NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)

## 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x' in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

stori	c name	Commer	ce City Hal		<del></del>			
her	name/site	e number <u>l</u>	<u>I/A</u>					
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y or	town _	Commerce	<u> </u>				48.	N/A vicinity
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Name of Property		Scott County, MO County and State				
5. Classification Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)				
		Contributing	Noncontributing			
private	building(s)	1	0	buildings		
public-local	☐ district	0	0	sites		
public-State	☐ site	0	0	structures		
public-Federal	structure	0	0	objects		
	object	1	0	Total		
Name of related multiple prop (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a N/A		Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register  N/A				
6. Function or Use		e de la serie de la companya de la c				
Historic Function (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Fu (Enter categori	nction les from instructions)			
Government: City Hall		Government:	City Hall			
Social: Meeting Hall		Social: Club H	ouse			
Social: Club House						
7. Description Architectural Classification						
(Enter categories from instructions)		<b>Materials</b> (Enter categorie	es from instructions)			
Other: one-room government build	ing	foundation _	brick			
			concrete			
		walls	weatherboard			
		roof	Metal			
		other				
Narrative Description						

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Commerce City Hall	Scott County, MO
Name of Property	County and State
8. Description	The state of the s
Applicable National Register Criteria	
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property	Areas of Significance
for National Register listing.)	(enter categories from instructions)
☑ A Property is associated with events that have made	Politics/Government
a significant contribution to the broad patterns of	
our history.	
	<del></del>
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.	
The Board of the Control of the Charles and th	
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield,	Period of Significance
information important in prehistory or history.	c. 1896-1954
Criteria Considerations	
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
(man x in an mo boxes man apply)	Significant Dates
Property is:	c. 1896
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	9, 1000
☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for	
religious purposes.	
	Significant Persons
B removed from its original location.	(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
<b>-</b>	N/A
C a birthplace or grave.	
	Cultural Affiliation
D a cemetery.	N/A
<b>—</b>	
☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	
F a commemorative property.	Aughlagat/Duilden
	Architect/Builder
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance	Unknown
within the past 50 years.	
Narrative Statement of Significance	
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)	
Service of the servic	See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8
9. Major Bibliographical References	The state of the s
Bibliography	Martin Paritimental and to the Confession of The grant transfer and the state of th
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more con	tinuation sheets.
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Previous documentation on file (NPS):	Primary location of additional data:
preliminary determination of individual listing (36	Chata I listania Danasa satism Office
CFR 67) has been requested	State Historic Preservation Office     □ College
	Other State agency
previously listed in the National Register	☐ Federal agency
previously determined eligible by the National	Local government
Register	☐ University
designated a National Historic Landmark	Other Name of repository:
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey	- -
#	
recorded by Historic American Engineering	
Record #	_
	See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Commerce City Hall Name of Property	Scott County, MO County and State
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of Property less than one acre	
UTM References (Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)	
1 <u>1/6</u> Zone Easting <u>2/8/2/8/8/0</u> 4/1/1/5/0/3/0 Northing	2 / / /// / //// Zone Easting Northing
3 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / Zone Easting Northing	4 / / Zone Easting Northing
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)	
Property Tax No. N/A	
<b>Boundary</b> Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)	
11. Form Prepared By	See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10  Annual Section No. 10
name/title	
street & number P. O. Box 711	
city or town Cape Girardeau, MO	telephone 573-651-3780  state MO zip code 63701
Additional Documentation Submit the following items with the completed form:	State INO Zip code 00701
Continuation Sheets  Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the A Sketch map for historic districts and properties held Photographs: Representative black and white photographs Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any account of the sheet series).	aving large acreage or numerous resources.  The property.
Property Owner	
name/title Dewayne Better, Mayor, Town of Commerce	
street & number P.O. Box 117	telephone
city or town Commerce	state MO zip code 63742
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected in properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amend	to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _	7	Page	1	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

#### Summary

The Commerce City Hall sits in the middle of the village square bounded by Tywappity, Cape Girardeau, Spring and Washington streets in Commerce, Scott County, Missouri. Constructed c. 1896, the small frame building measures 26' x 50' with the primary entrance on the narrow, east façade. The walls are covered in narrow clapboard siding topped by a molded cornice and simple entablature. Vertical board, latching shutters cover all of the original wood sash windows. The building rests on brick and concrete piers and has a metal covered, hipped roof. This simply designed building has survived several floods, but has seen relatively few changes since its construction. The front door opening has been reduced in size and filled-in with a smaller door and siding to match the existing wall covering. Also, some brick piers have been replaced by concrete block and concrete steps at the rear entrance have been removed. The interior retains is open floorplan and wood covered walls and ceiling. The Commerce City Hall is a significant local example of a government building that has survived generations of floods and attempts at demolition to serve as the community's hub of governmental and social activity.

#### Elaboration

The Commerce City Hall sits in the center of a block historically set aside for public space. The square served as the location of the temporary Scott County Courthouse during and just after the Civil War, but had reverted to city use by the time the current city hall was constructed in c. 1896. The nominated building shares the square with a small modern post office, picnic shelter and playground. The square, however, is primarily open and retains much of its historic green space. The city hall faces east with an unobstructed view of the Mississippi River.

The Commerce City Hall is a government building of platform frame construction. The interior has an open floor plan with a stage on the west end and doorways at the center of the east and west walls.

The building sits on raised piers which is an element of the original construction. The open foundation allows for a free flow of air and water under the building had has likely provided some protection from Mississippi River floods. Some of the original brick piers that support the building have been replaced by cement blocks; this replacement is particularly noticeable at the corner posts.

The entrance of the Commerce City Hall faces east. It features a central doorway, flush with the façade. The entrance was altered c. 1950, according to former mayor, Ann

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number	7	Page _	2	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

Huck.<sup>1</sup> The entrance was made smaller, and the large wooden door was replaced by a smaller door due to deterioration. The space surrounding the new door was filled in with wood clapboard siding similar to that cladding the surrounding walls. Two rectangular sash windows with 4/4 panes flank the entrance. Each window has two vertical board shutters with latches. There are four replacement concrete steps with iron handrails leading to the entrance.

The west elevation has a central original door opening and doorframe. Like the east façade, the doorway is flanked by two rectangular sash windows with 4/4 panes. Each window has two vertical board shutters with latches. The steps leading to the west entrance are no longer present. According to former the former mayor, this alteration occurred sometime after 1930.

The north and south elevations consist of the same narrow horizontal weatherboard walls. High water marks from river floods are apparent on the lower weatherboards. Five rectangular sash windows with 4/4 panes, span the north and south elevations. Each window has two vertical board shutters with latches. There was a chimney on the center, south elevation, originally. According to Ann Huck, the deteriorated chimney was removed c. 1950, when gas heat was added to the structure. The conversion of heat sources was due to the prohibitive costs of coal and wood.

The medium pitched hipped, corrugated tin roof has projecting eaves with a molded wood cornice and simple entablature. The roof has not been altered from the original construction.

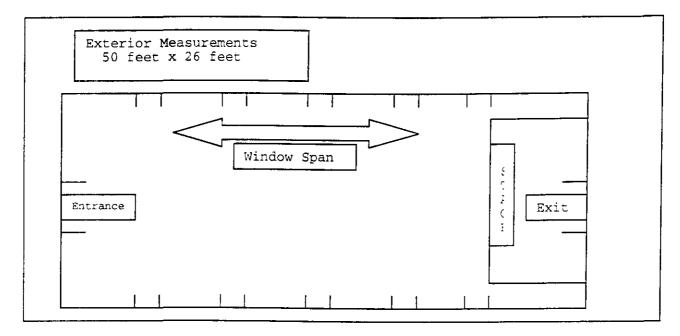
The Commerce City Hall has weathered numerous floods and demolition attempts, but a core of local citizens have fought diligently to maintain it. This building stands in the landscape of a once thriving river community with an unobstructed view of the Mississippi River. Because of numerous floods many of the community's historic buildings have been lost, or moved from their original locations. The Commerce City Hall stands on its original lot and represents the historic resources of a once thriving river community.

Oral Interview, February 8, 2003. Mrs. Ann Huck, Mayor of Commerce, Missouri for 25 years, and resident for over 70 years.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number_	7	Page _	3	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

#### Floor Plan Sketch





## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number_	 Page _	4	Commerce City Hall
	 		Scott County, MO

#### Statement of Significance

Summary: The c. 1896 Commerce City Hall at the center of the village square bordered by Tywappity Street on the east, Cape Girardeau Street on the west, Spring Street on the south, and Washington Street on the north, in Commerce, Scott County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Politics and Government. The Commerce City Hall has continuously played an important role in the civic and cultural development of the community. After construction the Commerce City Hall was the center of public gatherings for voting, city government operations, civic organizations, social clubs, town meetings, theatrical productions, film presentations and music concerts. The Commerce City Hall has been the hub of the community since its construction date, c. 1896. A significant amount of the original fabric is intact despite numerous floods and local relocation and demolition initiatives. The Commerce City Hall has served as the nucleus of community activity for generations, and remains as one of a diminishing number of historic structures in the community. The period of significance starts c. 1896 with the construction of the building and ends in 1954, the arbitrary 50 year cut off date.

### Historical Background and Significance

The first permanent colonial settlement in Commerce was c.1790, and was known as the Tywappity Settlement. It was home to native tribal residents, early traders, slaves, slave owners, free black settlers, entrepreneurs, river craft captains, and river craft personnel. In 1826, French Artist, Charles A. Lesueur sketched "Tyawaptia Bottom" or "Commerce Town" during his travels through the region.<sup>2</sup> The late regional historian, Edison Shrum conjectured that "it might be well to point out here that from the facts brought out . . . on Tywappity, it would appear that the Commerce settlement is one of the oldest, if not actually the oldest, in Southeastern Missouri . [Commerce] has remained throughout its history on the site first occupied by the French settlers in 1788. Hence, except for St. Louis and St. Charles, it would seem to be the oldest town in the state still occupying its original site." Commerce, Missouri is located in the Scott County hills and rests on the floodplain of the Mississippi River.

Edison Shrum, *The History of Scott County, Missouri Up to the Year 1880.* (Scott County: Scott County Historical Society, 1984) p. 73.

Louis Houck, *History of Missouri*. (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1908, Vol. 2, p. 162); Robert Sidney Douglass, *History of Southeast Missouri*. (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912, p. 290); Edison Shurm, *Commerce, MO 200 Years of History*. (Published by the author, 1996) pp. 170-182.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number_	8	Page	5	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

During the Spanish Colonial era, the Scott County region was a post of Cape Girardeau. On December 28, 1821, Scott County was designated as a separate county by the legislature. It was named after John Scott the first congressman for the state of Missouri. By 1822, Scott County had three judges: Andrew Ramsey, Richard Mathew and Thomas Houts. In 1822, the two townships were Moreland and Tywappity.

Commerce, Missouri was "laid out" in February of 1823. It was previously a trading post on the land grant of Thomas W. Waters. The early residents of Commerce included merchants, a hotel keeper, cabinet-makers, and a stoneware manufacturer. There was a tanyard by 1844 and a steam mill by 1856. 4

The Mississippi River has played a significant part in carving the physical characteristics of the community. Commerce has a beautiful unobstructed view of the river, but the absence of a levy has allowed generations of flooding to affect the community. The river floods have devastated businesses, industries, and private citizens who settled along the banks of the river. Many foundations of commercial and residential structures are scattered around the current landscape. Some of the structures have been moved to the hills overlooking the floodplain, and many more have been destroyed by the floods. The Commerce City Hall still stands on site, along with a diminishing number of historic local structures.

Commerce, Missouri was incorporated July 1834, with a municipal government formed under a charter in January, 1857. On January 26, 1864, the legislature moved the Scott County seat from Benton, Missouri to Commerce. The courthouse was relocated to Commerce due to Confederate raids that had prevented court proceedings in Benton. The county was split between Union and Confederate loyalties during the Civil War era. A brick building was completed on the current City Hall site in 1866. In 1878, the Scott County seat was returned to Benton. The courthouse building was constructed hurriedly with uncured bricks that were made in Commerce. Within twenty years the structure was condemned, and was torn down in 1896. It is likely that the

Douglass, 290; Marian M. Ohman, *Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1981, this is not a paginated text, it is in alphabetical order by county.)

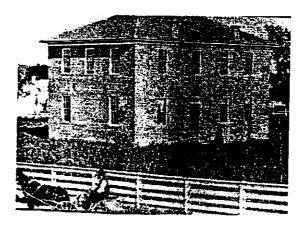
Southeast Weekly Bulletin, "Commerce Once Thriving Missouri City: First River Boat Passed City in Year of 1816," February 10, 1955; from the Commerce, Missouri Bicentennial Speech, Mayor Ann Huck, 1976; Ohman, ibid.

Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri, (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888; reprint Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Ramfire Press, 1955, pp. 352, 353, 462); Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 46. 149.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _	8	Page _	6	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

City Hall was constructed soon after the demolition of the former brick courthouse.



Scott County Courthouse, Commerce, Missouri c. 1870
From Missouri Courthouses, by Marian M. Ohman
Originally scanned from Benton, Missouri Centennial, 1860-1960

Commerce, Missouri experienced an economic boom from 1890-1926 and several of the buildings in the community and area remain from that era. Railroad expansion initiated the economic development with the extension of the Commerce to Morley line. The train ferry was the next development with an extension of the railroad line into Cape Girardeau in 1900.

New manufacturing facilities continued the economic prosperity brought by the railroad. The Post Brothers drainage tile manufacturing operation opened in 1908 and was supported by nearby clay pits. The tiles were used to assist in the drainage of nearby swamplands to the south and southeast of Commerce. Explosives manufacturing also employed many in and around Commerce. In 1907, the Miami Powder Company built a "black powder" explosives plant in Fayville, IL. A ferry connection between Fayville, IL and Commerce allowed residents to cross the river to work. This business was another company that prospered from the newly drained swamplands near Commerce. Explosives were necessary to blast out the cypress stumps that remained after the land was cleared and drained. Aetna Explosives Company took over the plant in 1917 and began manufacturing dynamite. In 1921, the Hercules Explosive Corporation took over operations of the plant. The development of this enterprise came at a high price for many workers that were killed during explosions at the factory.

The influx of funds allowed for the construction of a new city hall around 1896 as well as new houses, manufacturing and institutional buildings. Most reflect a simple frame

William W. Bloss, *The Cairo Bulletin*, "Dynamite Works is Biggest Industry in Southern Illinois," August 12, 1916; Shrum, 194-195.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _	88	Page .	7	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

construction with narrow clapboard siding and hipped roofs similar to the city hall. The 1906 Baptist Church, constructed near the city hall, is similar in layout and material. Other similar buildings, all built around 1900, can be found in nearby towns of Fayville, Illmo and Fornfelt. A new school building constructed in 1915, and several homes were also constructed in brick, possibly using clay from nearby pits.

Commerce has experienced a steady economic decline since 1927. The farm economy that supported most of the regional population was depressed after WWI well into the 1930s. Two major employers, the Post Brothers Tile Manufacturing Company and the explosives plant also both closed in 1927.

Whether in boom times or bust, the Commerce City Hall building has been the social and governmental center of the community since its construction c. 1896. The frame building, the design of which represents the frame construction of the community's boom era (1890-1926), replaced a two story brick courthouse that had been constructed in 1866. The county abandoned the courthouse in the 1870s when the county seat returned to Benton, and the building was used by the city as a gathering place and for city offices. The poor construction of the building and deterioration over several years lead to the demolition of the old courthouse in 1896. It is very likely that the new City Hall was constructed soon after the demolition.

The exact date of the construction and completion of the Commerce City Hall is unknown. The Commerce Dispatch newspaper was sold prior to the construction of the City Hall so no local newspaper reported on its construction. The Benton Newsboy had sporadic reports from Commerce but the editor frequently commented on the lack of news from the town. One entry on June 6, 1896 stated, "If our Commerce correspondent don't sober up and get the news from his town in here more regularly there'll be trouble." The Benton Newsboy editor commented on February 6, 1897, "Evidently our Commerce correspondent dropped through the ice." The historic records support the construction dates of the old courthouse, and its demolition, but the exact building date and builders of the current City Hall continues to be a mystery. Evidence does exist that the Commerce City Hall was built prior to 1902, due to the following "From Commerce" entry in the Scott County Kicker on January 4, 1902, "The Christmas tree at the city hall bore the usual variety of vari-colored fruit." This confirmation that the City Hall was in service in 1902, leaves a six year span between the demolition of the Old Court House and the construction of the Commerce City Hall.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Scott County Democrat, "Commerce Had a Two Room School in 1904," September 6, 1918.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Shrum, 192.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number_	8	Page _	8	Commerce City Hall
			_	Scott County, MO

When completed, the new Commerce City Hall was the physical and social center of the community. The building was constructed in the center of a city block historically set aside for public buildings and green space. The building functioned as a town hall where the needs and plans of the community were discussed by the town council, and local government activities were carried out. Until recently, the building also housed the polling place for area voters. According to former Mayor Huck, the women who ran the elections at the City Hall were willing to transport elderly voters or young mothers to and from their homes. It still shelters the city-wide Commerce Reunion which brings current and former residents to the town center to celebrate the community.

The simple design and open floorplan of the Commerce City also made it ideal for social and public functions. In the 1950s, local resident Ruth Pell, wrote plays for the youth of the community to perform on the stage at the west side of the building. Other plays hosted by the public school and community theatre were also performed on the stage at City Hall. Entertainment actives were not limited to theatrical productions. Local youth referred to the Commerce City Hall as "The Broken Reel" because the film of movies shown in the building had to be constantly spliced to continue the show. The central location has made the building an important resource for people and groups needing a meeting space. The building has historically housed family reunions, bridal and baby showers as well as meetings of local social and community improvement organizations. It has also been a city-wide effort to maintain the building and grounds. Dr. George Ann Huck recalls the summers of 1961 and 1962 when children of the community took their pony to the City Hall square to eat the grass and help with the upkeep of the property.

The Commerce City Hall is not used as often as it was during its heyday in the first half of the 1900s, but it is still a source of community pride. Local residents have consistently fought to save the City Hall from efforts to build a more contemporary community structure. Former Mayor Huck, recalls multiple times that the City Hall structure has been slotted for demolition in order to build a modern metal building, but the preservation efforts of a group of citizens has always prevailed. It is a cherished structure which has served the community for generations. The local citizens are currently pooling efforts to revitalize the City Hall's role as a nucleus of social and civic activity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> From interviews with former mayor, Ann Huck; city council woman, Lois Lee Ramsey; and Dr. George Ann Huck.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _	9	Page	9	Commerce City Hall
				Scott County, MO

#### **Bibliography**

Benton Newsboy, June 6, 1896, and February 6, 1897.

- Douglass, Robert Sidney. *History of Southeast Missouri*. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912.
- Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888; reprint Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Ramfire Press, 1955.
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- Ohman, Marian M. *Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1981.
- Personal communications, oral interviews with Ann Huck, Lois Lee Ramsey and Dr. George Ann Huck, February 2, 2003, June 7, 2004, and September 3, 2004.
- Shrum, Edison. *The History of Scott County, Missouri Up to the Year.* Scott County: Scott County Historical Society, 1984.
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- Southeast Weekly Bulletin, "Commerce Once Thriving Missouri City: First River Boat Passed City in Year of 1816," February 10, 1955.
- Unpublished Speech, Bi-centennial Speech, Mayor Ann Huck, 1976.

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018 (8-86)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

#### **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number_	10/photos_	Page	10	Commerce City Hall
•				Scott County, MO

#### Verbal boundary description:

Tract 29N, Range 14#, Section 19, At the juncture of Lots 49-52, Survey 321. Also described as: At the Commerce, Missouri town square, the City Hall has a northern boundary of 87 feet south of Washington Street; an eastern boundary of 115 feet west of Tywappity Street; a southern boundary of 167 feet north of Spring Street; a western boundary of 115 feet east of Cape Girardeau Street. The formula used to calculate this location included 20 feet of green space around the perimeter of the City Hall.

#### Verbal boundary justification:

The nominated property includes a portion of the parcel historically associated with the building, excluding land one which a park pavilion and modern US Post Office have been constructed.

#### Nomination Prepared By con't:

Editing and revisions by: Tiffany Patterson, Missouri State Historic Preservation Office

P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65109

### Photographic Log:

Commerce City Hall Scott County, Missouri

Photographer: Carla L. Jordan

Date: 10-30-04

Negatives: Located at the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office

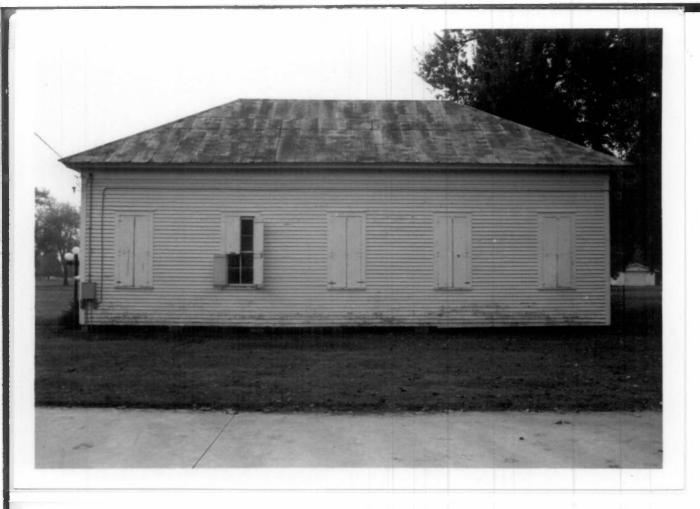
## Log:

- 1. North and east elevations, facing southwest.
- 2. South and east elevations, looking north northwest.
- 3. North elevation, looking south.
- 4. West façade, looking east.
- 5. East façade and grounds, looking west.

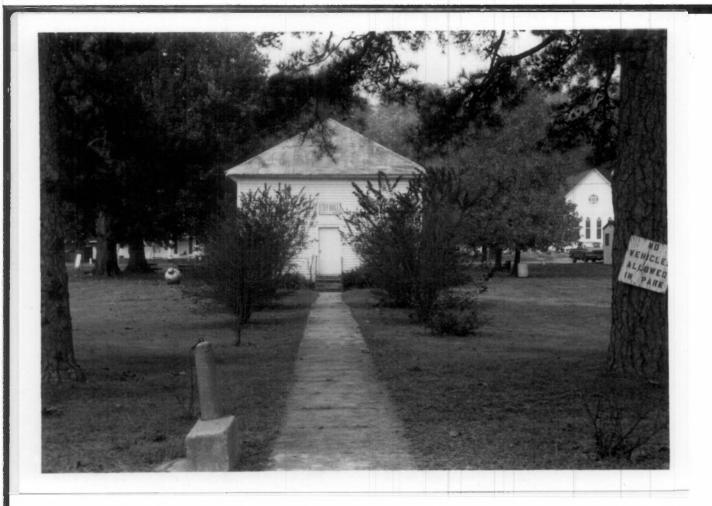












# EXTRA PHOTOS













