

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Dickmann Building

other names/site number Queens Work

2. Location

street & number 3115 South Grand Boulevard [n/a] not for publication

city or town Saint Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 631118

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.)

Claire F. Blackwell 22 Nov. 99
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO
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 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Dickmann Building
Name of Property

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing		Noncontributing		
1		0		buildings
				sites
				structures
				objects
1		0		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

TERRA COTTA

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

Dickmann Building
Name of Property

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1926

Significant Dates

1926

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wedemeyer and Nelson, Architects

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Dickmann Building
Name of Property

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property under 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1]5	[7]4[0]1[2]0	[4]2[7]6[2]3[0]	2	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting			Northing				
3	[]	[]	[]	4	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
													<input type="checkbox"/> 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 Karen Bode Baxter, Architectural Historian and Timothy P. Maloney, Research Associate

organization Karen Bode Baxter, Consultant date August 10, 1999

street & number 5811 Delor Street telephone (314) 353-0593

city or town Saint Louis state Missouri zip code 63109-3108

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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 Bernard Historic Property, LLC

street & number 3109 Grand Boulevard telephone (314) 773-4141

city or town Saint Louis state Missouri zip code 63118

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. 470 et seq.).

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.

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description

SUMMARY

Built in 1926, this six story, Late Gothic Revival, steel framed, concrete deck, rectangular office building has a front façade of white glazed terra cotta and red brick side walls. The Dickmann Building is located on the south side of the alley, one half block south of Arsenal Street (and Tower Grove Park), on the west side of South Grand Boulevard and has an additional alley on the back or north side of the building. This part of South Grand is a major early twentieth century commercial district of primarily two and three story retail/commercial buildings that developed in south Saint Louis to support the nearby, middle class, residential areas, such as those in the Shaw Historic District and the Grand-Oak Hill Neighborhood.

EXTERIOR

Primary Façade (East Elevation)

Primarily an office building, the upper floors of the front facade (and the first bay on each side) are connected visually by the use of the distinctive white glazed terra cotta over the complete wall surface, by their distinctive decorative details and by the symmetrical treatment which divides the front facade into three bays with three simple wood sashed windows within each bay at each of the five upper floor levels. Between each of the upper levels, and below each window, is a Tudor blind arch recessed panels with a heraldic shield of light blue and orange glazed terra cotta. The cornice area is distinguished by the ogee arches above each window and a large arch spanning the central bay around a large letter "D" (for Dickmann) embossed in a decorative cartouche, as well as by the decorative spires at the corners of each bay stretching above the roofline, reminiscent of the Gothic church spires. The verticality of the building is enhanced by the molded pilaster-like divisions between each window that span from the second floor to the top of the parapet which is capped with a white glazed terra cotta coping tiles.

The division between the upper facade and the ground level treatments is accentuated by the projecting band that appears to be a series of dentils, but upon close inspection is a series of glazed terra cotta flowerettes under a crown molded belt course. The first floor has an arcaded corner entry at the north end of the façade opening both onto the sidewalk and toward the alley with the arched openings repeating the flowerette design and framed by raised terra cotta bands (similar to those between upper floor windows) that form rectangular caps to the corner entry with triangular panels of tracery around small cartouche panels. Distinctive decorative cartouches featuring the letter "D" form the keystones at the top of both arched openings, and the arches are spanned by glass paneled transoms and rest on high gray granite plinthes. The arcaded recessed entry with its cross vault ceiling has a large, rectangularly lighted wooden door with a large plate glass window above a black marble kickplate on the north wall. Across the remaining two-thirds of the ground level facade is a retail storefront (with a granite kickplate below the metal-framed display windows and a centrally recessed entry with a ceramic tile floor).

Secondary Elevations

The building is basically rectangular in plan with the sides and rear facades made of common red brick with a raised poured concrete foundation and simple clay tile coping on the parapet in sharp contrast to the white terra cotta primary facade. The walls are punctuated by the fenestration pattern established on the front facade, utilizing steel sashed windows with reinforced glass in a 3x2 pattern and simple concrete sills. The northwest corner of the building is clipped since the alley forms a T at this location and the stairwell/elevator shaft extends continuously above the north wall (alley side) mid-building, breaking up the horizontal continuity of the fenestration pattern with its landing windows at each level.

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description (continued)

Behind the terra-cotta extension that wraps around the north elevation with its arched entry is an additional display window with paired frosted glass transoms stained with the same heraldic shield patterns used on the upper levels of the main façade. The narrow, west (or back) elevation is dominated visually by the metal fire escape staircase with a transomed (2 steel sashed windows) freight door centered between two vertical bays of windows. The rooftop has the remains of an old arbor from the beer garden in front of the elevator/stairwell housing and originally had a hand railing on the top of the parapet with the brackets still in place.

INTERIOR

First Floor, Retail Space

The western two-thirds of the first floor is a retail space that originally extended to the back of the building. Although the back portion has been partitioned off as an office space for a different tenant, the retail space has been retained at the front of the building. It is a simple, open room, which retains its pressed tin ceiling. The interior walls, which were originally plastered now have the brick exposed, but the cast iron columns are still visible on the interior and the display window and recessed entry with the granite kickplate appear to be original.

First Floor, Lobby/Hallway

The lobby/hallway to the offices runs along the north side (alley side) of the building from the arched entry with its small vestibule. This hallway extends back and takes a jog around the pair of elevators to the rear stairwell.

The vestibule projects halfway into the arched entry opening. And is created between the exterior and interior doorways with the paneled sidelights and inner doorway spanned by an arched transom that mirrors the transoms on the exterior arches and with the base of this transom at the ceiling height of the vestibule. The vestibule features a two colored, geometric design, terrazzo floor with a high black marble baseboard and beaded molding strips that form a decorative pattern around the light in its ceiling.

The terrazzo floor pattern continues the length of the hallway with black marble baseboards. In addition, the ceiling in the hallway is framed by a decorative cove molding featuring acanthus leaves above dentil molding. A stylized egg and dart molding strip on the ceiling surrounds the cross-hatched central, beaded molding strip panel that runs the length of the hallway ceiling. A wave molding strip divides the arched transom above the doorway (with stained or painted glass decorative details) and continues around the lobby. The front bay of the side wall in the lobby hallway has a transom with a pair of frosted glass fixed panes (stained or painted with heraldic shields) above a large plate glass window. The remaining hallway windows, positioned in the same line as the transom, are pairs of simple steel sashed windows with raised molded panels between the pair of windows and with each pair flanked by a flat plaster pilaster which disguises the steel structural framing. On the south wall opposite these windows, the pilaster pattern is repeated with the wall sections broken up by a pair of decorative raised molded panels in each bay.

Stairwell and Elevator Lobbies

On the north side of the back hallway, mid-building, is the elevator and stairwell, which service the upper level offices. In addition to its own exterior door into the alley, it can be accessed directly from the front hallway/lobby. In the first floor entry to the stairwell/elevator, the coved ceiling, molding patterns, raised molding panels, and terrazzo floor patterns match those in the front hall/lobby. The staircase has cast iron railings with a rectilinear pattern in the balustrade and

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Description (continued)

decorative urns on the square newel post caps with simple pipe railings on the walled areas of the combination open/closed staircase. Although the first floor stairwell lobby was more elaborately detailed, basic decorative details are common with all upper levels in their separate stairwell and elevator lobbies, most notably terrazzo floors, black marble baseboards, white marble wainscoting, the staircase railings and the gray marble stair treads with black marble risers.

Upper Level Offices

The office spaces on the upper levels have been altered drastically over the years, including the removal of what appears to have been a central hallway, which also had a terrazzo floor. Some of the upper level spaces have been re-divided with acoustical dropped ceilings and numerous partition walls while other levels are basically large open spaces. Over 50 years ago, in 1946 and 1947, the new owners, Queens Work, spent over \$20,000 making interior alterations, and many of the office spaces were remodeled at that time, probably removing the central hallway at that time.

ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

The building has been the victim of deferred maintenance for many years, but the exterior of the building retains a high degree of historical integrity. On the interior, it has several areas where there is broken or missing pieces of the glazed terra cotta and some of the marble wainscoting is damaged. A building permits point to alterations to the front door, which may explain the incongruity of the vestibule which extends into the arched corner entry with a separate ceiling, but the door appears to be original (maybe moved out from the interior doorway). It is difficult to be sure since the decorative elements closely match the remaining lobby and entry area and, besides, is not noticeable except upon close inspection since it is recessed within the arched corner entry. It appears that the front windows have been replaced with simple sashed, wooden windows but indications are from remaining side windows on the south front bay windows that these closely replicate the original windows, which were also simple sashed wooden windows. All of the other windows appear to be original steel sashed windows with reinforcing wire glass.

Although most of the interior office areas have been modified several times over the years to accommodate the needs of various tenants, the public areas retain most of their original architectural elements, including the entry and lobby/hall, the stairwell, and the elevator lobbies. The only alteration to the front hallway and lobby area appears to be the ceiling lights and decorative wall sconces and the application of ¼ inch sheetrock on the walls over the original plaster walls in an effort to make cosmetic repairs. The sheetrock is separated from the plaster discretely by the application of an additional strip of molding (whether or not it is original to the design has not been determined). The back hall has been widened to provide access to an office located behind the retail store on the south side of the building, but this alteration was done discreetly by removing the original wall between two pilasters (around steel columns) and retaining the floor and ceiling decorative treatments. On some of the upper levels the marble wainscoting in the stairwell or elevator lobbies has been painted and some pieces may be missing. The terrazzo floors in the elevator lobby of some upper levels have been covered in carpet and, to meet modern fire codes, partitions have been constructed to completely separate the stairwell and elevator lobbies from the main office areas. The elevator has a steel door without any glass, indicating that it may be a replacement elevator box.

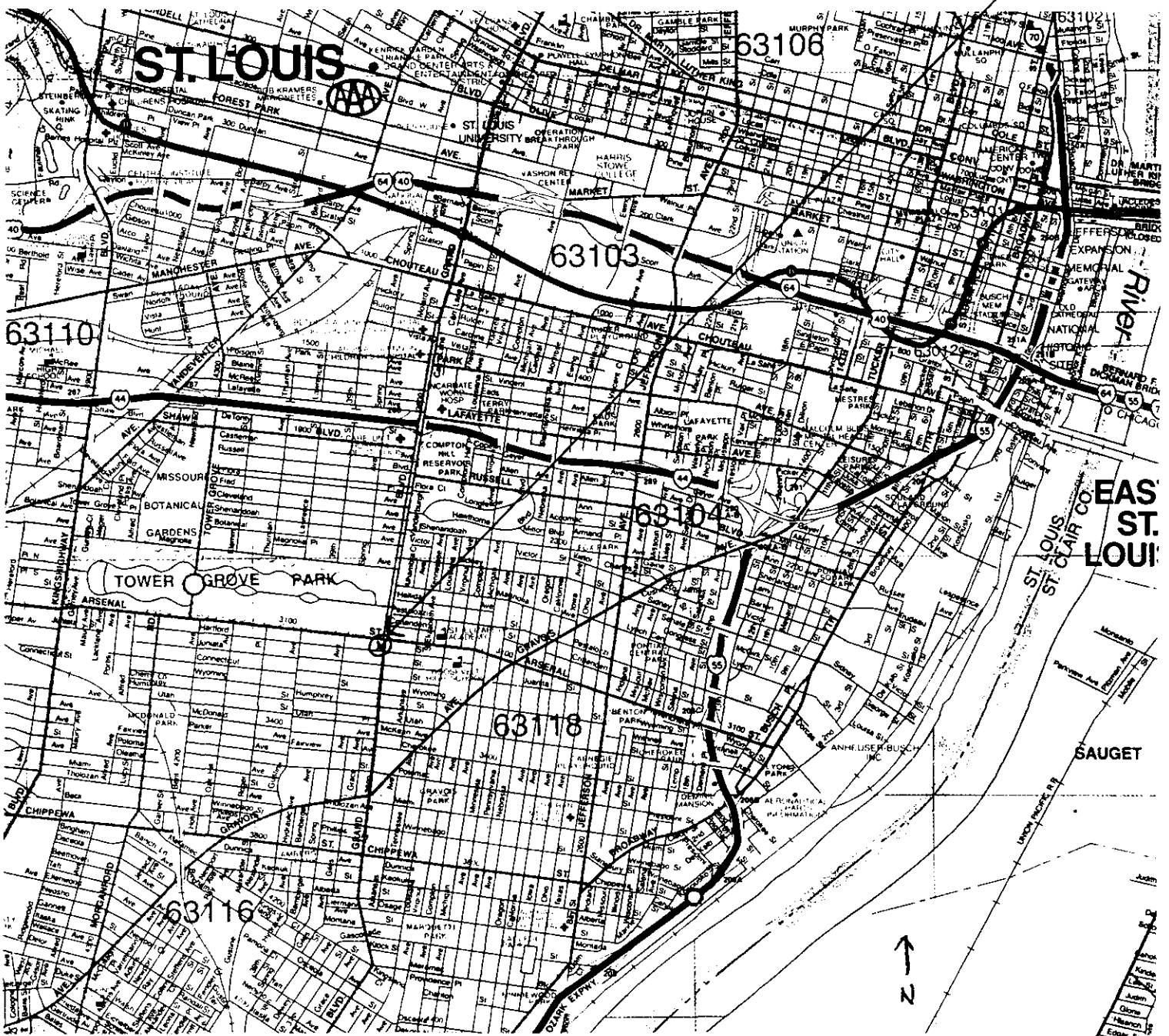
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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of City of St. Louis, MO
Locating Property



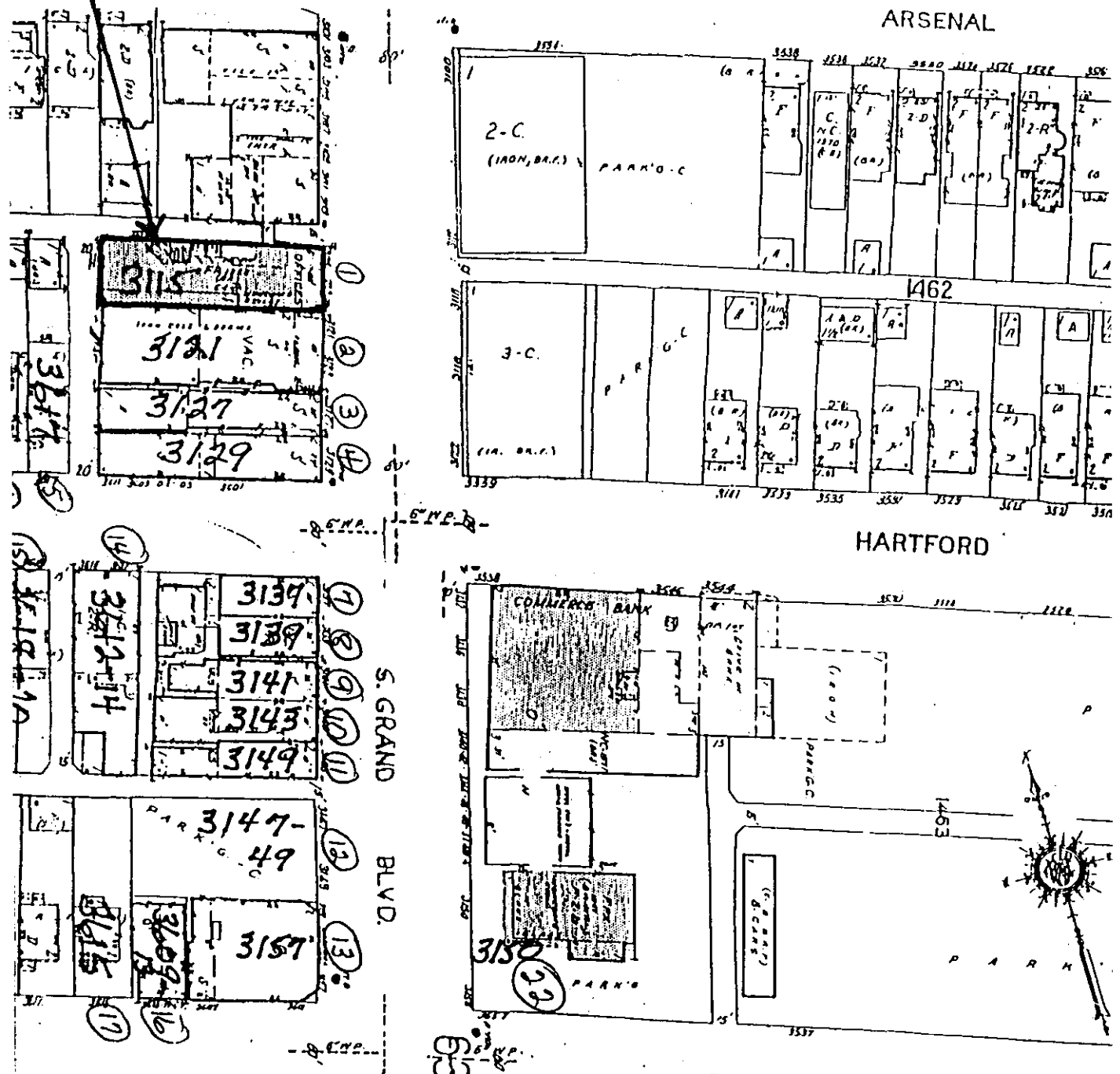
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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Site Plan of Property



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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Dickmann Building at 3115 South Grand Boulevard, Saint Louis, [Independent City] Missouri is significant under Criterion C, Architecture both for its architectural importance in south Saint Louis and for its association with the architectural firm of Wedemeyer and Nelson.

SUMMARY

Commissioned by Bernard Dickmann, an important political figure in twentieth century Saint Louis, and built in 1926, the Dickmann Building is significant as an excellent and unique example of Late Gothic Revival design, as well as the dominating visual feature in the commercial district along South Grand. It is one of the most important buildings in the South Grand commercial area south of Tower Grove Park, a fact documented by the Missouri Historical Society's recently published book: *Where We Live, A Guide to the Saint Louis Communities*.¹ It is also important as one of the few known, extant designs of Wedemeyer and Nelson, Architects, an important, early twentieth-century, architectural firm in Saint Louis.² The Dickmann building is also noted for its association with Bernard "Barnie" Dickmann who began his long political career in the city of Saint Louis as its mayor during the Great Depression, only four years after his office building, bearing his name, was finished on South Grand.

BUILDING HISTORY

Built in 1926³ during the early twentieth century building boom along South Grand that accompanied the residential building boom in the Shaw Historic District and Grand-Oak Hill neighborhood, the Dickmann Building is located only one-half block south of Arsenal Street, which borders Tower Grove Park (A National Historic Landmark). This expansion into the area followed the extension of the Union Depot Railroad's electric trolley line westward along Arsenal Street, making the area more accessible and attractive to middle-class Saint Louisans.⁴ During the 1920s, when the Dickmann Building was completed, South Grand Boulevard was a young, flourishing business district characterized by one to three story commercial buildings with first floor storefronts built compactly along the public sidewalks either side of the street and surrounded by residential neighborhoods that patronized these nearby shops. The Dickmann Building actually replaced an earlier two-story building on this site, but only a few other commercial buildings built during the first two decades of the twentieth century were replaced with second-generation commercial buildings, except for other major components in the district, such as the public library at 3305 South Grand.⁵ Despite a decline beginning in the 1960s, the South Grand business district has recently experienced a revitalization and the Dickmann Building, as one of the largest buildings in the area, continues to make a significant contribution to the architecture of the neighborhood, especially as the revitalization of the area comes at the cost of some of the historic buildings, including the entire block directly across the street from the Dickmann Building (the east side of the 3100 block of South Grand Blvd).

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Dickmann Building has always contributed to the area by providing office space in the neighborhood, originally for a number of physicians and dentists as well as the office space for the Knight Drug Company, the Builders Engineering Company, and a number of architectural and investment firms, with a beauty parlor on the first floor.⁶ For at least some of this time through the 1930s, the Joseph F. Dickmann Real Estate Company (founded by Bernard Dickmann's father and then run by Bernard Dickmann⁷) also maintained its offices in the building.⁸ Local folklore states that the Dickmann building provided discreet access to the adjacent building which reputedly housed a speakeasy upstairs during Prohibition, although this information is extremely difficult to verify. The steel framework for the rooftop arbor (which is known to have been used as a beer garden at least in recent years) got a supplemental building permit in March 1926, just two months after the main building permit had been issued, which might indicate the existence of a speakeasy during Prohibition.⁹ Queens Work (which had been one of the early tenants in the building and later moved out) purchased the building in 1946 and converted it into its office for its adjacent printing plant,¹⁰ completing major interior renovations in 1946 and 1947¹¹ when the upper floor office spaces were probably modified to eliminate the central hallways and office partitions. By 1970, the building was sold to the New Apostolic Church, which once again leased the office space to multiple tenants, as have subsequent owners, retaining the retail space on the first floor with offices upstairs.¹²

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally the Dickmann Building is noteworthy for its Late Gothic Revival design with its front façade of white glazed terra-cotta tiles, a material and a style not frequently used in Saint Louis on smaller scale commercial building designs. The imposing six story office building is one of the rare examples of the Late Gothic Revival style used on office buildings in Saint Louis (and the only known example in the south half of the city), a style usually identified with educational and religious buildings, not commercial buildings. The use of glazed terra cotta had been popularized after the Saint Louis World's Fair in 1904 as an alternative material that would better resist the staining caused by the heavy air pollution in the city, but few buildings outside of the downtown business district utilized this material for the complete façade and this is one of the best examples of glazed terra cotta facades that can be found today in the south part of the city and one of the few in the Grand Boulevard business district. Coupling the use of this stark white glazed terra cotta with the elaborately detailed Late Gothic Revival style produced an office building that visually rises above the bustle and grime of the street with its strong vertical divisions of the upper façade that even stretch above the parapet with its decorative spires. The Dickmann Building is distinguished from its neighboring buildings by its architectural design that incorporated a studied symmetry to the towering white façade. In addition, the design focuses upon its predominant use as an office building rather than as a retail building (which normally focuses upon the first floor storefront) by minimizing the retail storefront visually with a large, dominating, arched entry to the office lobby and by wrapping the upper façade (with its white glazed terra cotta treatment and Late Gothic Revival design) around the first bay of each side. This focuses more attention upon the office characteristics by expanding the visual area with its regular repetition of sashed windows,

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

especially when contrasting its white terra-cotta to the red brick of the remaining walls. In addition, the symbolic sense of reverence and awe implied in the use of the Late Gothic Revival style reminiscent of large cathedrals in Europe as well as in the use of heraldic shields as decorative details emphasizes the importance of the Dickmann Building. The use of more expensive materials (terra cotta, terrazzo, granite and marble) as well as elaborate decorative details (the gothic blind arch panels with the heraldic shields between the upper floor windows, the elaborate cartouches with Dickmann's initial, the series of flowerette medallions, the bands of three-dimensional molding around the arches and windows, and the arcaded entry) help distinguish this building as a significant and unusual architectural design in south Saint Louis' early twentieth century commercial development.

In addition, the Dickmann Building, visually anchors the northern end of the largest commercial district in south Saint Louis, an area that extends approximately one mile along South Grand Boulevard from its intersection with Arsenal Street south to Chippewa Street. While Tower Grove Park (a National Historic Landmark) forms a visual barrier on the north end of this commercial area at the intersection of Arsenal and South Grand, the six story Dickmann Building is the tallest visual element in the streetscape, only a half block south of this intersection. It is one of the highest elevations in the city from its rooftop, which commands an excellent panoramic vista of metropolitan Saint Louis. The office building anchors the visual entrance at the north end of the South Grand business district just as the large, Art-Deco style Southside National Bank at the corner of South Grand Boulevard and Gravois Avenue anchors the south end of the business district. With its white terra-cotta, Late Gothic Revival style façade, the Dickmann Building stands out in stark contrast to the smaller (one to three story), simpler, red brick, commercial buildings in scale, style, and color—making it the most significant building at the north end of this commercial area.

WEDEMEYER AND NELSON, ARCHITECTS

Wedemeyer and Nelson, Architects, which designed the Dickmann Building, was an important early twentieth century architectural firm in Saint Louis, primarily known for its designs and prominence in north Saint Louis.¹³ It was probably through Wedemeyer's association with the north side business community¹⁴ and Dickmann's strong political support among the north side Irish community,¹⁵ that he and Dickmann first associated with one another. The firm, established in 1894 by William Wedemeyer, was joined by Albert L. Nelson in 1919.¹⁶ After Nelson left the firm, Wedemeyer's son, Wesley William Wedemeyer, joined his father to form the firm Wedemeyer and Sons in 1932.¹⁷ Its successor firm still exists today under the name Wedemeyer-Cernick-Corrubia and is as successful as its progenitor.¹⁸ The firm of Wedemeyer and Nelson designed numerous movie theaters in the Saint Louis area and they also designed the North Side Young Men's Christian Association, a major building at 3100 North Grand Boulevard. The firm also designed the Casa Loma Ballroom (3354 Iowa, 2715-2729 Cherokee),¹⁹ the last ballroom in Saint Louis still in operation and itself a good example of a simplified Art-Deco style in Saint Louis that was originally built in 1926 and rebuilt in 1940 after an extensive fire.²⁰ William Wedemeyer was on the Saint Louis Planning Commission from 1920-1930, which attempted to guide development in Saint Louis and reorganized some aspects of the existing street layout of the city (with major street thoroughfares, widening major streets such as Olive and renaming Morgan Street as Delmar Boulevard, and planning the layout for other new streets, plazas and boulevards).²¹ Today, only a few of the early designs by Wedemeyer and Nelson can be identified as still extant in the Saint Louis area since their records and drawings have suffered through years of disuse²²—the Dickmann Building is one of the most impressive known examples of their work prior to 1932.

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

BERNARD DICKMANN

The Dickmann Building is further known, beyond its architectural significance to the area, through its association with Bernard Dickmann (1888-1971), the former mayor of Saint Louis, who had the building constructed and for whom it was named. After serving as a gunnery sergeant in World War One, Bernard Dickmann returned to his home in Saint Louis to pursue his business (a real estate firm and an investment firm) and his civic interests. Dickmann became the first Democrat to become mayor of Saint Louis in 24 years when he won the 1932 election. After his second term as mayor, which ended in 1941, Dickmann continued to contribute to the Saint Louis community through his term as Postmaster of Saint Louis, a position he filled from 1943-1958, and then as director of the newly created Saint Louis City Department of Welfare from 1959-1961. He was also a member of the Missouri Constitutional Congress from 1941-1943 and one of the four United States Inspectors General for Civilian Defense during World War Two. As a private citizen, Dickmann headed the March of Dimes drive for over thirty years and was the president of the Real Estate Board of Saint Louis.²³

During his two terms as mayor, Dickmann instituted many programs that had a significant impact on the Saint Louis area. Dickmann played an instrumental role in the founding of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, including taking the lead in the bond drive to raise the portion of the funds the city had to contribute to the project. Dickmann was also essential in ensuring that the federal government would support the project with federal funds. He oversaw further construction projects in the city during the Great Depression, including the Homer G. Philips Hospital (the largest hospital for African-Americans in the United States at the time and a building that is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and Malcolm Bliss Memorial Health Center as well as the completion of the Civil Courts Building and Kiel Auditorium were completed. Within the city government, Dickmann started the first public housing project, replaced the patronage system with a merit based system for city jobs, placed public health workers in both public and parochial schools, and passed the Standard Milk Ordinance. Besides all of these accomplishments, Dickmann also directed the passage of the Anti-Smoke Ordinance. The ordinance eliminated the "high noon blackouts" that occasionally occurred by outlawing the cheap coal that was commonly used as a source of fuel in both homes and industries. The ordinance changed Saint Louis's air quality from one of the dirtiest to one of the best in the country at that time. The change was so dramatic that Saint Louis's Anti-Smoke Ordinance became a model for many of the cities around the country.²⁴ Besides the obvious health benefits, the cleaner environment also helped to protect many of the buildings in the city and indirectly contributed to the unique white terra-cotta front of the Dickmann Building by preventing smoke and smog in the air from staining the façade to a grey or even a black surface.

CONCLUSION

Throughout its history, the Dickmann Building has been an integral part of the South Grand Boulevard business district as one of the largest commercial buildings in the area, but it especially significant for its architectural value to the area. The 1926 building designed by the firm of Wedemeyer and Nelson visually dominates the north entrance to the business district. It does so not only through its size, but also because of its style. Both its Late-Gothic Revival Style and the white terra cotta façade represent unusual elements in the Saint Louis area and contribute to the architectural diversity not only of the neighborhood, but also to the city as a whole.

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

ENDNOTES

¹ Tim Fox, ed., *Where We Live, A Guide to St. Louis Communities*, Introduction by Eric Sandweiss, Saint Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1995, 101-102.

² "William Wedemeyer," *Who's Who in North St. Louis*, n.p., 1925, p. 23.

³ City Block 2108. Building Plans/City Block Cards, Microfilm Room, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴ Fox, *Where We Live*, p. 100.

⁵ Landmarks Association of St. Louis, *Architectural Survey of S. Grand Blvd. Architects and Dates*, May 1992 [map]; "Fire Insurance Map of Saint Louis, Missouri," New York: Sanborn Map Company, corrected to 1951, Vol. 9, p. 63.; Toft, Carolyn Hewes, *Saint Louis: Landmarks and Historic Districts*, Saint Louis: Landmarks Association of Saint Louis, 1988.

⁶ *Gould's Saint Louis (Missouri) City Directory*. Saint Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Company, Publishers, 1928, p. 868; 1929, p. 1885; 1930, p. 1867; 1931, p. 1805; 1932, p. 1574; 1933, pp. 1542-1543; 1935, p. 1638; 1936, p. 1936; 1937, p. 1659; 1938, p. 1603; 1939, p. 1667; 1940, p. 1671; 1941, p. 1682; 1942, p. 1835; 1943, p. 1639; 1945, p. 1747; 1947, p. 1820; 1952, p. 211; *Polk-Gould St. Louis Directory*, Saint Louis: Polk Gould Directory Company, Publishers, 1926, p. 617; 1927, p. 2957.

⁷ Bernard Dickmann, Envelopes 18-20, Vertical File, Mercantile Library Association, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁸ *Gould's Saint Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1928-1952; *Polk-Gould St. Louis Directory*, 1926-1927.

⁹ City Block 2108.

¹⁰ *Gould's Saint Louis (Missouri) City Directory*, 1928-1946.

¹¹ City Block 2108; Fox, *Where We Live*, pp. 101-102.

¹² Fox, *Where We Live*, pp. 101-102.

¹³ "William Wedemeyer Dies; Retired St. Louis Architect," *Saint Louis Post Dispatch*, 17 January 1962, clipping in Esley Hamilton's Private Collection, Saint Louis.

¹⁴ "William Wedemeyer," *Who's Who in North St. Louis*, p. 23.

¹⁵ "Bernard F. Dickmann Dies: Former Mayor," *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 10, 1971, clipping in *Necrologies. Vol. 28 [scrapbook]*, p. 191 at the Missouri Historical Society Library, Saint Louis.

¹⁶ "William Wedemeyer," *Who's Who in North St. Louis*, p. 23.

¹⁷ Gill McCune, "Wesley William Wedemeyer, A.I.A.," *The Saint Louis Story*, clipping in Esley Hamilton's Private Collection, Saint Louis.

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Dickmann Building
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

¹⁸Mike Bauer (principal in Wedemeyer-Cernick-Corrubia) interview by Karen Bode Baxter on 10 March 1999; McCune, "Wesley William Wedemeyer, A.I.A.;" George McCue, *The Building Art in Saint Louis: Two Centuries: A guide to Architecture of the City and its Metropolitan Region*, Saint Louis: Knight Publishing Company, sponsored by the Saint Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1981, pp. 63, 91, 161.

¹⁹"William Wedemeyer," *Who's Who in North Saint Louis*, p.23.

²⁰Cinderella Dance Palace; Casa Loma Ballroom, 3353 Iowa, 2715-2729 Cherokee Inventory Form, part of Esley Hamilton, *Historic Building Survey: Art Deco and the International Style, Saint Louis and Saint Louis County, Missouri*, 1987, located at the Missouri Cultural Resource Inventory, State Historic Preservation Office, Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

²¹"William Wedemeyer," *Who's Who in North Saint Louis*, p23.

²²Bauer interview.

²³Mercantile Library, Vertical File, Bernard Dickmann, Envelopes 18-20; Missouri Historical Society, Biography Scrapbook Vol. 1, "Dickmann," p 128.

²⁴Missouri Historical Society *West End Word*, Vol. 16, # 24 p3, 12/17/87, Missouri Historical Society, *Necrologies*, Vol. 28, p 190-191; Missouri Historical Society Vertical File, Bernard Francis Dickmann; Mercantile Library, Vertical File, Bernard Dickmann, Envelopes 18-20.

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 10 of Tower Grove Heights Amended Subdivision, City Block 2102 of the City of St. Louis.

Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description. Except for public sidewalks and a small area behind the building at the back alley, the building encompasses the entire lot.

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Dickmann Building
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Photo Log

Photographer: Karen Bode Baxter
February 1999

Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

- Photo #1: Exterior, east façade, facing west
- Photo #2: Exterior, east façade and portion of north elevation looking southwest down Grand Blvd.
- Photo #3: Exterior, detail of upper portion of south wall and east facade, looking northwest
- Photo #4: Exterior, north and west elevations, facing southeast
- Photo #5: Exterior, detail of upper portion of west and south elevations, looking northeast
- Photo #6: Exterior, detail of first floor storefront and main entry, looking southwest
- Photo #7: Exterior, detail of terra cotta arch and "D" cartouche on north end, looking up and south
- Photo #8: Interior, lobby/hallway facing east toward main entry
- Photo #9: Interior, lobby/hallway looking west down hallway toward elevators
- Photo #10: Interior, stairwell/lobby looking up and southeast from first floor near exterior doorway

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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