

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Emerson Electric Company Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 2012-18 Washington Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town St. Louis _____ vicinity of congressional district

state Missouri code 29 county St. Louis City code 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Aljer Properties Partnership

street & number 1325 Washington Avenue

city, town St. Louis _____ vicinity of state Missouri 63103

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis City Hall

street & number 1200 Market Street

city, town St. Louis _____ vicinity of state Missouri 63103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Missouri State Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1986 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Missouri Department of Natural Resources

city, town P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City state Missouri 65102

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Constructed in 1920, the Emerson Electric Company Building is an eight story reinforced concrete factory faced with brick located at 2012-18 Washington Avenue, several blocks west of St. Louis' wholesale and manufacturing district. Both the primary (north, photo #1) and east (photos ##1 & 2) elevations are articulated with piers and spandrels sheathed in buff brick. The building remains virtually unaltered from its original appearance (cf. photos ##1 & 4).

Eight story piers fashioned into slender double pilasters define six bays in the primary facade facing Washington Avenue (photo #1). At each story, narrow spandrels faced with buff brick in raised panels and trimmed with stone string courses span the bays. Large multi-light metal sash windows fill the rectangular areas formed by the intersection of piers and spandrels. Elongated brick quoins embellish the end piers.

At the first story, identical, round arched entrances at each end of the facade are set with keystones. The entrances are vaulted, heightening the impression of mass and strength. Brick and stone face the deep intrados of the arches. At the extreme west end of the facade, there is a smaller entrance with a stone surround featuring a shaped lintel above the opening.

Fine brick pilasters subdivide the first story bays. Above the first story, stone medallions and guttae ornament the spandrels. Stone string courses border the spandrels.

The east elevation is similar to the primary facade (photos ##1 & 2). Piers again divide the elevation, this time into eight bays joined by unornamented, brick sheathed spandrels. The end bays, trisected by narrow brick pilasters, are surmounted by pediments ornamented with disks. A stone coped parapet crowns the six inner bays. As on the primary facade, multi-light metal sash windows fill the pier and spandrel framework.

The west elevation (photo #3) contains a light well necessitated at the time of construction in 1920 by the presence of an adjacent building (photo #4); multi-light windows line the light well. In this elevation, unlike the north and east elevations, the concrete framing is exposed. Brick fills the concrete frame. What appears to be a ninth story on the three southernmost bays of the west elevation (photo #3, bays to the right of the light well) is actually a holding tank for the sprinkler system.

The south elevation is six bays wide and reveals the concrete framework, as on the west (photo #3). Large rectangular areas formed by the piers and spandrels are filled with multi-light metal sash windows as on the north and east elevations.

The interior of the building is unpartitioned. As illustrated in photos ## 5 & 6, mushroom capital columns, decreasing from a diameter of approximately 32" at the first story to a diameter of approximately 18" at the eighth story, support the multi-story factory while allowing light to penetrate to the innermost areas of the building. Skylights above the top story (photo #5) provide additional interior illumination.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1920 ~~Builder~~ Architect Albert B. Groves, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Emerson Electric Company Building qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C and is significant in the following area: ARCHITECTURE: Designed in 1920 by Architect Albert B. Groves, this eight story building is a good representative example of 1920's factory construction in St. Louis. The building features a state of the art reinforced concrete structural system and an exterior that embodies the St. Louis tradition of fine masonry facades here expressed in a modern interpretation of classical Revival references.

Background:

The Emerson Electric Company was founded in St. Louis in 1890 as a three man operation and named after Judge John Wesley Emerson its first president. Originally, the company produced electric fans, small electric motors, electric lighting, and railway specialties. By 1903, Emerson Electric had outgrown its small quarters in the central business district and moved to a six story factory (razed) at 2020 Washington Avenue.¹

During the early years of the 20th century, the growth of the electric industry was nothing short of spectacular. Electric products, once novelties developed into necessities for American consumers and businesses. Demand for electric products soared. Emerson Electric, while continuing to produce and perfect its line of electric fans, also pioneered the design and development of electric motors for household, commercial, and industrial application. Among the company's early successes were the development of forced air central heating, motorized dental equipment, electric hair dryers ("able to dry the heaviest suit of hair in ten minutes"), motorized sewing machines and electric pianos.²

As remarkable as the growth of American industry had been prior to World War I, post-War industrialization, including the growth of the electric industry, was virtually without limits.³ In 1920, at the brink of a long period of expansion and product innovation, Emerson Electric again found it necessary to augment its manufacturing facilities and commissioned architect Groves to design a new factory at 2012-18 Washington adjacent to and east of its existing building. The company remained at this location until 1938 when it moved to a 162 acre site in St. Louis County. The building subsequently housed a variety of concerns including, for some twenty-five years, The Sporting News.

Architectural Context:

Washington Avenue, during the last three decades of the 19th century through the 1920's, was the focal point for St. Louis' wholesale and manufacturing trade. Initially confined to a small area at the east end of the Avenue, these business concerns migrated west overcoming the figurative barrier of 12th Street at the turn of the century and ultimately forming a long, rather linear "district" that extended well beyond 18th Street.

During the approximately fifty years in which Washington Avenue predominated as St. Louis' wholesale and manufacturing center, the street became a "showcase" for local architectural talent. Many of the factory and loft buildings erected were designed by

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prestigious, locally prominent architectural firms and were of exceptional quality. (Approximately a dozen have been individually listed in the National Register.)

A maturing and development of design occurred with the geographic and chronological progression of buildings along Washington Avenue. Traditional St. Louis building practices using brick and stone facades articulated in historic styles gradually moved toward a less ornamented expression in the spirit of Chicago school, functionalist designs; earlier, richly ornamented structures were followed by simpler, more restrained buildings. An increased emphasis on functional efficiency, a by-product of 20th century industrialization⁴, was reflected in the later Washington Avenue buildings. In particular, advances in structural systems, i.e., reinforced concrete flat-slab framing, allowed abundant light and air to reach deep interiors unobstructed by low-hanging girders and beams.⁵ Increasingly, greater portions of building exteriors were allocated to windows.

Groves' buildings were representative of the general trend in the architectural development of Washington Avenue. Very early, Groves exhibited a preference for streamlined, subtly ornamented facades suggestive of late Chicago School buildings. Albert Groves, singularly connected with the development of Washington Avenue, began his career in St. Louis in 1891 as the junior partner in the firm of Grable, Weber, and Groves. In 1898 he formed a partnership with Weber and from 1905 until his death in 1925 he practiced alone. Although credited with a wide variety of buildings including residences, hotels, commercial buildings, and some eighteen churches, he is locally reknowned for his expertise in factory design. Chief among his more important factory buildings are the eleven factories and the eight story office building ("The White House" now razed) that he designed for the Brown Shoe Company:

Mr. Groves has erected buildings in St. Louis to the value of over thirty million dollars. He was the designer of most of the wholesale buildings on Washington Avenue from Fourteenth to Twenty-first Street and now has charge of the erection of new buildings in the same section which will cost a million dollars or more.⁶

Groves' mastery of the principles of factory design is also evidenced by an article he published on the subject in The American Architect in 1918.

Typical of Groves' early work is his 1907 St. Louis Drygoodsman's Building at Washington and 16th Street which, while still echoing traditional design modes is sheathed in sparsely ornamented brick and is suggestive of the reductive designs that followed. During the teens, he designed a series of buildings (not all of which are on Washington Ave.) which he clad in cream colored glazed terra cotta and in which he began to narrow piers and spandrels and enlarge window area proportionately. In the 1920 Emerson Electric Building, once at the western end of the Washington Avenue district and now isolated by demolition and new construction, Groves achieved a design that marks the end point in the use of historic styles. Historic references, reinterpreted in the context of the 1920's, can be seen in the building's brick quoining and panelling, the classical round arched, deeply vaulted entrances and the pilaster-like piers. In keeping with his earlier work, the overall effect is subdued and streamlined. Following accepted

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principles of modern factory design, Groves utilized reinforced concrete flat-slab construction. Largely experimental during the first decade of the 20th century, reinforced concrete construction was by the 1920's a standard, widely used method of construction. This structural framework in conjunction with the large window areas and roof top skylights allowed light and air to enter and circulate freely throughout the building (photos #5 & 6). Although the building proved in later years as it withstood nearby fires to be quite fireproof, Groves' design included a sprinkler system with a roof-top water holding tank supported by auxilliary reinforced concrete beams.

In St. Louis, the bulk of development was complete by the 1920's. Already, Washington Avenue and nearby businesses were beginning to relocate to suburban sites. Of nearby factories constructed during the 1920's, what remains is utilitarian and is not comparable to the Emerson building's combination of functionally efficient design and architecturally sophisticated, streamlined exterior.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Snead, William Scott, Emerson Electric Company, (The Newcomen Society: New York), 1965, pp. 10-16.
2. Ibid.
3. "St. Louis--the Electrical Center," Greater St. Louis, vol. 2, March 1921, pp. 4-5.
4. See, e.g., "The Architectural Treatment of Utilitarian Structures," Architecture, vol. 38, Sept. 1918, p. 238; Helme, Frank J., "Architectural Expression in Concrete," The Architectural Forum, vol. 34, Jan. 1921, p. 11.
5. Condit, Carl W., American Building Art: The Twentieth Century, (Oxford University Press: New York), 1961, p. 168.
6. The Centennial History of Missouri, vol. 5, (S. J. Clark Publishing Co.: St. Louis), 1921, p. 543.

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Granite City, Ill.-Mo.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	115	741301010	4279640
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property includes the Emerson Electric Company Building and parcel of land historically associated with the building. AKA 2012-20 Washington Avenue, CB 2005, fronting 149' 4-3/4" on the SL of Washington by a depth south of 150'; bounded on the east by a line parallel to and 80' west of the west line of 20th Street.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: 1. Deborah B. Wafer

organization: na date: April 1986

street & number: 4425 Laclede Place telephone: (314) 652-3135

city or town: St. Louis state: Missouri zip: 63108

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Wayne E. Gross

for Frederick A. Brunner, Ph.D., P.E., Director, Department of Natural Resources, and title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/29/86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet EMERSON ELECTRIC Item number 9 Page 1

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"The Architectural Treatment of Utilitarian Structures," Architecture, vol. 38,
September 1918, p. 238.

The Centennial History of Missouri, vol. 5, S. J. Clark Publishing Co., St. Louis,
1921, p. 543.

Condit, Carl W., American Building, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, pp. 243-45.

Condit, Carl W., American Building Art: The Twentieth Century, Oxford University Press,
New York, 1961, pp. 166-70.

Helme, Frank J., "Architectural Expression in Concrete," The Architectural Forum,
vol. 34, January 1921, p. 11.

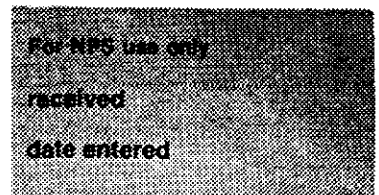
Siegel, Arthur, Ed., Chicago's Famous Buildings, University of Chicago Press, Chicago,
1965, pp. 13-22.

"St. Louis--the Electrical Center," Greater St. Louis, vol. 2, March 1921, pp. 4-5.

Snead, William Scott, Emerson Electric Company, The Newcomen Society, New York,
1965, pp. 10-16.

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2. James M. Denny
Chief, Survey & Registration
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
9th Floor, Jefferson Building
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
Date: August 18, 1986
Telephone: 314/751-5376

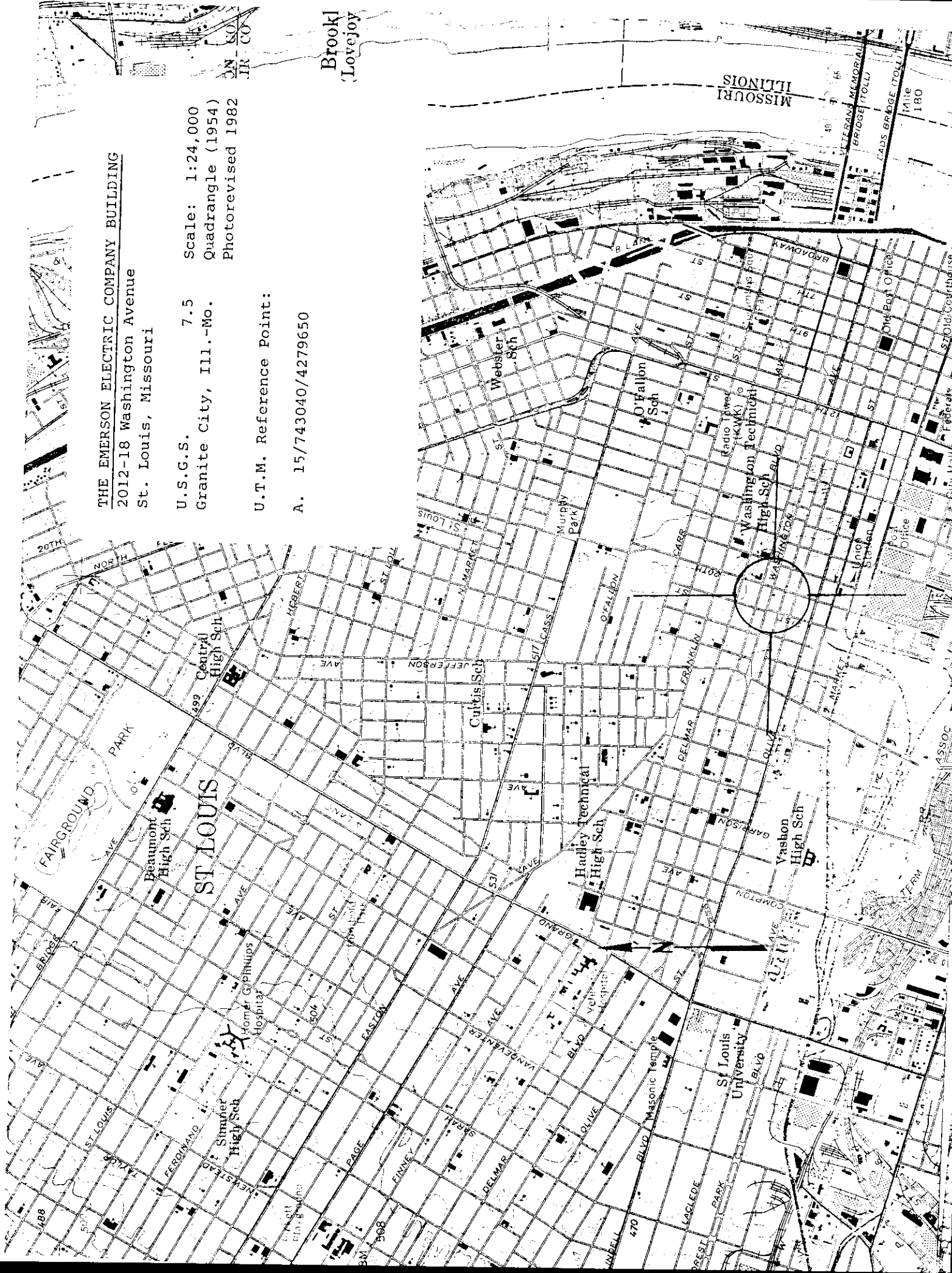
THE EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING
2012-18 Washington Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri

U.S.G.S. 7.5
Granite City, Ill.-Mo.
Photorevised 1982

U.T.M. Reference Point:

A. 15/743040/4279650

Brookl
Lovejoy



MISSOURI
ILLINOIS

VETERANS MEMORIAL
BRIDGE (TOLL)
LADS BRIDGE (TOLL)
MILE
180

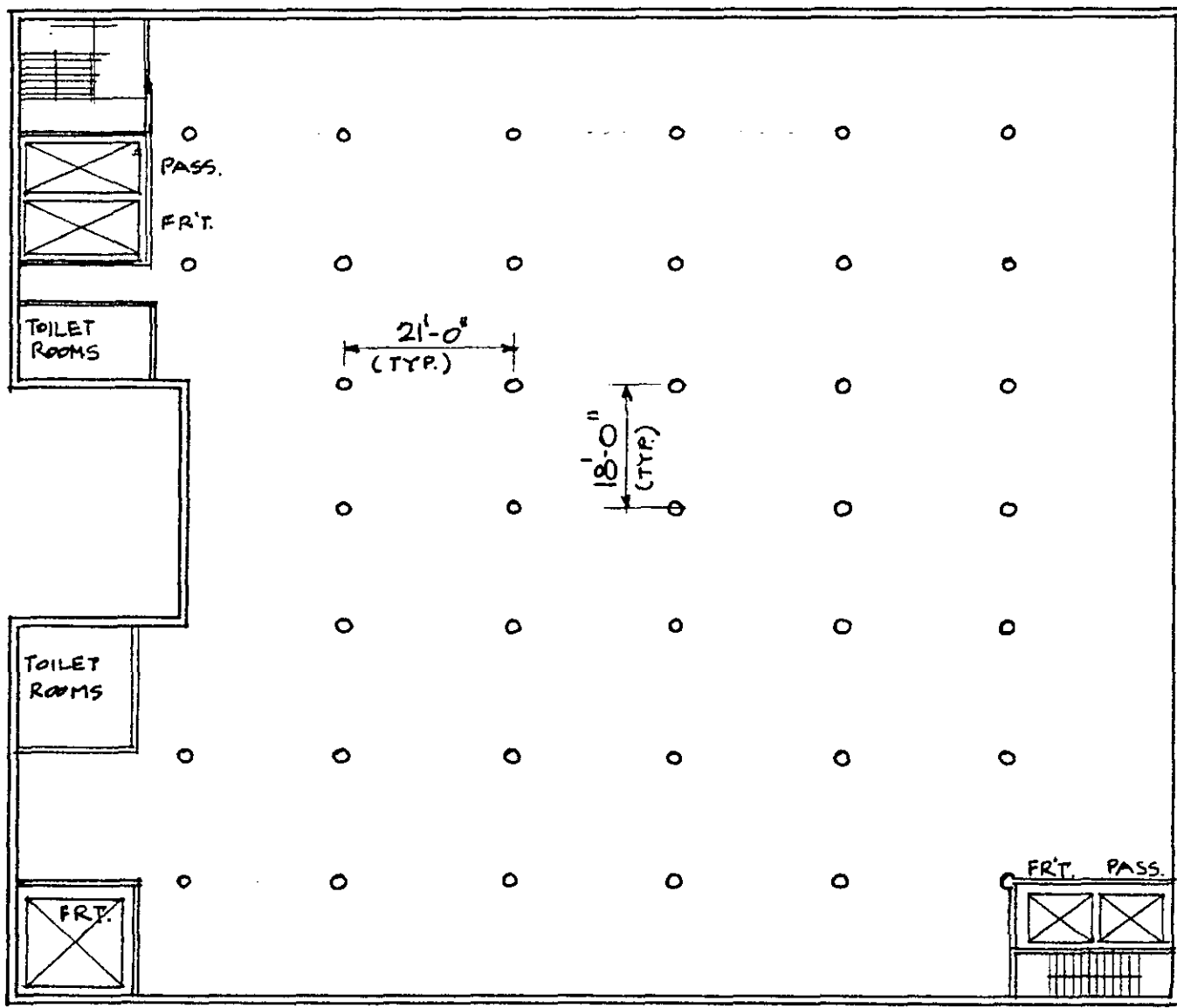
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Continuation sheet Emerson Electric Item number Typical Floor Plan Page

WASHINGTON AVE



TYPICAL PLAN (2nd - 8th FLOORS)

NOT TO SCALE

EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING
2012-18 WASHINGTON AVE. / ST. LOUIS



63103

63118

63101

63103

63101

EAST ST. LOUIS

CAHOOKIA

SAUGET

ST. LOUIS COUNTY
CLAIR COUNTY

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

JEFFERSON

WASHINGTON BL

MARKET ST

JEFFERSON AVE

WASHINGTON BL

MARKET ST

JEFFERSON AVE

WASHINGTON BL

MARKET ST

JEFFERSON AVE

WASHINGTON BL

MARKET ST

JEFFERSON AVE

WASHINGTON BL

MARKET ST

JEFFERSON AVE

WASHINGTON BL

EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING Photo #1
2012-18 Washington, St. Louis, Mo.

Photo by: Deborah B. Wafer

Negative: 4425 Laclede Place

St. Louis, Mo. 63108

Date: March 1986

View: Left to right: east & north
elevations; camera facing
southwest.



EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING Photo #2
2012-18 Washington, St. Louis, Mo.

Photo by: Deborah B. Wafer

Negative: 4425 Laclede Place
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

Date: March 1986

View: East elevation; camera facing
west.



EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING Photo #3

2012-18 Washington, St. Louis, Mo.

Photo by: Deborah B. Wafer

Negative: 4425 Laclede Place

St. Louis, Mo. 63108

Date: March 1986

View: Left to right: west and south

elevations; camera facing

northeast



EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING Photo #4
2012-18 Washington, St. Louis, Mo.

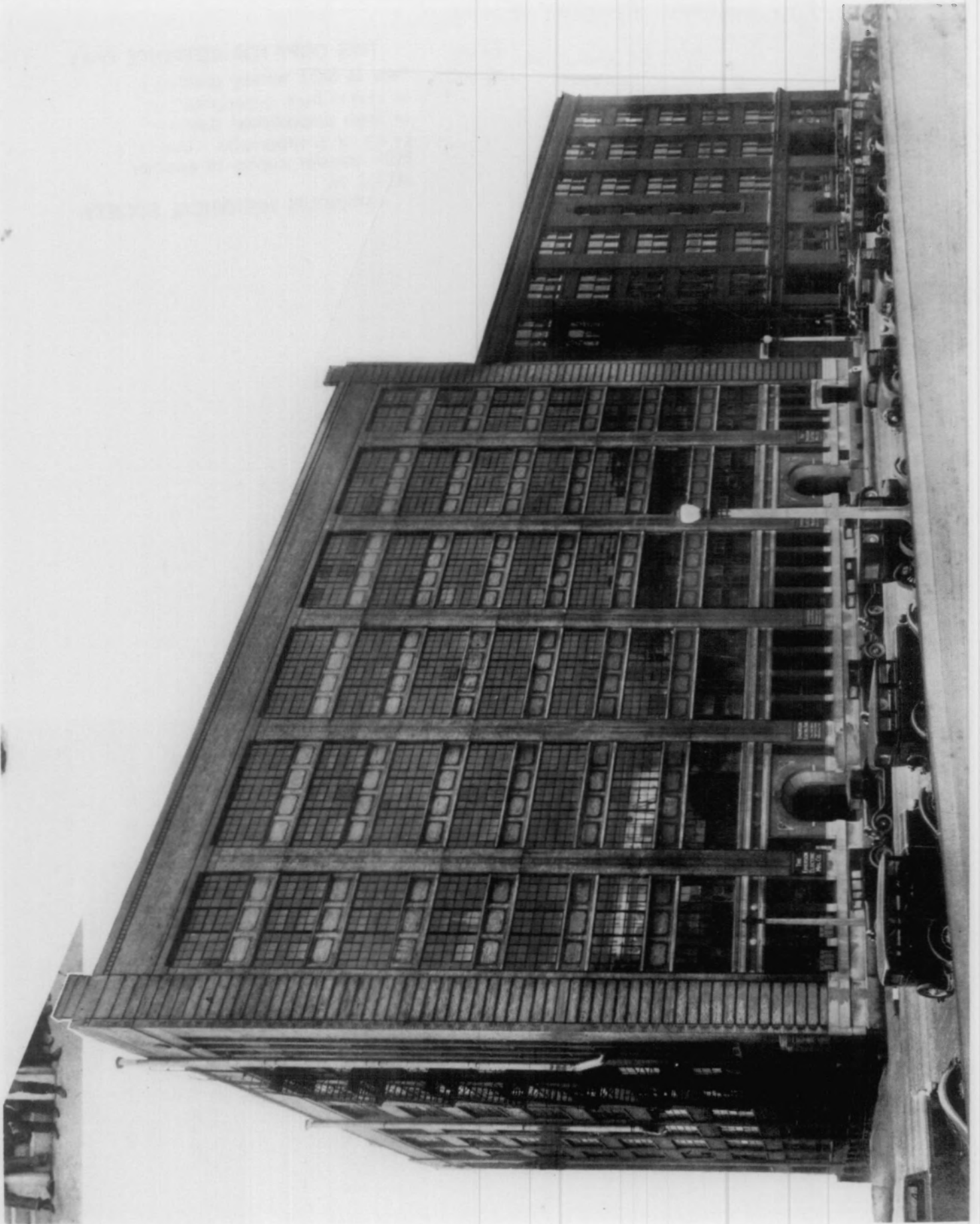
Photo by: Photocopy by Missouri Historical
Society from The Emerson Electric
Company

Negative: Missouri Historical Society
Forest Park, St. Louis, Mo.

Date: copied March 1986

View: Left to right: east & north
elevations; camera facing s.w.

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forms or photographs. User may
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institution.
MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY



EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING Photo #5
2012-18 Washington, St. Louis, Mo.

Photo by: Deborah B. Wafer

Negative: 4425 Laclede Pl.
St. Louis, Mo. 63108

Date: March 1986

View: Interior: illustrates skylights
in roof; photographed on top
floor.



EMERSON ELECTRIC COMPANY BUILDING Photo #6
2012-18 Washington, St. Louis, Mo.

Photo by: Deborah B. Wafer

Negative: 4425 LaClede Place

St. Louis, Mo. 63108

Date: March 1986

View: Interior: Illustrates "forest"
of columns with mushroom capitals.

