

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1 Name of Property

historic name 217 West Main Street Building

other names/site number Open Door Service Center Building

2 Location

street & number 217 West Main Street [n/a] not for publication

city or town Sedalia [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Pettis code 159 zip code 65301

3 State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of certifying official/Title *Claire F. Blackwell* 17 Oct 96
Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4 National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet .

determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet .

determined not eligible for the
National Register.

removed from the
National Register

other, explain
See continuation sheet .

5 Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6 Function or Use

Historic Function
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
Other: Brothel

Current Functions
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
Italianate

Materials
foundation stone
walls brick
roof asphalt
other

Narrative Description

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

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

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

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

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

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

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

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

Areas of Significance

Social History

Periods of Significance

circa 1874--circa 1940

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9 Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	479070	4284500			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
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[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rhonda Chalfant
organization _____ date July 23, 1996
street & number 519 West 32nd Street telephone 816/826-5592
city or town Sedalia state MO zip code 65301

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

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

Property Owner

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

name Open Door Service Center
street & number 217 West Main Street telephone 816/827-1613
city or town Sedalia state MO zip code 65301

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

217 West Main Street Building
Pettis County, Missouri

Architecture--summary:

217 West Main, Sedalia, Pettis County, is an L-shaped, two-story, brick building. Built in 1874, this building has Italianate features, including a decorative metal cornice and three round arched windows with keyed full arch hood molds and stone lug sills. The transom, display window, primary entrance, and secondary entrance of the early twentieth-century storefront are intact. The facade retains a high level of integrity. The first floor showroom features a pressed metal ceiling, cornice, and wainscot. The walls of the second floor rooms have graffiti which identifies the upstairs as a brothel. The wing of the building facing west on Kentucky Avenue was added in 1906. The storefront of this wing has been altered by changes in windows, bulkheads, and the replacement of its primary entrance with a contemporary stormdoor. Its clear glass transom and doorway to the second story are intact.

Elaboration:

The building at 217 West Main is L-shaped. The leg of the L faces north on West Main Street; the arm faces west on South Kentucky Avenue. The building is a two-story brick-front store building with Italianate features, including a decorative bracketed metal cornice on the north facade. The second story of the north facade features three round-arched, 2-over-2 windows with decorative pressed metal full arch hood molds. The eyebrow hoods are keyed and end with acanthus-leaf decorations.

The building has an early twentieth century storefront, one of the few remaining in Sedalia. The first-floor is recessed five feet. A transom of obscure glass extends the width of the facade. At the west side is a door opening onto a stairway leading to the upstairs. The double-door primary entrance to the store is in the center. On the east is a pair of glass and wood bi-fold doors (hinged together to open to the east) and on the west is a showroom window.¹

¹Mara Gelbloom, "Old Storefronts: 1870-1890," The Old House Journal, 6 (March 1978), 25,33-34; Janet Marinelli, "Architectural Glass and the Evolution of the Storefront," The Old House Journal, 16 (July/Aug 1988), 34-43.

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The north facade has been painted red. The window frames and muntins are dark green, and the window trim is ecru. The eyebrow hoods and cornice are ecru with details picked out in dark green.

The west facade of the building, fronting on Kentucky Avenue, has a separate address, 111 South Kentucky. This two-story, brick addition to the building was added in 1906.² At the north end of 111 South Kentucky, a chimney supported by three courses of corbelled brick projects from the building. The chimney rises approximately 10 inches above the parapet. At the south end, a shorter projection also supported by three courses of corbelled brick serves to balance the chimney. Between the chimney and the decorative projection is a brick cornice featuring a row of brick dentils over a band of tiles embossed with a looping spiral pattern.

The second story has five 1-over-1 windows with stone sills and lintels. On the north end of the ground floor a door opens onto a steep stairway leading to the upstairs rooms. A stairway to the basement opens off the south end of the ground floor. The trim on this part of the building is red, ecru, and dark green, matching the trim on the north facade.

Immediately to the north of 111 South Kentucky is a segmental arched door opening into the rear of the ground floor of 217 West Main. A straight-sided segmental-arched window is on the second story directly above this door. The segmental-arched door and windows are consistent with the Italianate design of 217 West Main.

The north eighty-two feet of the west facade of 217 West Main was stuccoed when the second story of the adjoining building at 219 West Main was removed. This wall has been painted red to match the rest of the building.

The south of the building faces the alley between West Main and West Second Streets. The second story has three straight-sided segmented arched windows. At the far east of the south facade are two doors; the western-most leading into a ground floor area and the eastern-most opening to a stairway to the second floor. The brick on the south wall of the building is spalling badly, as a result of water damage from the building at 215 West Main and a poorly designed gutter. The building's owners are aware of the problem and are taking

²Abstract of Title, transaction number 86; Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1908.

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steps to repair the damage in a manner consistent with the age and the materials of the original building.

The three stairways to the second floor and multiple entrances help confirm the extent to which the building was added on to. They also reflect concern for safety in the event of fire at a time when the upstairs apartments were heated with wood or coal. They further reflect the need for surreptitious escape in the event the house of prostitution was raided.

The ground floor of the north wing is a large showroom with decorative pressed metal wainscot, cornice and ceiling. The ceilings are 12'9" high. This wing retains a high level of integrity, despite the addition of furnace ductwork which was added over the walls to avoid the damage to the wainscot, cornice and ceiling that a dropped ceiling or false wall would have caused. The interior of the west wing of the ground floor has painted plaster walls.

Upstairs, the northern most part of the north wing is now a large room, 22'9" x 82', but ghosts on the walls and floors indicate the former presence of a north-south running hallway off which opened several rooms, apparently apartments. Remnants of five flues are visible. This portion of the building has been altered by the removal of its original partitions.

A door with two transoms, one directly above the other, separates this former hallway from a hallway extending south sixty feet to the south wall of the building. The original baseboards, door trim, and doors are oak and in good condition. This hallway is papered with several layers of wallpaper, but red on cream swag-patterned wallpaper shows in several places where later layers of paper have fallen. The wall-paper is typical of the early twentieth-century colonial revival influence.³ Off this hallway are nine numbered rooms, some interconnecting, and hallways leading to other rooms or to stairway exits. (The rooms are identified on the accompanying floorplan.)

The northern-most room, located on the east side of the hallway, is room # 8. It is 10'4" by 15'9". It is separated from room # 9,

³Richard C. Nylander, Wallpapers for Historic Buildings, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley, 1992), 164,166,188 show papers similar in design. The paper was probably added after 1906, since the name of one woman, Birdie Sissler, appears on the wall of the hallway and also on the wall of a room in the 1906 addition.

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also 10'4" by 15'9", by a working pocket door. Both room # 8 and # 9 have a window on the east wall. Each room opens onto the central hall. Directly to the south of this pair of rooms is a now non-functioning bathroom, 8' by 15'9", with plaster grooved to resemble tile set in grout and molding. The bathroom has toilet, sink, and footed tub in the style common in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴

Directly south of the bathroom at a right angle to the central hallway and extending to the east wall of the building is a 40" wide hallway. At the east end of this hall and at a right angle to the hall, a stairway to the alley at the rear of the building opens. The stairwell has a window overlooking the roof of the one-story building to its east. The door at the top of the stairs opens out onto the stairs and has a peephole cut into it. The door opening onto the stairs and the peephole are consistent with those found in other Sedalia buildings known to house brothels or gambling halls. A dumbwaiter to the first floor is located across the hall from the stairwell.

South of this hallway are two more connecting rooms, joined by a door in their shared wall. The northern of these two rooms, room # 10, is 11'4" by 11'2". Room # 10 has a window on its east wall overlooking the stairwell, and directly opposite the window in the stairwell. The southern most room, room # K, is 11'4" by 15'9". Room # K has one window on its east wall overlooking the roof of the building to the east, and a window in its south wall overlooking the alley. Both room # 10 and room # K open onto the central hall.

On the west side of the building are four rooms; each pair of rooms is separated from the other pair by a 40" wide hallway extending at a right angle from the central hall to the west wall of the building. A window overlooking Kentucky Avenue opens off the west end of this hallway. The northern-most pair of rooms do not connect. The north-western room, Room # 15, is 10'2" by 15'6". It has two windows looking out onto South Kentucky Avenue. Room # 15 opens onto the rear hallway. The north-eastern room, Room # 11, opens onto the central hallway. Room # 11 is 10'4" by 15'6". It has a window opening onto the stairwell overlooking the stairway leading down to South Kentucky Avenue.

⁴Sears Catalog

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The pair of rooms south of the rear hallway connect. The south-western room, Room # 2, is 10'2" by 15'6". It has a flue on the south wall and two windows on the west wall overlooking South Kentucky Avenue. Room # 2 opens onto the rear hallway and opens into the south-eastern room, Room # 12. Room # 12 is 10'4" by 15'6". It has a chimney that projects 5" into the room and a window on the south wall overlooking the alley.

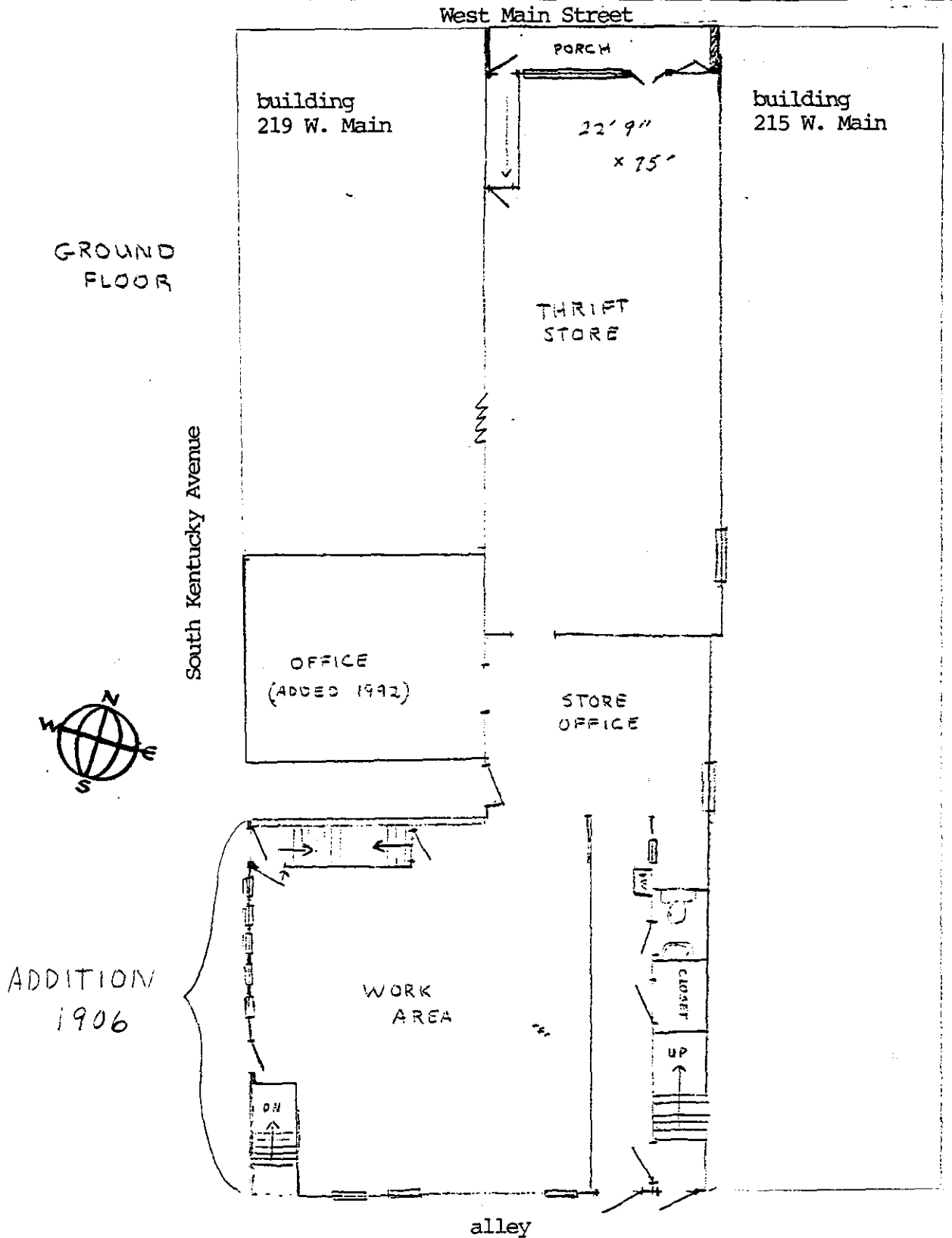
The rooms off the hallway retain a high degree of integrity. Windows, doors, baseboards, and trim are original. Wallpaper has fallen, revealing plaster walls.

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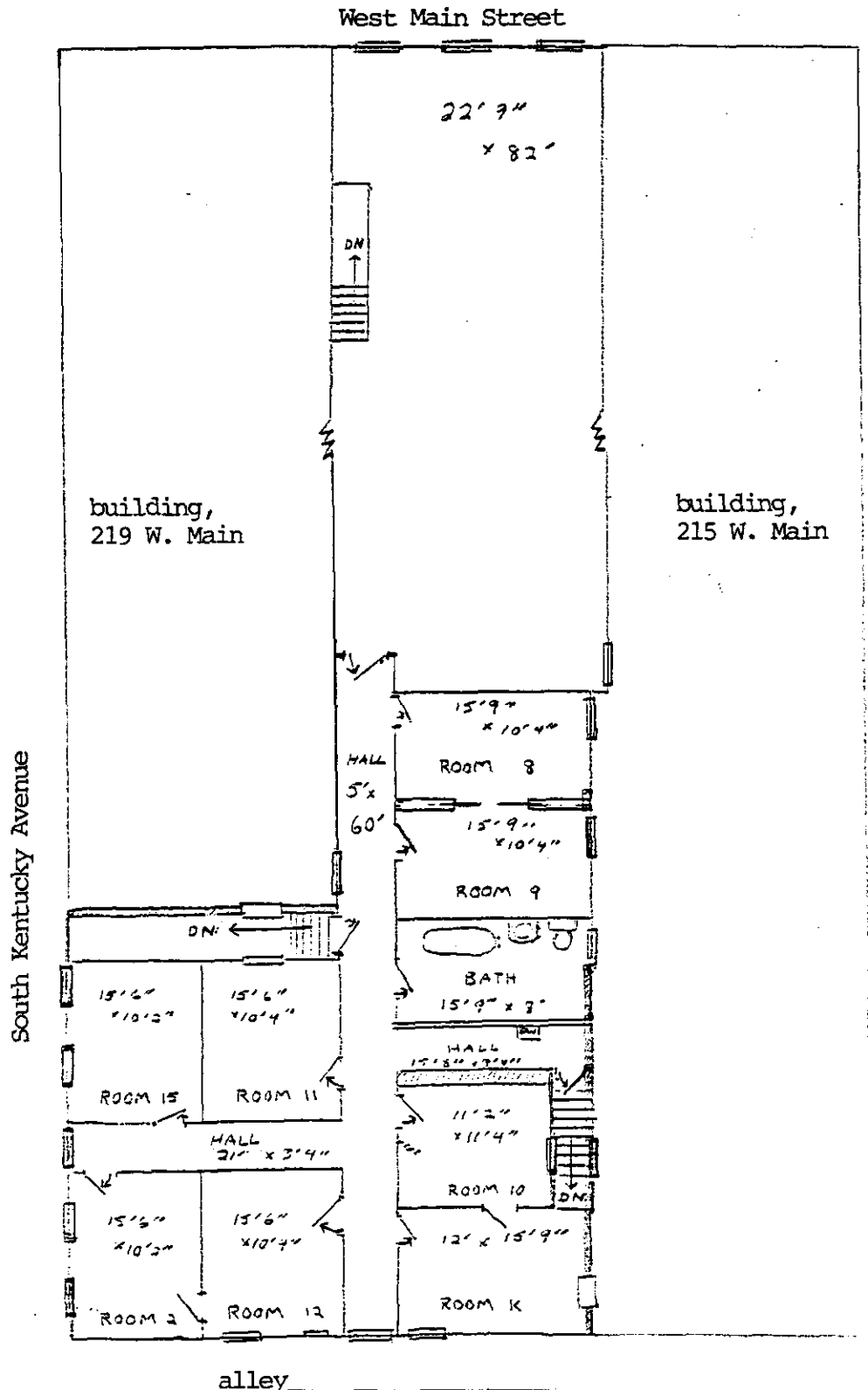
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217 West Main Street Building
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Second story,
brothel rooms



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217 West Main Street Building
Pettis County, Missouri

Significance--summary:

217 West Main, Sedalia, Pettis County, is significant under criterion A, the area of SOCIAL HISTORY, as the most intact surviving building which served as a brothel in a city which in 1940 received nationwide recognition for its red light district. Located on West Main Street and opening onto South Kentucky Avenue and an alley, it was one of several Sedalia buildings whose first floors housed legitimate businesses and whose upstairs apartments were rented to prostitutes. In this building, the front apartments were rented to working-class couples or men, and the rear apartments to prostitutes.

Prostitution was a significant aspect of Sedalia's social history, linked to Sedalia's position as a railroad center and as the home of ragtime music. The building's sustained use as a brothel, from 1875 through circa 1940, reflects society's attitudes toward prostitution and toward the prostitutes themselves. Although prostitution was condemned by the legal system, the press, and the church as evil, prostitution and brothels were tolerated, even encouraged, because fines levied against the madams and the prostitutes added revenue to the city. The continuation of prostitution in Sedalia reveals a pattern of official complicity and corruption. Prostitution provided a livelihood for an underclass of women, further emphasizing the tensions between men who patronized brothels and the women who worked there, and the tensions between upper-class Sedalians who owned the buildings rented to the prostitutes.

The building at 217 West Main is especially significant because it retains a high level of integrity, and because the graffiti on the upstairs walls identifies both prostitutes and their patrons. Much of the graffiti is railroad related, mentioning specific jobs (Boomer machinist), railroad companies, and unions (I. A. of M.). The frequent mention of railroads reflects Sedalia's position as the intersection of two major railroad lines, the Missouri Pacific and the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas, and two minor railroad lines, the Lexington and St. Louis and the narrow gauge line to Warsaw. Some of those who signed the walls included their hometown, which confirms the existence in Sedalia of a large transient population, as well as the demi-monde who catered to them.

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Elaboration:

According to the abstract, the building at 217 West Main was built by C. E. Smith in 1874; Sedalia City Directories report Smith's Clothing Store occupied the first floor of the building in 1875 and 1876. Local city directories are sometimes a year behind in their information, suggesting that Smith's Clothing Store was probably in existence during 1874-75.⁵ Smith defaulted on the mortgage on the property, and in 1875, the property was sold at auction. The earliest graffiti identifying the building as a brothel appears to date to 1875.

In 1879, Grove Young of Lafayette County purchased the property. Young had extensive real estate holdings in Lafayette, Jackson, and Dent Counties in Missouri, and in Kansas.⁶ During Young's ownership, the first-floor store had several tenants, including Bagby's Grocery Store; Heaton's Carriage Shop; Stanley, Lowman and Co., manufacturers of patent medicines and flavorings; Peter Arbun's Second Hand Store; Joseph Rowe's Secondhand Store; Noah Shear's Restaurant; and George Davis Billiard Hall. According to city directories, a number of working class men and couples occupied the upstairs apartments.⁷

Three tenants have a connection to prostitution. One tenant, a black woman named Sallie Todd, lived upstairs in 1892 and 1893. Sallie Todd was a prostitute, having been fined as a madam in 1872 and registering herself as a prostitute living at 209 West Main in the 1900 census.⁸ Another tenant, Peter Arbun, was reported by the Sedalia Democrat to have rented a room to a sick, poor mother of a

⁵Sedalia City Directory, 1875; Abstract of Title, transactions # 5,68-77; the abstract is currently held by the Open Door Service Center, 105 South Kentucky, Sedalia, MO 65301.

⁶Abstract of Title, transaction # 79-85.

⁷Sedalia City Directory, 1879, 1873, 1884-85, 1889-90, 1892, 1895, 1897, 1898-99, 1900-01, 1903-04, 1906-07, 1908, 1915.

⁸Sedalia Democrat, 23 October 1872; Federal Census, 1900.

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four year old who was supplied with food and clothing by "two scarlet sisters." Because of the inexactness of the dates in the city directory, it is uncertain whether this room was above 217 West Main or 305 West Main, where Arbun had his store in 1895.⁹ The third tenant, George L. Davis, managed a billiard hall from 1900 to 1906. Davis was known to deal with prostitutes before he opened his business at 217 West Main; in 1897, the Sedalia Capital reports Cynthia Maupin, a known prostitute, fled from police to hide in rooms over George Davis' Saloon. In 1883, Davis was fined \$10 for being found in a bawdy house.¹⁰

Young and his trustees held the property, but did not apparently monitor the extent to which its upstairs rooms were rented, until 1905, when it was sold to the Moerschel Brewing Company of Sedalia. The property was then used as a saloon, first by Joseph F. Sewell and then by Frank DeJarnett.¹¹ DeJarnett had been in the saloon business for a number of years; on April 4, 1897, the Sedalia Daily Capital praised him for serving "nothing but the very best" and for keeping "one of the most quiet and orderly saloons in Sedalia." The Capital's comments may not have been entirely accurate, however, for in 1896, DeJarnett was charged in city court with renting rooms to prostitutes; that same year he posted \$300 bond for an appearance in circuit court on the same charge.¹² Graffiti on the walls at 217 West Main, much of which is dated to 1906 and 1907, suggests that he continued to rent rooms to prostitutes. The abstract shows that the 111 South Kentucky

⁹Sedalia Democrat 10 May 1895, 12 May 1895; Sedalia City Directory, 1895.

¹⁰Sedalia Capital, 16 April 1897; Sedalia Daily Bazzo, 12 June 1883.

¹¹Abstract of Title, transaction # 86; Sedalia City Directory, 1906-07; 1908.

¹²Sedalia Daily Capital, 4 April 1897; Sedalia Evening Democrat, 1 June 1896.

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217 West Main Street Building
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addition was built in 1906; Sanborn Insurance Maps confirm its existence in 1908.¹³

During Prohibition, Moerschel Brewing Company was forced to close. The company rented the building to Sedalia Velie Motor Company, a used car dealership and repair garage. After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the Kentucky Club Saloon occupied the building.¹⁴

Information about various owners and occupants of 217 West Main and 111 South Kentucky suggests that between the 1870s and 1890s, Sedalia was somewhat unsettled, still in the process of changing from a frontier boom town to a settled community. The building's interior design confirms a pattern of apartments above stores typical of urban areas. However, none of the information about occupants reveals as much about the building's use as the graffiti on the walls, which confirms that much of the upstairs served as a place of work for many of Sedalia's prostitutes.

The pencil graffiti is perhaps the most historically significant feature of the upstairs rooms of 217 West Main. The earliest appears to date to 1875; the most frequently mentioned date is 1907, but cartoon drawings in the style of the 1920s and 1930s are also visible.

Grffiti includes the names of prostitutes, names of their patrons (with comments about their physical attributes), vulgar rhymes, and drawings. The names of some men, such as Rollo Kendrick and William Harrison, are repeated, suggesting that perhaps they were repeat customers. The name of one prostitute, Baby Birdie Sissler, and Zeke (apparently her pimp/boyfriend), appears in Rooms # 8, 9, 2, and in the central hallway. Since Room # 2 is in the 1906 addition, Birdie and Zeke were apparently working after that date. Unfortunately, little else is known at this point about Birdie or Zeke.¹⁵

¹³Abstract of Title, transaction #112, 113; Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1908.

¹⁴Abstract of Title, transaction #117, Sedalia City Directory, 1934.

¹⁵A review of city directories, of the soundex index to the 1900 and 1910 census, of the 1900 census, and of Sedalia cemetery records fails to provide any information about Zeke or Birdie.

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Graffiti in room # 8 includes the following comments, some of which are visible in the photographs:

"Bertha Best in the house"

"Josie the best Looker on Main Street"

"Birdie Sissler, Zekes Best"

"Leon and Birdie"

"L. A. Northway"

"Walter Beardsley 7" cock"

"Richard Sittle Boomer Machinist / Moberly Mo"

"H. B. Klumph / Youngstown, Ohio"

"William Harrison / Sedalia January 15, 1907"

"F. M. Robbins" [Mr. Robbins taught penmanship at one of Sedalia's business colleges; his florid signature evidences his skill.]

"Georgie Shepherd Sedalia Mo"

a drawing of a nineteenth-century woman dressed in a corset and stockings. The woman has what appears to be skull and crossbones on her arms and thighs. This drawing may be a warning of the very real danger of death by venereal disease to those who consorted with prostitutes.

a number of off-color rhymes

Graffiti in room # 9 includes the following, some of which is visible in the photographs:

"Della best in this house"

"Zeke's Birdie Sissler"

"Myrtle Taggart / Centertown" [While Taggart might have been a male patron with a unusual name; more than likely she was one of the many prostitutes who moved from town to town along the railroad.]

"Jack Lyons Bushwhacker / Jack I A of M"

"Elza M Bottom Boonville / Cooper Co Mo"

several cartoon drawings in the style of the 1920s or 1930s

Most of the wallpaper in the hallway is intact. However, some graffiti is visible, including the following:

"Eva Deil"

"Zeke's Birdie Sissler"

"Hattie Logan [Longan]"

Newspapers and circuit court records may prove more helpful.

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"Fritz P_gef_ggle"

Room # 12 is covered with several layers of wallpaper. In a few places where paper has been stripped away, graffiti including a drawings of a bird and male genitalia, and some indecipherable writing, is visible. Most of the wallpaper in this room is intact. Most of the wallpaper in room # 2 is also intact, but the following is visible on the west wall between the windows:

"Baby Birdie Sissler / Zekes Best Girl / City of / Sedalia Mo
Sedalia's red-light district was widely known. In the 1870 census, seven women identified themselves as prostitutes.¹⁶ By 1877, the social evil in Sedalia was notorious enough that the St. Louis Post Dispatch referred to Sedalia as the "Sodom and Gomorrah of Missouri."¹⁷ While prostitution might have been expected during the time when Sedalia was a Federal military post during the Civil War and a railroad boom town during the 1870s, as the city grew and became more settled, prostitution would have been expected either to decrease or to be hidden. Neither happened.

The extent of prostitution in Sedalia during the late nineteenth century is apparent in the city newspapers; more than five hundred women were mentioned by name in the period between 1868 and 1900.¹⁸ Twenty-two of these women identify themselves as prostitutes in the 1900 census.¹⁹ Prostitution continued to flourish, with the complicity of city officials, well into the twentieth century, despite the reform efforts of the Progressive Era. As late as 1940, Life magazine drew nationwide attention to the prostitution in Sedalia when

¹⁶Federal Census, 1870.

¹⁷St. Louis Post Dispatch, cited in Sedalia Democrat, 12 August 1877, without a rebuttal.

¹⁸A thorough reading of the Sedalia Democrat and the Sedalia Bazoo, 1868-1880, and reading of selected issues of the Sedalia Democrat, the Sedalia Bazoo, the Sedalia Capital, and the Sedalia Democrat Sentinel has revealed the names of 500 women. A thorough reading of newspapers 1881-1920 and research of circuit court records 1870-1920 will undoubtedly reveal many more.

¹⁹Federal Census, 1900.

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it recognized Sedalia as having "one of the midland's most notorious red-light districts."²⁰

During the nineteenth century, brothels in Sedalia were not confined to a specific district. Some were near the railroad depots and in the business district on South Ohio Avenue, but they also appeared in residential districts on West Fourth, West Seventh, Sixth Street, near the gas works, and in the southern and western suburbs of the city. Newspaper accounts of the 1890s mention "Happy Hollow" as a site of houses of prostitution; this area is said by local residents to be near the location of what is now Vermont Park, but this location cannot be confirmed.²¹

A few houses, such as the Junction House at 112 Washington, managed first by Lizzie Cook, then by Sallie Hicks and later by Edith Thompson, were well established. Others were associated with saloons or hotels; for example, Otto Nass managed the Cottage Hotel, a well-known brothel near the intersection of North Grand Avenue and the Pacific Railroad tracks. Annie Ingram called her bawdy house on the southwest corner of West Main Street and Osage Avenue the Future Capitol Hotel, anticipating Sedalia's being designated the state capital. When Edith Thompson moved from the Junction House, she called her new establishment the Lindell Hotel.²²

However, most of the brothels during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were above businesses on West Main Street. Newspaper accounts generally do not give specific addresses, referring only to the "notorious dives" on West Main Street. The 1900 Census identifies 202 West Main as the house of Edith Bauman; 204 West Main as the house of Ida Hathaway, Bertha Hathaway, Sadie Samond, and Marguerite Anderson; 209 West Main as the house of Sallie Todd, Nellie Rennison, and Mary Lispert; 215 West Main as the house of

²⁰"Sedalia Mo It Is Taking the Campaign Calmly," Life, 21 October 1940, 42.

²¹Sedalia Daily Bazoo, 25 January 1883, 29 August 1883, 29 November 1883, 23 June 1885, 28 August 1885, 16 September 1890; Sedalia Democrat, 16 February 1878.

²²Sedalia Daily Bazoo, 4 May 1875, 7 May 1883, 8 November 1883, 7 December 1883.

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217 West Main Street Building
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Eunice Hunter, Maud Lyman, and Lila Neff; 219 West Main as the house of Lizzie Jennings and Nellie Lathrop; and 302 West Main as the house of Nellie Hall, Belle Chilcoat, Laura Spangus, Lillie McClanahan, Edith Flint, and Ada Clark. All these women identify themselves as "bawdy house keepers," "boarding house keepers," or "prostitutes."²³ While these buildings are still standing, their exteriors have been altered by blocking in windows, by changing shopfronts, or by removing upper stories, resulting in a loss of integrity. The building at 217 West Main retains a significant level of integrity. In addition, the interiors of other buildings used as brothels lack the graffiti that reveals customers names and attitudes toward prostitution.

Prostitution came to be associated with the entertainment industry in Sedalia, much of which was condemned, especially by the churches. While theater was popular, and Sedalia was able to support two opera houses, distinctions between respectable and not-so-respectable entertainment were made. A city ordinance in the 1870s banned variety shows in saloons, but did little to keep saloon owners and madams from providing music for their patrons.²⁴ Scott Joplin, the ragtime musician and composer, is said by music historian Ed Berlin to have played at the West Main Street brothels of Lottie Wright and Nellie Hall, as did musicians Arthur Marshall and Emmett Cook.²⁵ According to Berlin, black ministers frequently complained about the immorality of the men and women who frequented the Maple Leaf Club and the Black 400 Club on East Main Street.²⁶

The city's ambivalent attitude toward prostitution is reflected in the connection between Sedalia's virulent racism and its

²³Sedalia Daily Bazoo, 8 July 1890; Federal Census, 1900.

²⁴Sedalia Democrat 20 December 1877.

²⁵Ed Berlin, Scott Joplin: King of Ragtime (New York: Oxford, 1994), 13-44 gives background on the ragtime musicians and their haunts, as does Susan Curtis, Dancing to a Black Man's Tune (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 71-88. While both of these sources mention prostitution as a part of Sedalia's underworld, neither examines prostitution thoroughly.

²⁶Berlin, 40-44.

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217 West Main Street Building
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condemnation of prostitution. Most of Sedalia's prostitutes were white, but some, like Lottie Wright and Ada Carroll, consorted with African-American men. Other prostitutes were black, and like Clementine Pyles, regularly served both white and black men. Otto Nass' Cottage Hotel was frequented by both black and white men and women. Local newspapers reflected both the attitudes of the community and of their racist editors in that they denounced the miscegenation with more vehemence than they condemned prostitution.²⁷

Prostitution continued in Sedalia, despite complaints from the citizens, the churches, and the press, because of official complicity. Leading merchants extended credit to prostitutes, local banks arranged mortgages on bawdy houses, and well-known citizens patronized brothels.²⁸ Although many of the houses were located within a block of the City Hall at Second and Osage, they remained open. In July 1890, Mayor Stevens requested those complaining about houses of prostitution on West Main to sign complaints, but he received little response. On July 31, 1890, the Daily Bazoo complained that houses of prostitution and gambling dens were always warned in advance of a raid.²⁹

Further evidence of official complicity is seen in references in local papers which refer to regular payments of fines. Under the established system, a madam and some of her employees appeared in court monthly, often in special session, to pay a predetermined fine; if fines were paid regularly, the house would not be raided.³⁰ For example, the May 4, 1875 Daily Bazoo mentioned one madam and six

²⁷Sedalia Capital, 29 November 1898, Sedalia Daily Bazoo, 1 May 1883, 18 May 1885, 30 July 1890; Sedalia Democrat, 21 April 1873, 10 January 1873, 18 October 1878.

²⁸Chalfant, pp. 28-42.

²⁹Sedalia Daily Bazoo, 8 July 1890, 23 August 1890, 28 August 1890, 30 August 1890, 31 August 1890 details one of Sedalia's periodic attempts to eliminate prostitution. The Sedalia Daily Bazoo 8 August 1885, and 27 August 1885, show an earlier, and equally unsuccessful attempt to clean up Main Street.

³⁰Sedalia Democrat, 8 September 1872.

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prostitutes who "paid their fines, took their departure, and now await the coming of June, 1st, when they can do the same thing over again."³¹ Another reference in 1875 mentioned the "monthly stipend" of \$20 paid by the madam and \$10 paid by each of four employees.³² In 1883, according to the Daily Bazon, Edith Thompson, "tired of paying the city a revenue for conducting a house of ill fame...conceived the plan of opening a hotel"; her "dining room girls," Maggie and Mollie West, were well-known prostitutes.³³ In 1885, the Daily Bazon questioned "why negroes and 'hotel keepers' are allowed to run bagnios unmolested while white women are required to pay a 'license' fine?"³⁴ On April 6, 1897, the Sedalia Capital reported a "special session for their benefit," at which several prostitutes were fined \$10 each; those who did not have the money were given time to raise it. The judge proposed assessing a fine of \$20 each against women who "make a practice of hiding out about fine day."³⁵ The practice of special court sessions was still in effect in 1899, according to local newspapers.³⁶

Perhaps the real reason prostitution was allowed to continue was because the city profited. Prostitutes were consumers who spent money in local shops; they paid taxes on any real estate they owned; and they contributed regularly to the city treasury. If even twenty of Sedalia's many prostitutes paid a monthly fine of \$10 at a "special session," the city could realize \$200 per month, or \$2400 per year.

Women became prostitutes in part because of the social and economic structures of the time. Women were expected to remain chaste until marriage; they were expected to marry; and their husbands were

³¹Sedalia Daily Bazon, 4 May 1875.

³²Sedalia Daily Bazon, 2 March 1875.

³³Sedalia Daily Bazon 7 December 1883.

³⁴Sedalia Daily Bazon, 4 August 1885.

³⁵Sedalia Capital, 21 February 1897, 6 April 1897.

³⁶Sedalia Democrat, 24 September 1899; Sedalia Sentinel, 4 December 1899.

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217 West Main Street Building
Pettis County, Missouri

to provide for them. The woman who "allowed" herself to be seduced and abandoned was viewed as "ruined"; the term itself suggests the extent to which the options marriage and respectability were denied to her. In 1871, the Sedalia Bazoo printed an account of an interview at one of Sedalia's bawdy houses; the women spoke of "broken vows, trust misplaced, seduction, desertion, crime."³⁷

Unmarried women had no real place in nineteenth-century America. Never-married women could remain at home under the care of a father or brother, pitied or scorned as an "old maid." A widowed or deserted woman might return to her family's home with her children, pitied if she were widowed, and scorned if she had been deserted. If living with relatives were neither possible nor tolerable, the women could try to earn a living at the few jobs open to them.³⁸

A single woman might, if she were educated, teach school, but teacher's salaries were low, averaging in Sedalia in 1882 \$40 to \$50 per month for white teachers and \$30 to \$35 per month for African-American teachers.³⁹ Women with little education were left with needlework or laundry, but neither of these jobs paid enough for a woman to support herself or her children. On October 16, 1877, J. West Goodwin, the flamboyant, socially conscious editor of the Sedalia Bazoo, decried the lack of jobs for women and connected this situation to prostitution: "Why then should women be confined to the sewing

³⁷Sedalia Bazoo, 24 July 1871.

³⁸Ruth Rosen, The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America 1900-1918 (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1982) 137-168; Rhonda Chalfant, Down at the Junction: A Study of Madam Lizzie Cook, A Prostitute in Sedalia, Missouri, 1870-1879 (Thesis, University of Missouri, 1994) 63-65; Barbara Meil Hobson, Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition (New York: Basic, 1987) 56-76, 85-109. For more insight into Sedalia's attitude toward "ruined" girls who became prostitutes, see the Sedalia Bazoo, 24 July 1871, 24 May 1872, 30 August 1878; and the Sedalia Democrat, 7 August 1877, 8 August 1877, 12 August 1877, 14 August 1877.

³⁹I. Mac D. Demuth, The History of Pettis County, Missouri, 1882, rpt. (Clinton, MO: The Printery, N.D.) 579-583.

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Pettis County, Missouri

machine or the school room for support? In nine cases out of ten, the avenues they open are strewn with dissatisfied lives and broken hearts. Life turns into apathy and closes in despair. Every hope is smothered, every aspiration crushed back in the bitter fight between penury in honor or shame in luxury. Before them spreads a dreary waste of fruitless toil, or infamy."⁴⁰

Sedalia offered few jobs for women. The Sedalia Bazon hired women as typesetters, and some hotels hired waitresses and maids, but until the early twentieth century, most store clerks and secretaries were male. While Sedalia had a number of factories, few of them employed women; those that did paid little, and vigorously resisted attempts at unionization of workers.⁴¹

Other Sedalia citizens recognized the connection between the lack of jobs for women, poverty, and prostitution. In 1882, several prominent Sedalia women established the Working Women's Home. This facility helped women find jobs (generally as domestics), provided a place to stay during difficult times, and occasionally helped arrange adoptions or foster care for the children of poor women. The Weekly Bazon pointed out, "If there were more Working Women's Homes, there would be fewer houses of prostitution."⁴²

Prostitutes were condemned because they openly flouted the nineteenth-century moral standards which demanded that women stifle their own sexuality and be pure enough to restrain any immoral

⁴⁰Sedalia Daily Bazon, 16 October 1877; Goodwin also commented on poverty and women on 10 April 1877.

⁴¹Lamy's Mfg. Co., which made overalls and jeans, employed 200 men, women and girls in 1898, according to I. MacD. DeMuth, A Feast of Cold Facts (Sedalia: Fisher, 1899), 10-11. Though the company has records concerning the employment of women, the company refuses to release any payroll records. The low wages at Lamy's have long been a point of contention between employees and the company's owners. Efforts to resist unionization at another Sedalia factory, Brown-Evans Mfg. Co., are detailed in B. B. Ihrig, et al, The First One Hundred Years: A History of the City of Sedalia, Missouri, 1860-1960 (1960), 68-70.

⁴²Weekly Bazon, 8 August 1882.

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217 West Main Street Building
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impulses a man might feel. Prostitutes thus were blamed for the failure of a man to exhibit the proper degree of self-control required for the "blameless life." In addition, prostitutes violated the standards of the day when they entered the marketplace as businesswomen. The "separate spheres" concept mandated that women not be involved in business. The woman who sold her sexual favors violated the nineteenth-century understanding that women were either too pure or too ignorant to enter the marketplace as entrepreneurs.⁴³

Prostitutes were further condemned because they represented a danger to respectable women. Although medical records cannot be obtained, newspaper accounts frequently denounce certain prostitutes as having a "loathsome disease," a typical euphemism for syphilis or gonorrhoea. Local gossip recalls that members of some of Sedalia's leading families suffered from sexually transmitted diseases, and the failure of the children of Sedalia's founders to reproduce, either because they did not marry or because they had no children or because their children were sickly and died shortly after birth seems somewhat to confirm some of these suspicions. Although the exact incidence of venereal disease cannot be ascertained, it had to be common, given the number of prostitutes in Sedalia.⁴⁴

Prostitution also contributed significantly to the number of abortions and infanticides. The Sedalia Bazaar, on September 1, 1876, denounced the "ghouls" who under the name of doctors induce late term abortions and "grow fat on their nefarious calling." They apparently made a great deal of money, for the Bazaar noted that they "sport the finest rigs and spend money with a lavish hand."⁴⁵ In the eleven years from 1870 through 1881, twenty-three infanticides or late term

⁴³Chalfant, pp. 40; see also Graham J. Barker-Benfield, The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century America (New York: Harper, 1976), 177-196.

⁴⁴Chalfant, 93-96; Rosen, 51-68. While local gossip may be an unreliable source, some credence must be given, if only because of the persistence of the rumors, and because of the prevalence of prostitution.

⁴⁵Sedalia Bazaar, 1 September 1876.

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abortion were mentioned in local newspapers. In July 1879, the Sedalia Democrat reported that the "finding of dead infants had become so frequent as to illicit no interest." During the same period, adoptive parents were sought for six new-borns that had been abandoned.⁴⁶

Despite the reform efforts of the Progressive Era, prostitution continued to thrive in Sedalia, well into the twentieth century. Arrests of women for "frequenting wine rooms" or "late hours" were made in an attempt to control streetwalking; arrests of couples for "lewd conduct" occurred when the woman's occupation as prostitute could not be verified.⁴⁷ During Prohibition, bootlegging was common, and Sedalia's prostitutes were involved. A raid by federal agents in August 1925 discovered a bootlegger selling and hiding pints of whiskey at the "dance pavilion" managed by Polly Howe, a well-known madam.⁴⁸ Other aspects of Sedalia's underworld were thriving during the 1920s; gambling houses and brothels existed above stores on Main Street.⁴⁹

Although the city's red light district centered itself north of the Missouri Pacific Railroad tracks during the 1940s and 1950s, prostitution remained a part of Sedalia until the early 1970s. Prostitution and the brothels that housed it were condemned by polite society, but were patronized by the men in control of the legal system

⁴⁶Chalfant, 68-69; Sedalia Weekly Times, 8 April 1871, 7 April 1872; Sedalia Weekly Bazaar, 10 October 1882; Sedalia Daily Bazaar, 24 July 1871, 15 September 1873, 9 February 1874, 29 October 1874, 14 December 1874, 15 May 1876, 1 September 1876, 28 September 1880, 13 January 1880, 18 July 1881, Sedalia Democrat, 20 July 1871, 18 April 1872, 28 October 1872, 15 May 1873, 16 June 1873, 14 July 1873, 16 July 1873, 21 July 1874, 2 November 1874, 3 March 1875, 4 May 1875, 20 July 1875, 16 May 1876, 20 July 1877, 11 October 1879; Sedalia Weekly Eagle, 12 August 1879.

⁴⁷Sedalia Democrat-Sentinel, 23 January 1907, 3 February 1907, 5 March 1907.

⁴⁸Sedalia Democrat, 23 August 1925.

⁴⁹Sedalia Democrat 23 July 1925.

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of police and the courts, the church, and the press. The continuation of prostitution reveals the degree to which a double standard of sexual behavior became part of the economic structure of Sedalia. Prostitution provided a certain degree of economic security for women with no other options for employment, while also enriching the city through repeated fines or bribes. The building at 217 West Main, preserved as it is, provides confirmation of Sedalia's reputation as having "one of the midland's most notorious red light districts."⁵⁰

⁵⁰"Sedalia Mo It Is Taking the Campaign Calmly," Life, 21 October 1940, 42.

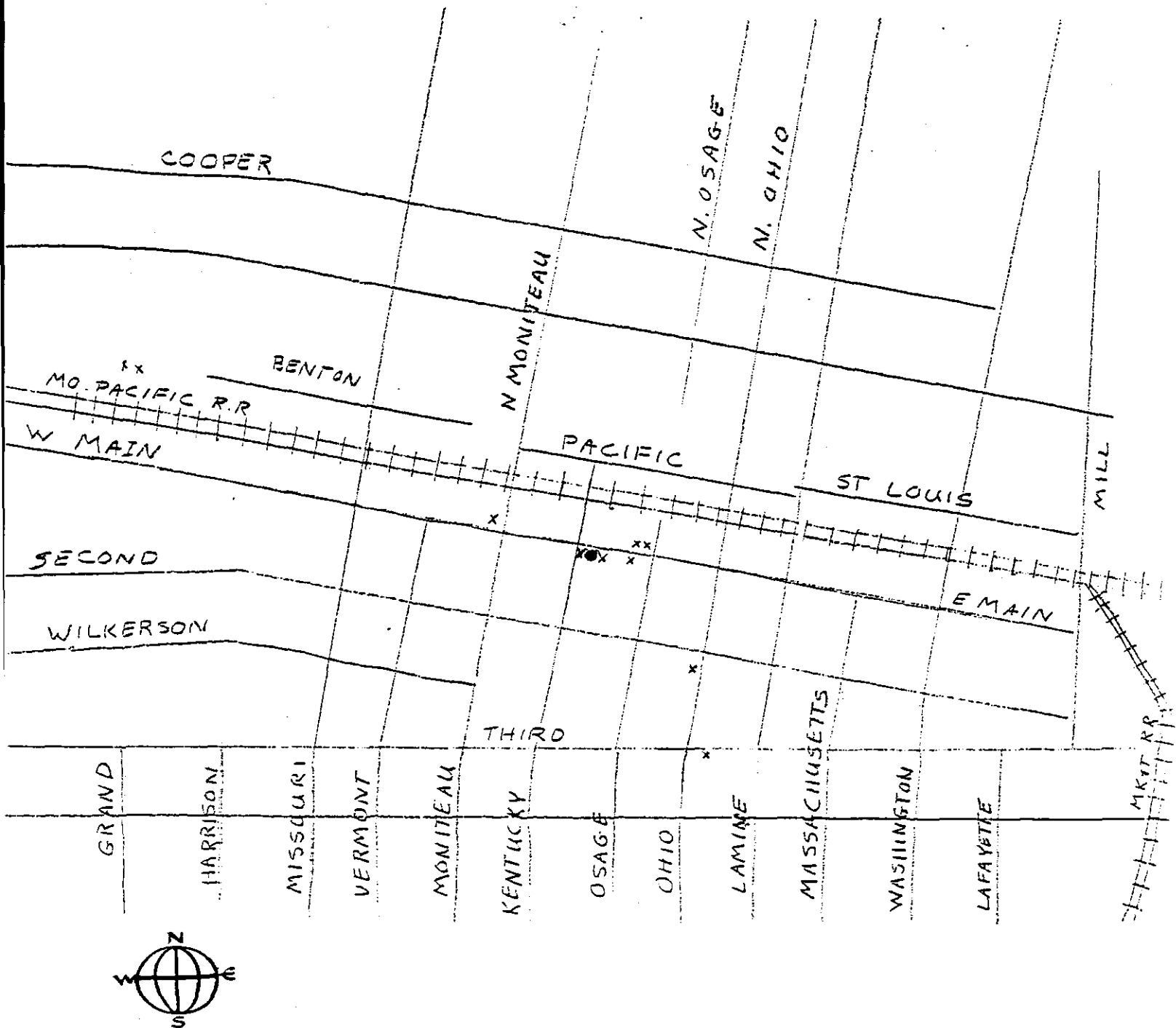
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217 West Main Street Building
Pettis County, Missouri

Map of downtown area of Sedalia, Missouri, showing sites of brothels identified in 1900 Federal Census
217 West Main is indicated by a circle.



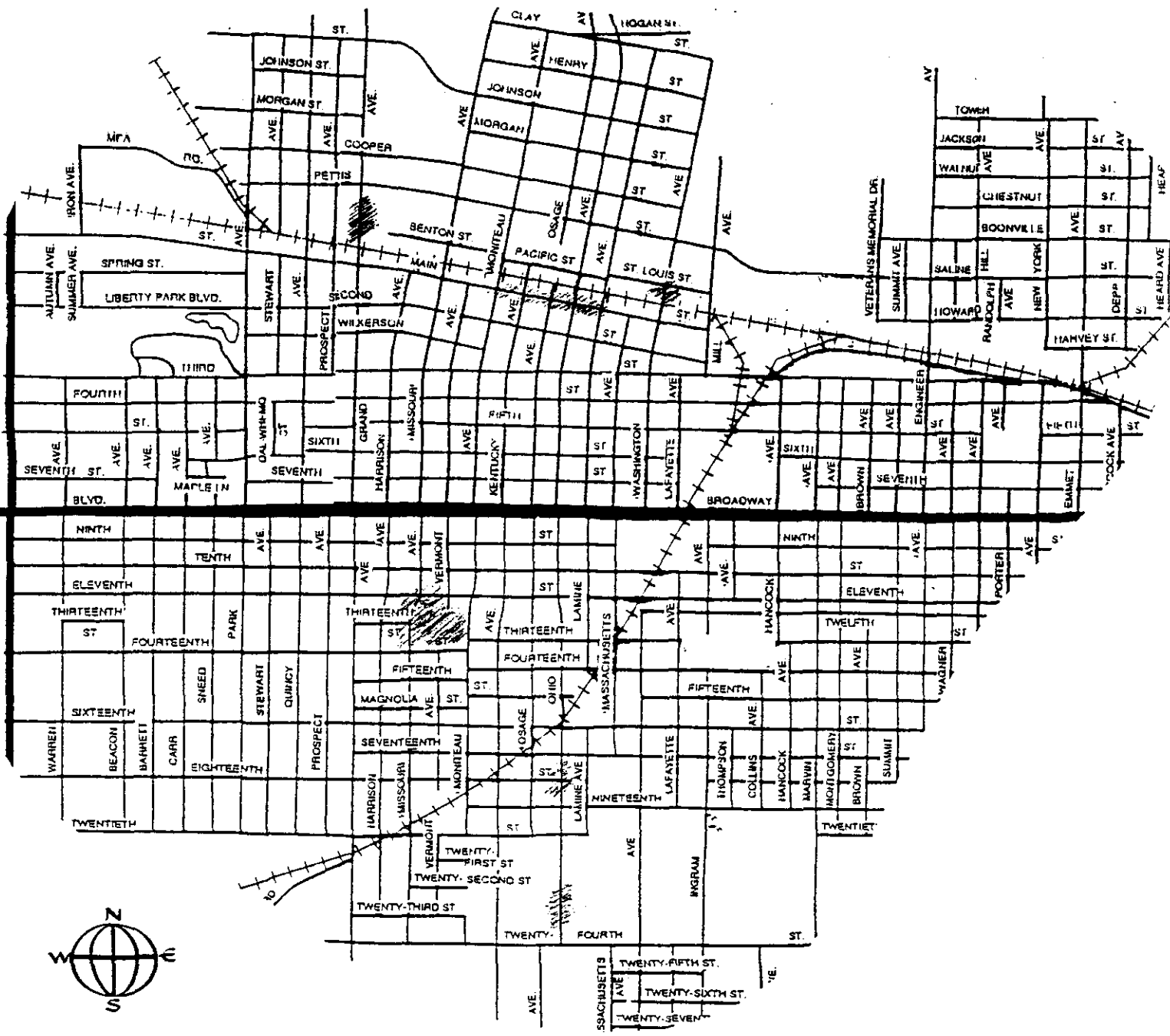
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217 West Main Street Building
Pettis County, Missouri

Map of Sedalia, Missouri, showing sites of brothels, 1870-1910. Shaded areas indicate general vicinity in which brothels were located; newspapers usually only mentioned "in the vicinity of" rather than providing a specific address.



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217 West Main Street Building
Pettis County, MO

Geographical Data:

Verbal Boundary Description: The east one-half of Lot 1 and the south forty-two feet of the west one-half of Lot 1, Block 37, Original Plat of the City of Sedalia, Pettis County, Missouri.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the portion of the city lot which has historically been associated with the building.

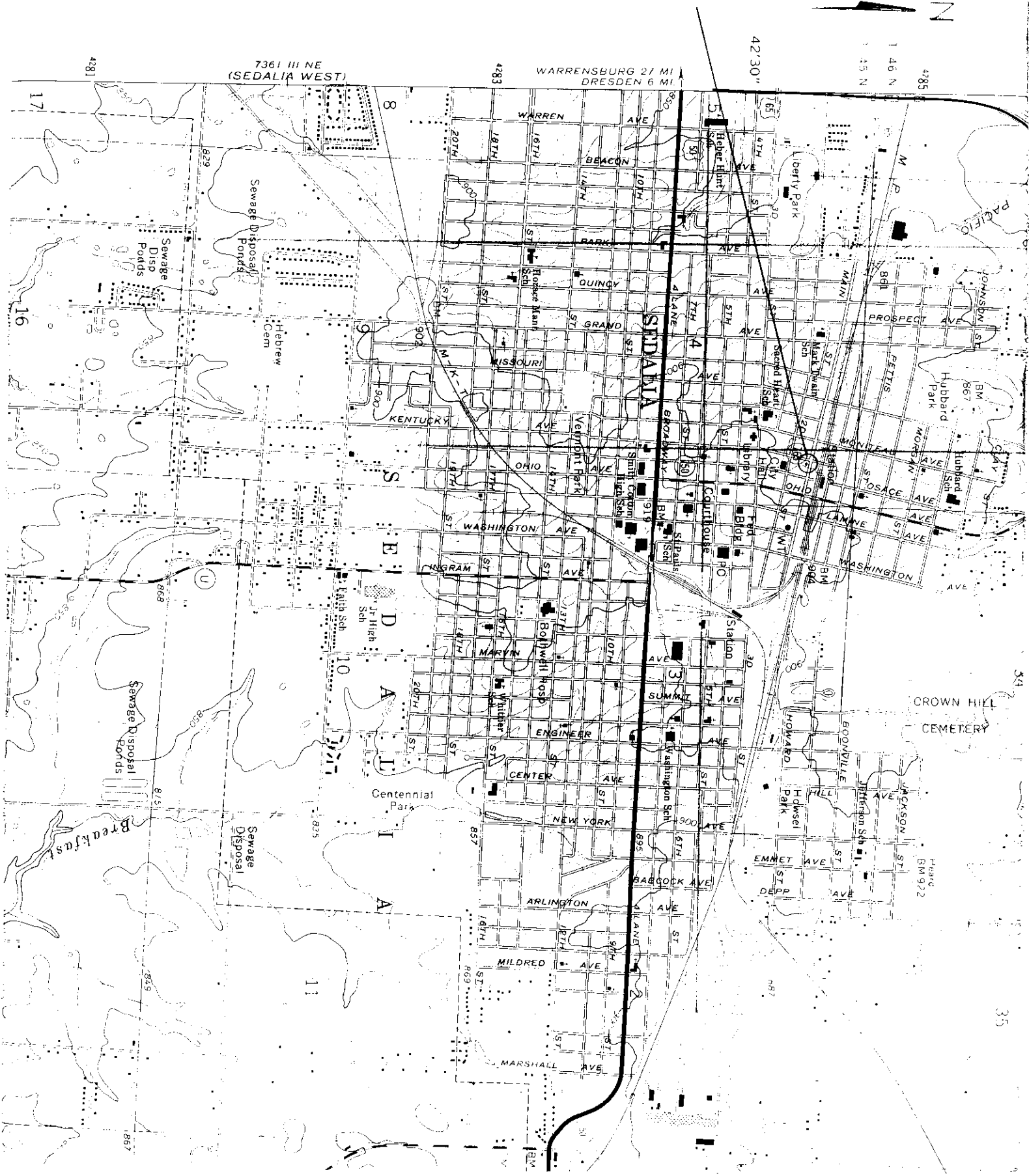
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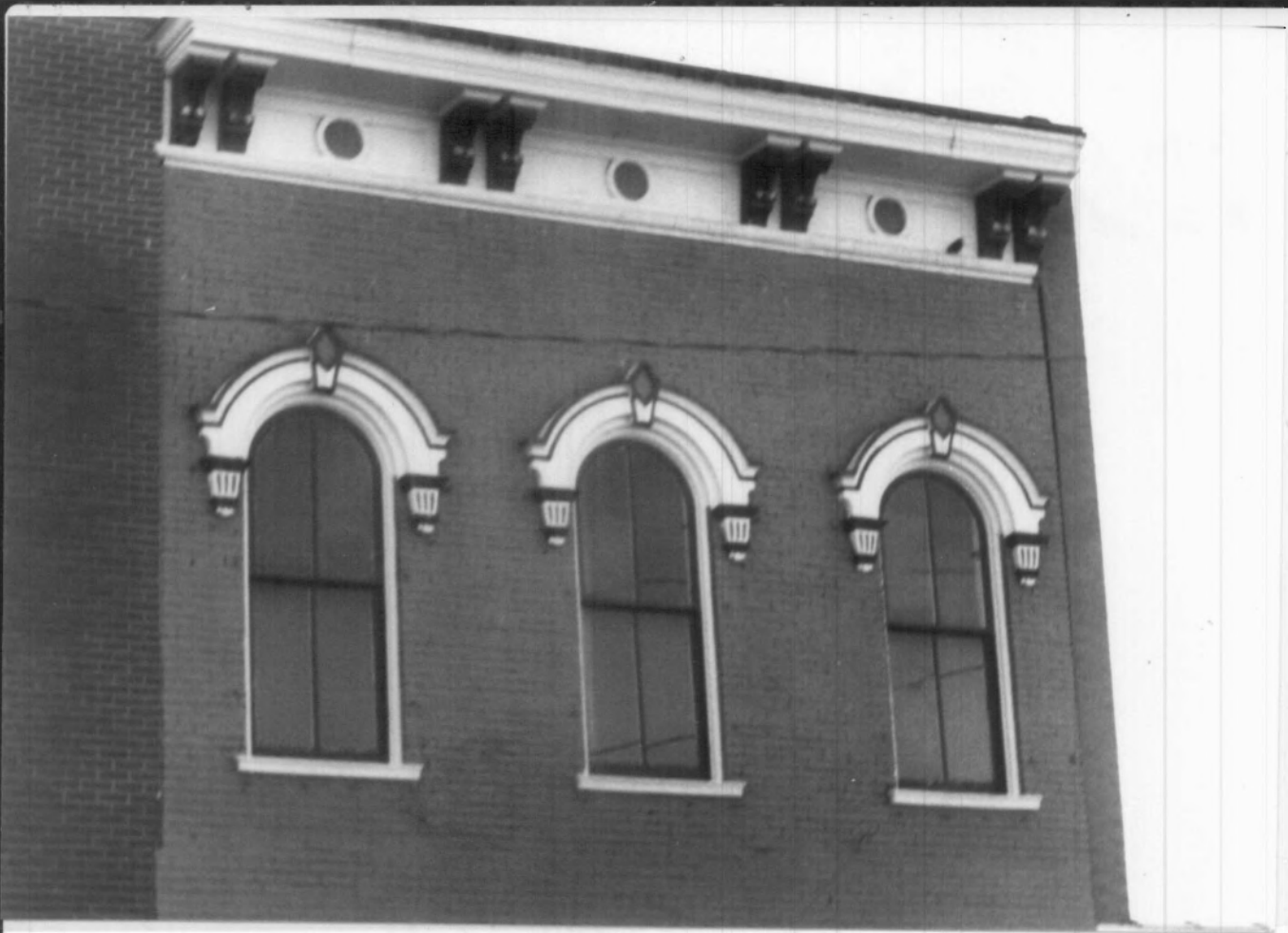
217 West Main Street Building
Sedalia, Pettis County, MO
Rhonda Chalfant and Chester Chalfant
February 1996
Rhonda Chalfant, 619 West 32nd Street, Sedalia, Missouri 65301

- #1. West Main Street elevation, camera facing south
- #2. West Main Street elevation, second story detail, camera facing south
- #3. South Kentucky Avenue elevation, camera facing east
- #4. South Kentucky Avenue elevation, second story detail, camera facing east
- #5. South Kentucky Avenue elevation, alley entrance, camera facing east
- #6. detail of grafitti, Room 8
- #7. detail of grafitti, Room 8
- #8. detail of grafitti, Room 8
- #9. detail of grafitti, Room 9
- #10. detail of grafitti, Room 9

217 WEST MAIN STREET BUILDING
SEDALIA, PETTIS COUNTY, MO
15/479070/4284500













Flas

Mary had a little cat

It followed her to school one day
she was in lots of nasty
play ground with several
boys - what my father
said we left her father

to go on a ship in navy was
with my mother and I
he told me that my mother
was killed she was let in a
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change to one boy

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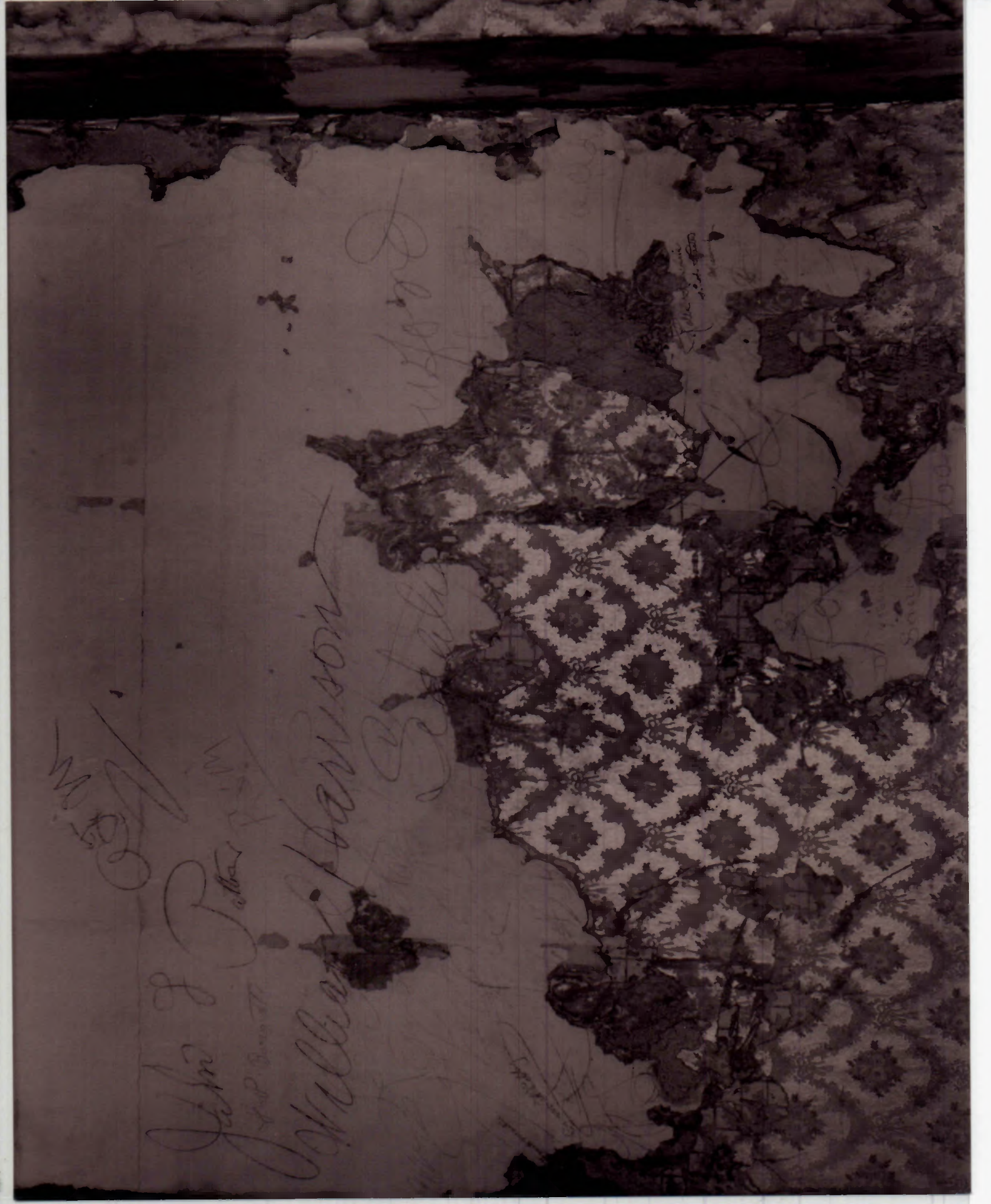
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16
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Ms. A. 9. 2. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

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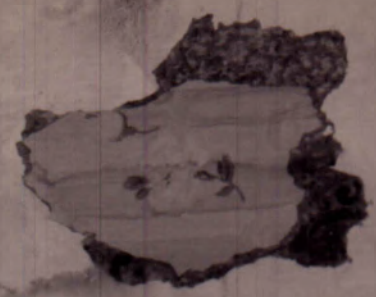
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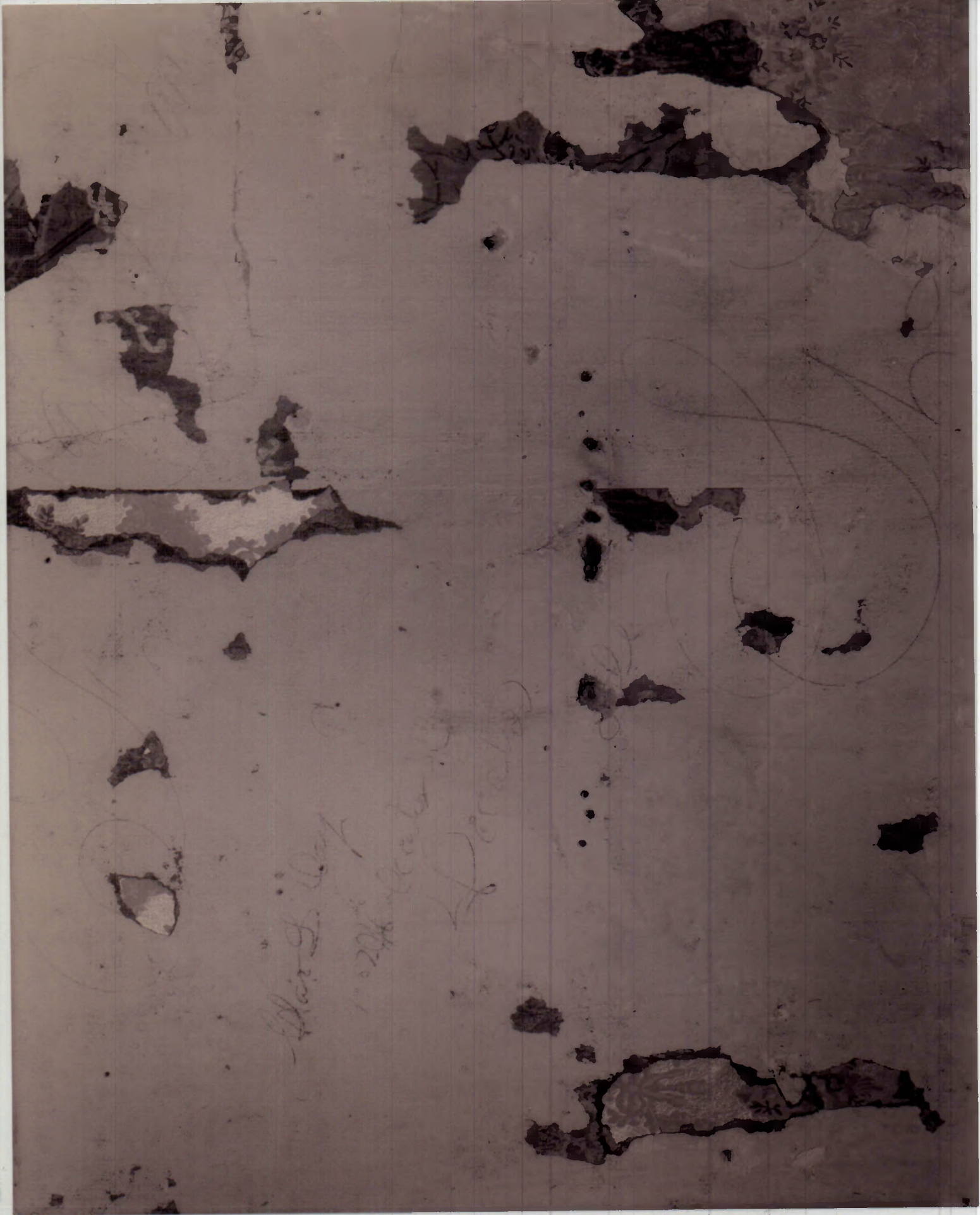
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Winnipeg 060-

July 17, 1901





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[Faint, mostly illegible handwriting at the top of the page, possibly including names like 'John' and 'William']

[A paragraph of handwritten text, starting with 'I was in a boat...' and ending with '...where all is gay and bright']

[A paragraph of handwritten text, starting with 'I saw a man...' and ending with '...and it will ride her plow to hell']

[A line of handwritten text at the bottom, possibly 'Aha ha ha']

[A large, stylized signature or flourish at the bottom right of the page]

The detail of the of Part 2

1870

Wang is the inventor of the
I see the invention of the
I see the invention of the
I see the invention of the

at 500ms

Robertson
Tom Vedd

Rolla Senaick
George Wells

Springfield
Starch

Starch
Starch

Starch
Starch

Starch
Starch

[Faint, illegible handwriting covering most of the page]

Ed. Williamson
Ed. Williamson

23

11

W. R. Miller

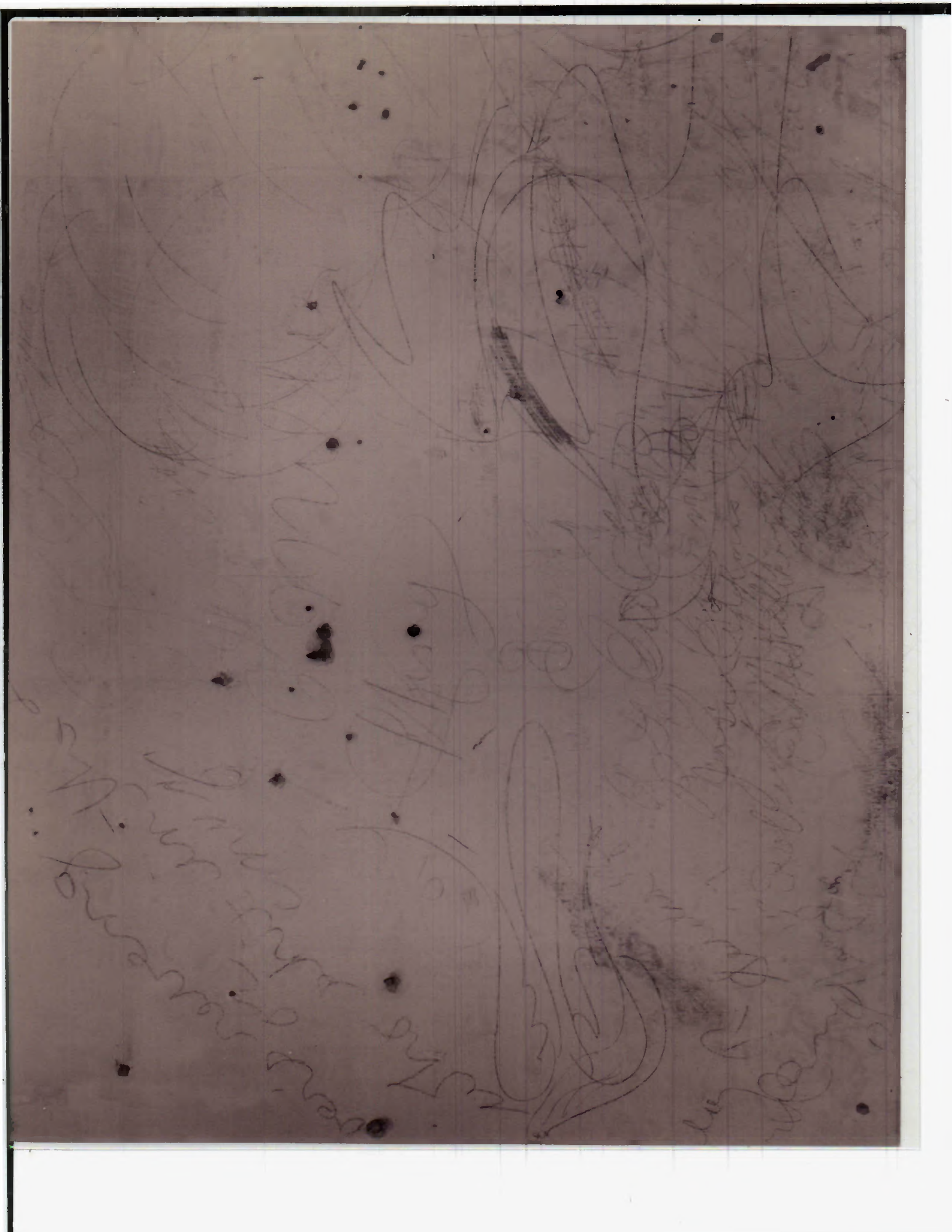
1st Lt. Northrup

William H. Miller

Sedona Ariz

Jan 13 190

[Faint, illegible handwritten text, possibly a letter or receipt]



OK

Remington

mans
to split in the corner part

[Faded handwritten text, possibly including names like 'John' and 'Mary']

and some by across the night
I was in the morning
I was in the morning
I was in the morning
I was in the morning

[Small rectangular stamp or note]

work after
I was in the morning



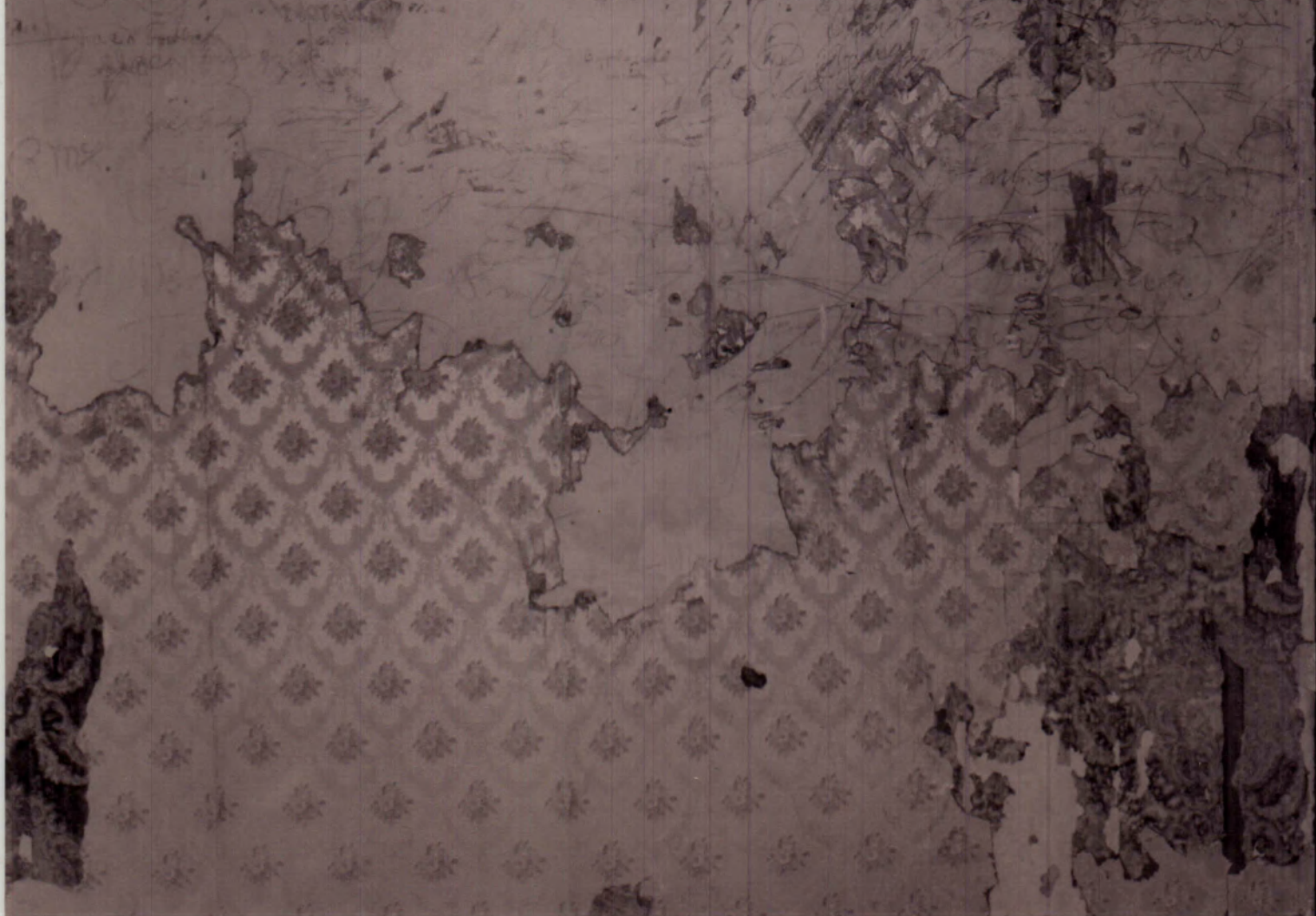
16
Eliza M. Bottom
F. Cooper Pa.
C. Smithson
James Kirk

George

Robertson



Robertson
Tom Todd
Kella Senack
George Wells



Jack Ruby



Handwritten notes and scribbles, including the name "Jack Ruby" written multiple times and the initials "RMK." in the bottom left corner.



PTIZH
PUNTER

to the interior of the
that the...

585