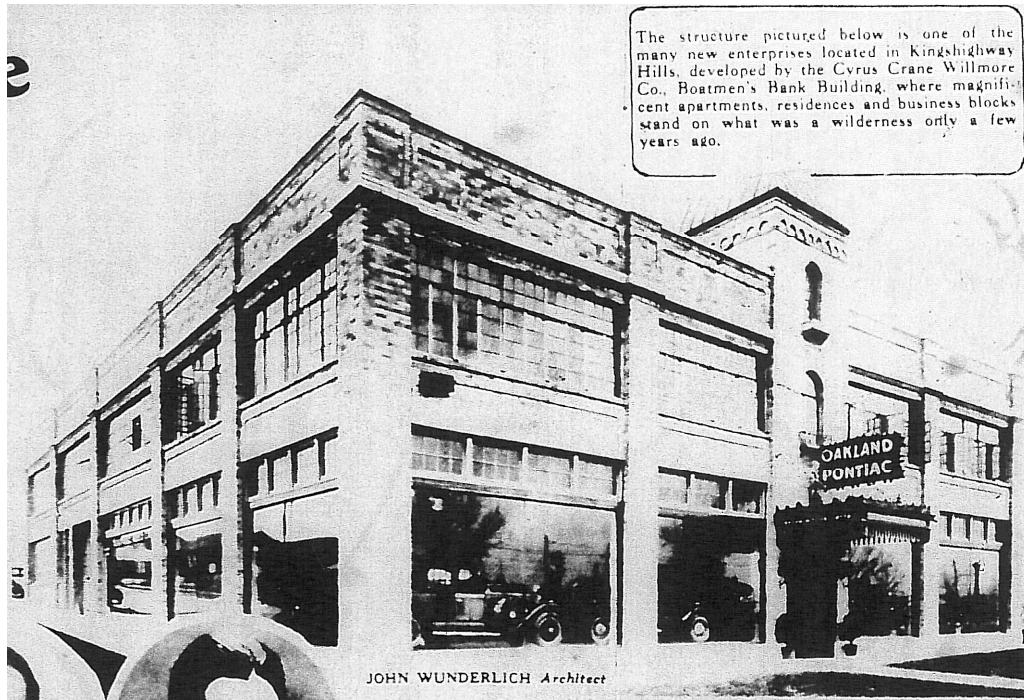


Figure 11. Brahms-Mitchellette Motor Car Company in 1928 (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 May, 1928).



Figure 12. Brahms-Mitchellette Motor Car Company in 2014.

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Figure 13. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1938. Brah-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is at bottom right hand corner (shaded). Note parking lot to the north, which was used as a used car sales lot at that time.

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**Figure 14. Northwest intersection of Locust (left) and 16<sup>th</sup> (right) Streets, c. 1915. Note the smooth surface of Locust vs. 16<sup>th</sup> Street. (Image used with permission from Campbell House Museum, St. Louis. Not to be used for reproduction or publication purposes). Locust Street was paved of this surface and void of streetcars, which made it a popular area for early automobile enthusiasts to establish garages and auto-related businesses.**

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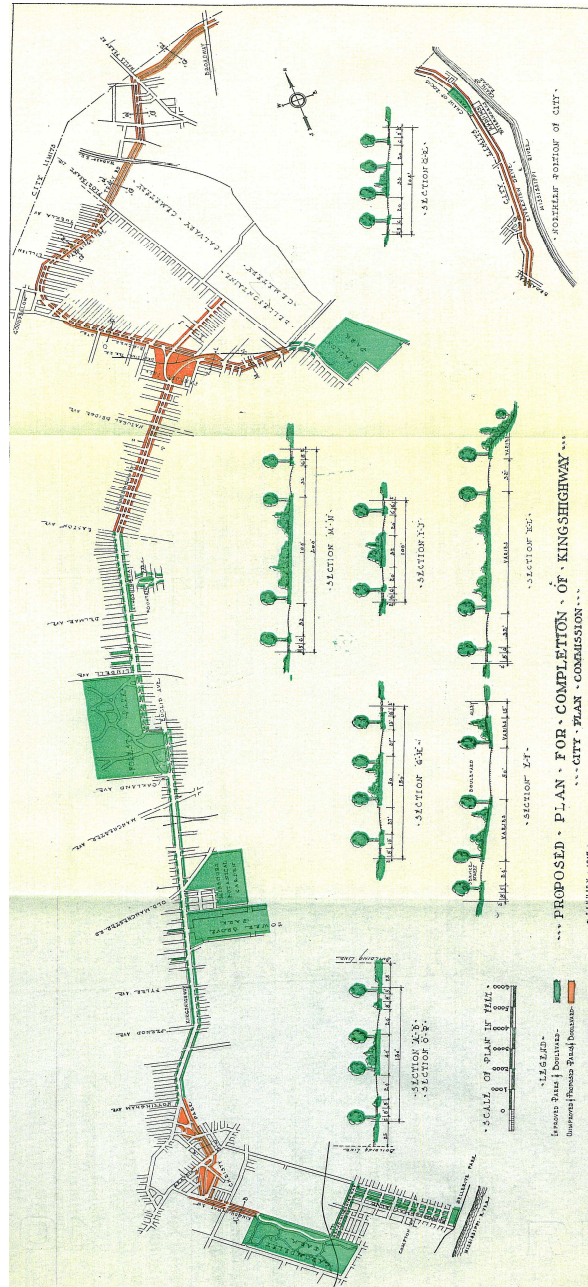


Figure 15. Plan for Kingshighway (Source: St. Louis City Plan Commission. *The Kingshighway: A Report by the City Plan Commission*, January 23, 1917, n.p.).



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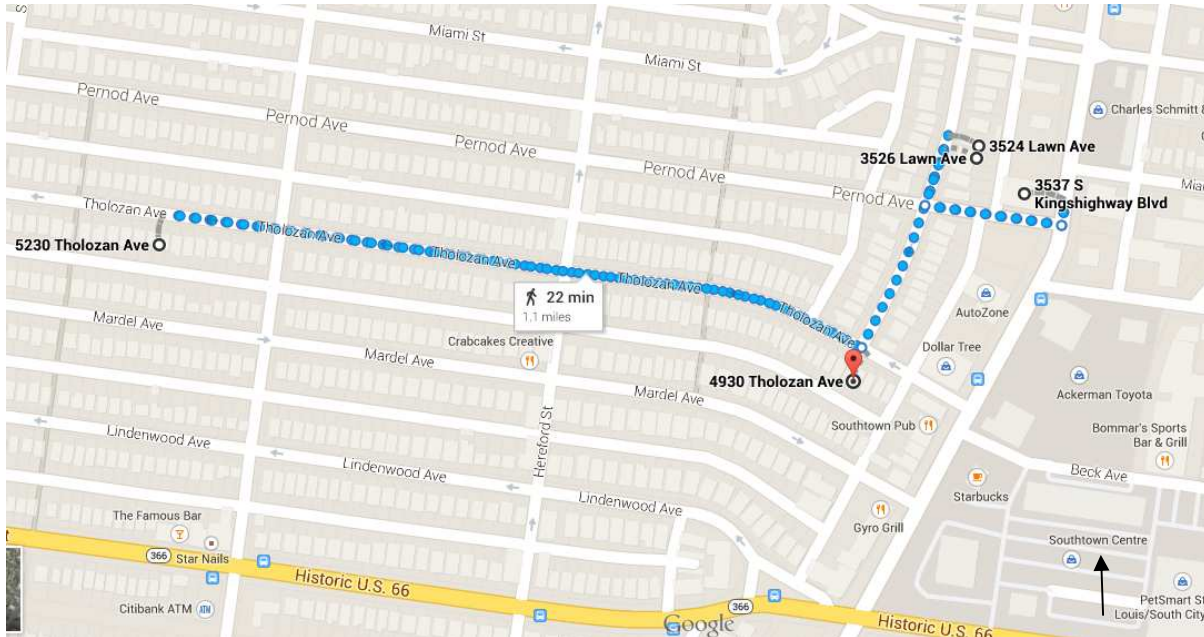


Figure 16. Map illustrating where the original owners and architect for 3537 S. Kingshighway resided in relationship to the dealership on S. Kingshighway. (Scale is approximate, 1" = 0.25 mile).



Figure 17. Kingshighway Hills' business district south of the Brahms-Mitchellette Motor Car Company; view is southwest.

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**Figure 18. Kingshighway Hills' business district south of the Brahms-Mitchellette Motor Car Company. The dealership's location is identified by the arrow in the photo. View is northwest.**

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Figure 19. AutoZone at 3647 S. Kingshighway was constructed as an automobile dealership in the late 1920s.



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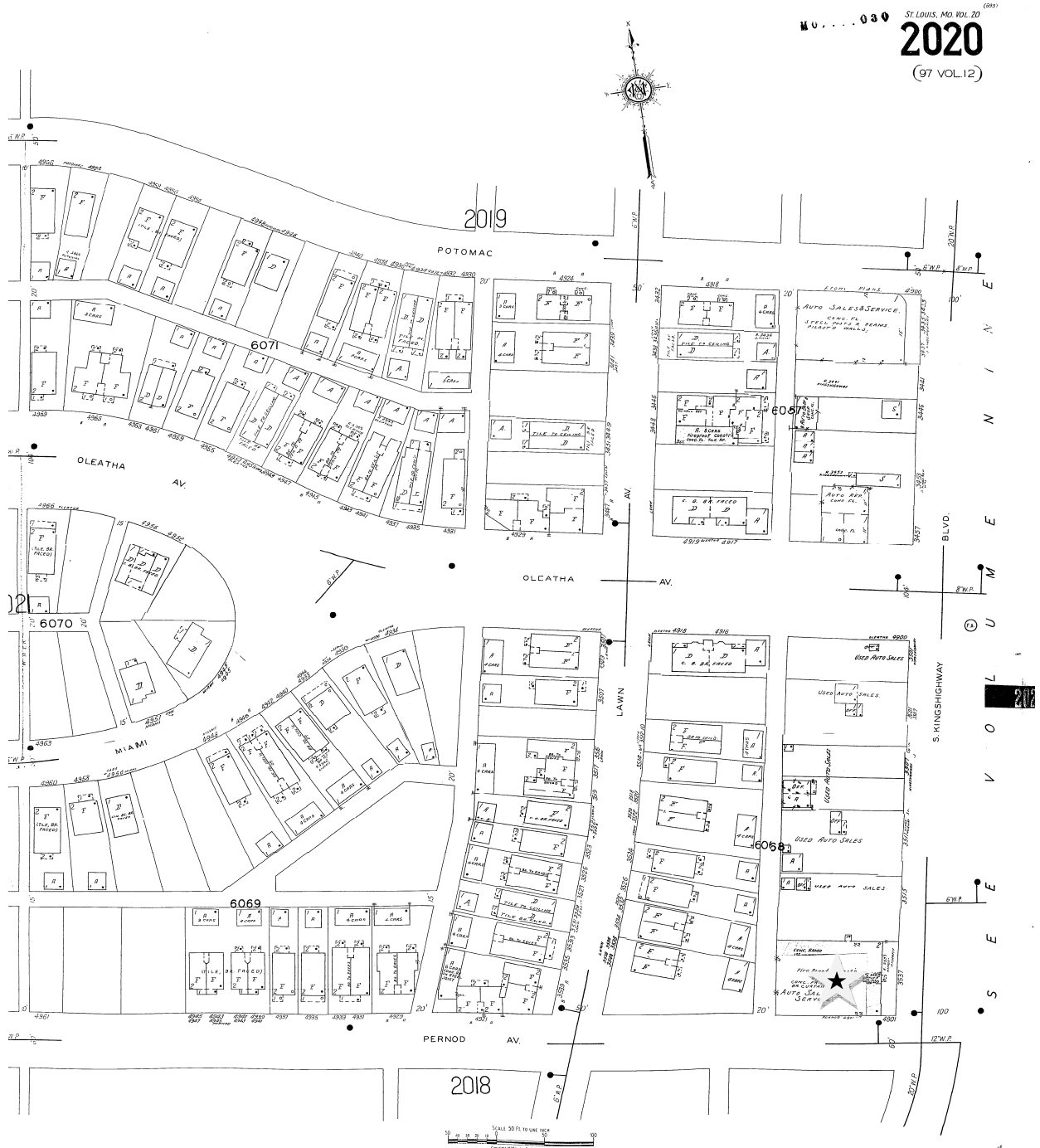


Figure 20. Sanborn Map, 1950, Volume 20, Sheet 2020. Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company is the property with a “star.” (Image not to be reproduced or published, research purposes only). All of the properties north and south of the dealership (on Kingshighway) were auto-related businesses in 1950.



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**The Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Company's NEW HOME**

The new home of the Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Co., at 3337 South Kingshighway, is an example of substantial business growth due to the energy and aggressiveness of two men whose names it bears.

The business is owned and operated by Elmer A. Brahm and Joseph Mitchellette, who began selling automobiles eight years ago. While serving as salesmen, they saw their opportunity, secured the agency for the OAKLAND and PONTIAC automobiles, locating their new venture in a small store room on Boyle Avenue. The quality of their cars with the excellent service rendered by the new Company assured success. The agency grew from the beginning. Their new home came as a need. They applied progressive methods and square dealings in serving St. Louis. The attractive building at their new location is evidence of the public's approval and shows the measure in which they have gained and held the esteem of their growing clientele.

JOHN WUNDERLICH Architect

The erection of this beautiful building was made possible through financing by the investment house of WOLFF-SCHIELD & CO., American Trust Building. They underwrote and are offering to investors the 6% First Mortgage Gold Bonds secured by the property.

ELMER A. BRAHM

JOSEPH MITCHELLETTE

VIEW OF THE PRIVATE OFFICE. Note desks and office furniture of the highest quality supplied by the Comfort Printing & Stationery Co., 107 N. 5th St. All business pertaining to finance is handled through the Park Savings and Trust Co., Clayton at De Muir. The Fred Schirm Contracting Co. of 4336 College Ave. was the general contractor and John Wunderlich the architect. The M. J. Conroy Plastering Co. of 3914 Pennsylvania Ave. executed the plastering contract and A. E. Mayer Plumbing & Heating Co., 3163 S. Grand Ave., the heating of the building, installing the vapor heating control method, the show room being heated through concealed radiators covered with bronze grilles.

VIEW SHOWING DISPLAY ROOM, with ample space to attractively display 25 automobiles. The fireproof safe shown was supplied by the General Fireproofing Co., Arcade Building. The entire flooring is Art Mosaic tile, installed by Arthur Girolami, 4234W Evans Ave., and the ceiling beautifully decorated by the Rehm-Joern Painting & Decorating Co., 4233 Manchester. The building exterior is neatly trimmed with Terra Cotta from the Winkle Terra Cotta Co., Century Bldg. All our insurance is handled by the Many-Bland Insurance Agency, Pierce Bldg.

VIEW OF THE SERVICE DEPARTMENT. All tires used here come from the Suburban Tire Co., 1426 S. Grand Ave.

PART OF THE FIRST FLOOR, showing ramp and overhead door, the latest in door equipment supplied by the Overhead Door Co., 201 Dickson St., Kirkwood, Mo. All technical machine work in repairs and engines is supplied by the H. & H. Machine Co. of 4216W Easton. Oil Service by J. D. Streett & Co., Park Ave., St. 4181 St.

Architect  
JOHN WUNDERLICH  
Real Estate  
CYRUS CRANE WILLMORE CO.  
Boatmen's Bank Bldg.  
Building Financing  
WOLFF-SCHIELD & CO.  
American Trust Building  
Banking  
PARK SAVINGS AND TRUST CO.  
Clayton at De Muir  
Many-Bland Insurance Agency  
Pierce Bldg.  
Office Furniture  
COMFORT PRINTING & STATIONERY CO.  
107 N. 5th St.  
Concrete and Gravel  
FRED SCHIRM CONTRACTING CO.  
4336 College Ave.  
Plastering  
M. J. CONROY PLASTERING CO.  
3914 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Vapor Heating System  
A. E. MAYER PLUMBING AND HEATING CO.  
3163 S. Grand Ave.  
Fireproof Safe  
GENERAL FIREPROOFING CO.  
Arcade Bldg.  
Art Mosaic Tile Flooring  
ARTHUR GIROLAMI  
4234W Evans Ave.  
Interior Decorating  
REHM-JOERN PAINTING & DECORATING CO.  
4233 Manchester Ave.  
Terra Cotta Trim  
WINKLE TERRA COTTA CO.  
Century Bldg.  
Tires  
SUBURBAN TIRE CO.  
1426 S. Grand Ave.  
Door Equipment  
OVERHEAD DOOR CO.  
201 Dickson St.  
Machine Work  
H. & H. MACHINE CO.  
4216W Easton Ave.  
Oil Service  
J. D. STREETT & CO.  
Park Ave. at 41st St.  
St. Louis, Mo.

**OAKLAND ALL-AMERICAN SIX ~ \$1045**  
Fast . . . silent . . . flexible . . . with luxury and comfort at every speed  
The car with all those qualities that Americans admire.

**NEW SERIES PONTIAC SIX ~ \$745**  
The world's lowest-priced Six with body by Fisher. Embodiment engineering features offered in no other car at the price.

Figure 21. Full page advertisement, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 May 1928.

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**Figure 22. 3435 S. Kingshighway was constructed in 1946 and is currently used as a used automobile sales business.**

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Figure 23. 3500 S. Kingshighway was constructed in 1951 and remains in use as an automobile sales/service business.



Figure 24. 3345 S. Kingshighway was constructed in 1949 and until very recently was still in use as an auto-related business.



Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Architectural floor plan of the first floor of a building. The plan shows a rectangular layout with a central corridor and various rooms. The plan is annotated with 16 numbered circles and arrows indicating specific features or directions. The plan includes a staircase, a central corridor, and several rooms. The plan is oriented with North at the top.

Key features and annotations:

- 1**: Arrow pointing to the bottom-left corner.
- 2**: Arrow pointing to the bottom center.
- 3**: Circle at the bottom center.
- 4**: Circle at the bottom center.
- 5**: Arrow pointing to the top-left corner.
- 6**: Arrow pointing to the top-left corner.
- 7**: Arrow pointing to the bottom-right corner.
- 8**: Arrow pointing to the bottom center.
- 9**: Circle at the bottom center.
- 10**: Circle at the bottom center.
- 11**: Arrow pointing to the bottom center.
- 12**: Arrow pointing to the top-right corner.
- 13**: Circle at the bottom-right corner.
- 14**: Arrow pointing to the top-left corner.
- 15**: Arrow pointing to the bottom center.
- 16**: Arrow pointing to the bottom center.

Other features include a staircase at the top-left, a central corridor, and several rooms. The plan is oriented with North at the top.

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <p>DATE: January 06, 2015 SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0" DRAWN BY: JMS/ST TITLE: FIRST FLOOR PLAN</p> </div> <div> <p>10401 - Historic Renovation - Mixed Use</p> <p><b>3537 S. Kingshighway</b> St. Louis, MO 63109</p> </div> </div>	<p>10401 - Historic Renovation - Mixed Use</p> <p><b>3537 S. Kingshighway</b> St. Louis, MO 63109</p>
	<p>10401 - Historic Renovation - Mixed Use</p> <p><b>3537 S. Kingshighway</b> St. Louis, MO 63109</p>

**Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company. St. Louis Independent City, MO.  
First Floor Plan and Photos 1-16.**

Historic Auto-Related Resources of St. Louis

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**IPX Garcia, LLC**  
3721 South Kingshighway  
St. Louis, MO 63109

**ARCHITECT:**  
UIC Architecture and Urbanism  
1607 Tower Grove Avenue  
Saint Louis, Missouri 63110  
314.771.7100  
uicall.com

**Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company. St. Louis Independent City, MO.  
Second Floor Plan and Photos 17-21.**

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Brahm-Mitchellette Motor Car Company. St. Louis Independent City, MO.  
Roof Plan and Photo 22.**



BOWERSOX

KINGSHIGHWAY on  
PENNSYLVANIA

INSURANCE

3537

AGENCY

COMPANY

NO  
THRU  
TRAFFIC

**BUSINESS RELOCATION**  
16,250 SF Office  
**For Sale**  
John Warriner  
314.655.6000





BOWERSOX

INSURANCE

3537

AGENCY

COMPANY

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY  
14,280 SF Office  
For Sale  
314 655 6000  
Call Bob

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY  
14,280 SF Office  
For Sale  
314 655 6000  
Call Bob





NCE

3537

3537

AGENCY

COMPAN

















No Zone  
BUSINESS BROKERS  
16, 30 SF Office  
For Sale

Let Cup Coffee





















































