

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Heer's Department Store

other names/site number The Greater Heer Store

2. Location

street & number 138 Park Central Square [N/A] not for publication

city or town Springfield [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Greene code 077 zip code 65806

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 6 Sept. 02

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

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

Heer's Department Store

Greene County, Missouri

Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri

5. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing.

Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

COMMERCE/TRADE: Department Store

Current Functions

VACANT/ NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/ Commercial Style

foundation Concrete
walls Terra cotta
Brick
roof Asphalt
other Metal

Narrative Description See continuation sheet [x].

See continuation sheet []

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

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

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

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

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

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

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

Areas of Significance

Commerce

Period of Significance

1915-1952

Significant Dates

1915

1951

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect/ Opel and Torbitt

Builder/ Lewis Construction Co. of New York

Narrative Statement of Significance

See continuation sheet [x].

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

See continuation sheet [x].

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

#

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

#

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository:

Springfield History Museum: Heer Collection

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|----------|
| A. Zone | Easting | Northing | B. Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 15 | 474020 | 4117910 | | | |
| C. Zone | Easting | Northing | D. Zone | Easting | Northing |
| | | | | | |

[] 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 Debbie Sheals
organization Private Contractor date May, 2002
street & number 406 West Broadway telephone 573-874-3779
city or town Columbia state Missouri zip code 65203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

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

Property Owner

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

name Warren Davis Properties V, L.L.C. (Contact: Kim Davis)
street & number 316 Park Central East telephone 417-862-9100
city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65806

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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**Heer's Department Store
Greene County, Missouri
Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri**

Summary: The Heer's Department Store, at 138 Park Central Square, (originally College Street) in Springfield, MO, is a tall commercial building which is sheathed with cream colored terra cotta; it is one of the largest buildings on the public square of Springfield. The building housed the Heer's Department Store from the time of its construction in 1915 until the mid-1990s; the period of significance thus runs from 1915 to 1952, the standard fifty year cut-off point. The Heer's building is an important example of the "Downtown Commercial Buildings" Property Type, as defined in the MPS Cover Document "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri." The building consists of two main sections. The oldest and most visible section, which is seven stories tall, was built in 1915, and a large two-story addition to the north was completed in 1951. The original section occupies the northwest corner of the square; most of the addition is tucked behind another historic building located on the north end of the square. The oldest section of the building has two main elevations; the east wall faces the square, and the south wall faces Park Central West, which was originally College Street. Those two elevations are ornamented in a similar fashion, with wide window bays, terra cotta sheathing, and a prominent ornamental cornice. The addition is much simpler, with relatively flat wall surfaces sheathed with stucco, terra cotta, and brick. The addition has a formal elevation facing north to Olive Street. The interior of the building retains its original open floorplans, and some early finishes. Historic interior features of note include a formal tea room which has seen few changes since the store opened in 1915, and an escalator installed in 1951, which was the first escalator ever used in southwest Missouri. The building is the only resource on the property, and is a contributing building. The Heer's building meets the registration requirements set forth in the MPS cover document for eligibility under Criterion A, and appears today much as it did during the period of significance, when it housed the largest department store in Springfield.

Elaboration: The Heer's Department Store is located on the west side of the public square, which is just a few blocks south of State Highway 13 (Chestnut Trafficway), near the center of Springfield. The square is part of a commercial area which includes several of the surrounding blocks. Almost all of the buildings on the north half of the square were built around the same time as the Heer's, and many have similar terra cotta sheathing and other stylistic elements.¹ The Heer's building is the largest historic retail building in that commercial area.

¹ There was a major fire on the Square in 1913, which spurred a building program soon after. Sanborn maps for the area date nearly every building on the north side of the Square at 1913 or 1914, and most of those mapped in 1933 remain in place; many have seen alterations.

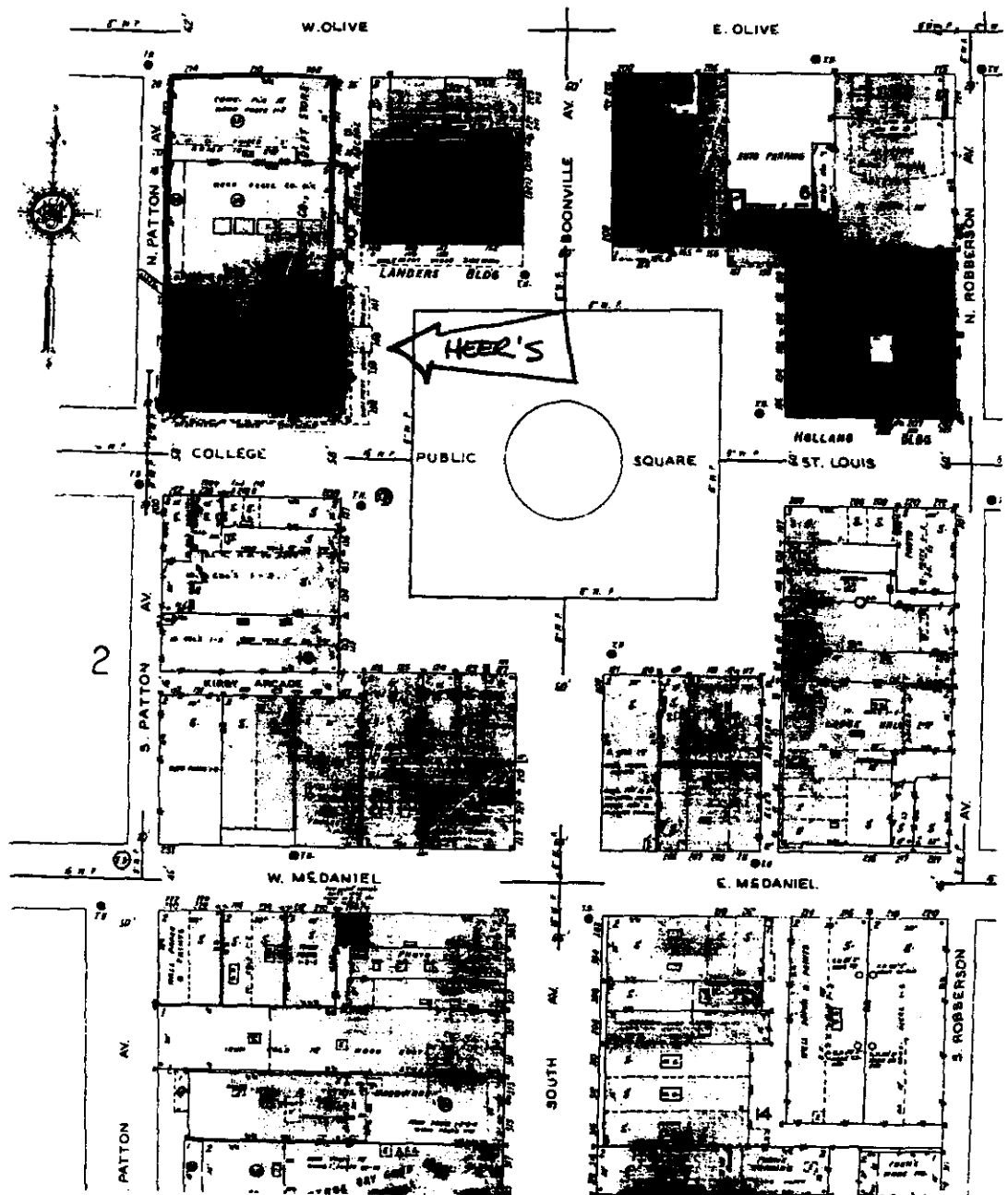
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Figure One. 1933 Sanborn Map of the square. The dark buildings indicate "fire-proof" construction, usually in the form of concrete structural systems.



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The Heer's building occupies a large lot on the north side of Park Central West, which was known for most of its history as College Street. (See Figure One.) The lot is bounded on the east by the square, the south by College street, the west by a narrow alley, and the north by West Olive Street. The lot has a rectangular footprint, and measures roughly 120 feet along Park Central West, and 230 feet between Park Central and Olive Streets. The building, which has a reinforced concrete structural system and a concrete foundation, occupies all of the lot.

The building is comprised of two main sections. A seven-story tall block on the south part of the property dates to 1915, and a two-story section which covers the rest of the lot was completed in early 1951. The taller section is the most visible from the square; the lower addition is tucked behind the ten-story Landers Building, which is located on the north side of the square. A walkway between those two buildings which runs from the square to Olive street is covered with a high, arched canvas awning.

The 1915 portion of the building, which measures roughly 80 feet by 120 feet, has two main elevations, the east and the south, both of which are highly visible from the square and which have very similar detailing. Both have red granite facing and large storefront windows along the ground floor, and cream colored glazed terra cotta sheathing on the upper levels. The top of the building is accented with an ornamental cornice and parapet wall made of the matching terra cotta. Large, evenly spaced window bays fill both elevations.

The original section of the building also contains a rooftop tower, which makes it one of the taller structures in the area. The tower is visible from many different parts of the city, and serves as a landmark for the square. It has white-painted brick walls and measures just over 40 feet tall. The tower is topped with a solid band of wall, painted red, upon which huge white letters spell out HEERS on each elevation. A small terra cotta cornice runs along the base of the rooftop sign. Below the cornice are banks of windows which originally served an observation area; the windows are now painted over with white paint.

The walls of that tall section currently bear marks left from a remodeling project which took place in 1967. That project included the application of the new sheathing to all of the east and south walls of the original part of the building. That sheathing, which has since been removed, consisted of semi-opaque orange panels, recessed behind vertical piers which arched together at the top of the building as part of an overhanging cornice. (See Figure Two.)

Although that project resulted in a drastic change in appearance, a remarkable amount of original fabric was left in place beneath it. The sheathing was actually composed of a semi-attached steel framework, which was connected to the building via a grid of vertical connectors which tied into the original structure. The framework sat a few inches out from the surface of the original wall

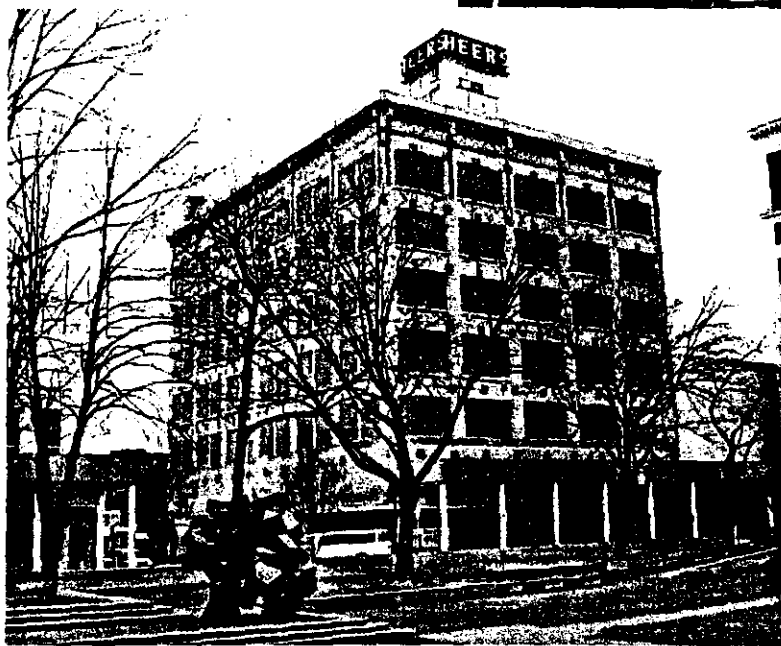
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Figure Two. Top: Before the 1960s sheathing was removed. Center: Recent photo, without the modern sheathing. Bottom: Photo taken shortly after the store opened in 1915.



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in most places, and the early wood windows were left intact behind the new orange panels.² Because the sheathing did not attach directly to the wall surfaces, the vast majority of the exterior architectural detailing was untouched. Also, the new cornice had a larger overhang than the original, which was left largely unchanged beneath it.

The most obvious alterations associated with that 1960s project include the removal of relief work from the top parts of the walls, damage to flat wall tiles where the sheathing grid was attached, and the removal of a small projecting cornice at the second floor line. (Plans call for that damage to be repaired during an upcoming rehabilitation project.) In spite of those losses, the building retains enough detailing, and presence, to clearly reflect significance under Criterion A, in the area of Commerce.

The tall elevations which face the square today are defined by the distinctive cornice at the top edge of the building and by the prominent grid of the large window openings. The cornice, which is of the same type of terra cotta found elsewhere, is topped by a low parapet wall of the same material. The cornice extends out from the surface of the wall approximately eighteen inches. It has a molded top edge and a distinctively scalloped bottom edge. A band of vertical ribs which line up with the scallops runs along a flat panel below the overhang. A second panel beneath that is ornamented with a sinuous line of relief which runs beneath the cornice in a repeating curve. (See photo 7.) All of that ornamentation is made of terra cotta, and is intact and in good condition.

The window bays are divided by simple flat piers which run from the second floor line up to the cornice. The piers have beveled edges and are accented by simple brackets at the cornice line. The brackets were shortened during the 1960s remodeling, which also included the removal of narrow pendants, and a small secondary cornice, all of which were near the top of the building. The original locations of those elements are clearly evident on the building today, and will guide replacement plans. The parapet walls above the cornice have rectangular projections which echo the lines of the wall piers; historic photos show that those were originally topped with metal light standards.

The vertical lines of the piers are balanced by recessed spandrel panels and the strong horizontal lines of the projecting window sills, all of which are also of terra cotta. The spandrels are set back several inches from the surface of the piers, while the sills extend out to the bevel line of the piers. The wide sills run in an unbroken line from pier to pier, and have beveled bottom edges. Each sill is accented with two widely spaced rectangular pendants. The spandrels consist of simple flat panels faced with terra cotta blocks.

Large window bays fill both the east and south elevations. Each eastern bay contains a group of three, one-over-one wood windows, and each western bay has two pairs of similar

² A. C. Esterly Architects, "Heers Refacing," 1967. (Original architectural drawings for the project, on file with Warren Davis Properties.)

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windows, separated by a narrow flat terra cotta mullion. Most of the early wood windows remain in place, although all are in poor condition. All of the window bays are temporarily boarded over for safety reasons; the windows are visible from the interior of the building. (See photo 11.) The upper window bays on both elevations have curved top edges which incorporate the bevel line of the piers.

The mezzanine level of the exterior is faced with a simple wide band of flat terra cotta blocks; windows which had been there earlier were replaced with terra cotta at the same time work was begun on the north addition, 1950. The ground floor walls of both the east and south elevations are faced with flat red granite panels, into which are set large open display windows, and a small flat awning runs along the south elevation. All or most of those finishes appear to date to 1950 or 1951. Small entrances are located on both the south and west walls; the main entrance to the building is on the east wall, facing the public square. A modern open canopy covers the ground floor of that east wall. The canopy, which is not structurally attached to the building, and sits over public land, is currently being removed. It is therefore not included in the resource count of the property.

The addition which was put on in 1950-1951 extends north from the main entranceway to Olive Street. The Olive Street elevation of the building has flat terra cotta tiles along the ground floor and east edge of the wall, and simple tan bricks on the rest of the wall surface. A street level entrance and display windows occupy much of the ground floor, and a simple flat canopy shelters the doorway. (The door and window openings along the Olive Street have been temporarily covered by metal sheathing, but will be re-opened in the upcoming rehab project.) Large block letters along the east edge of the Olive Street wall spell out HEERS.

The west wall of the complex faces onto a narrow public alley. The walls there are quite simple, with flat expanses of brick. The part of the 1915 building which faces the alley is lined with rectangular window openings. Most of those contain pairs of double-hung metal windows which have wired glass panes for fire safety. (They also are temporarily covered for security reasons.) The upper floors of the north wall of the 1915 section have similar windows, all of which are early or original.

The main entrance off the square opens to a large sales room which was created when the building was expanded in 1950-1951. That room follows the footprint of the entire building, including the both the original space and the addition. It has an extra high ceiling and a deep mezzanine which surrounds three sides of the room. (See Figure Three.) Directly opposite the front door is a bank of escalators which was installed in 1950 when the building was remodeled. The escalators provide access to the basement, mezzanine and second floor levels. The basement and second floors have the same large open layout of the main sales room. Elevators and stairs are located behind the escalators, on the west wall, and additional doorways and stairs lead to the south and north entrances on the ends of the building.

As in all interior spaces of the store, the ground floor room is punctuated by regularly spaced rows of heavy square posts. The posts are structural supports; both the old and new sections of the

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building utilize reinforced concrete construction. Most of the posts of the addition were designed to match the originals exactly, although a few of the newer ones are round instead of square. None of the posts have any notable original ornamentation such as bases or capitals. (Modern abstracted capitals have been added to many of the posts in the main sales room.) The support beams in the older part of the mezzanine are ornamented with molded trim. Most of those which are exposed in the other parts of the building have simple squared profiles. (See photo 12.)

The upper floors of the building, have, for the most part, the same basic layout, with regularly spaced posts and walls filled with windows. (See Figure Four.) Passenger elevators and stairs are all located along the west wall, and a second fire stair is centered on the north wall of the upper floors. Many of the floors have some modern partitions for offices and support spaces, but almost all retain at least some open showroom space. The seventh floor of the building differs from the others in that it has few windows; the cornice of the main elevations takes up the exterior wall space there. That area was used as support space originally, and still contains two large fur vaults which were used for off-season storage of customers' fur coats.

The fourth floor of the building contains a restaurant which has been in place since the store opened in 1915. (See photo10.) The room was designed to serve as the original "tea room" and housed a restaurant from opening day in 1915 into the 1990s. The room has wood paneled walls, and wood windows. (The windows are early but not original.) The ceiling is partially covered with modern suspended tiles, under which the original plaster and more wood trim is largely intact. Although missing some paneling and minor detailing, the room looks today much as it did in 1915, and is one of the most intact interior features in the older part of the building.

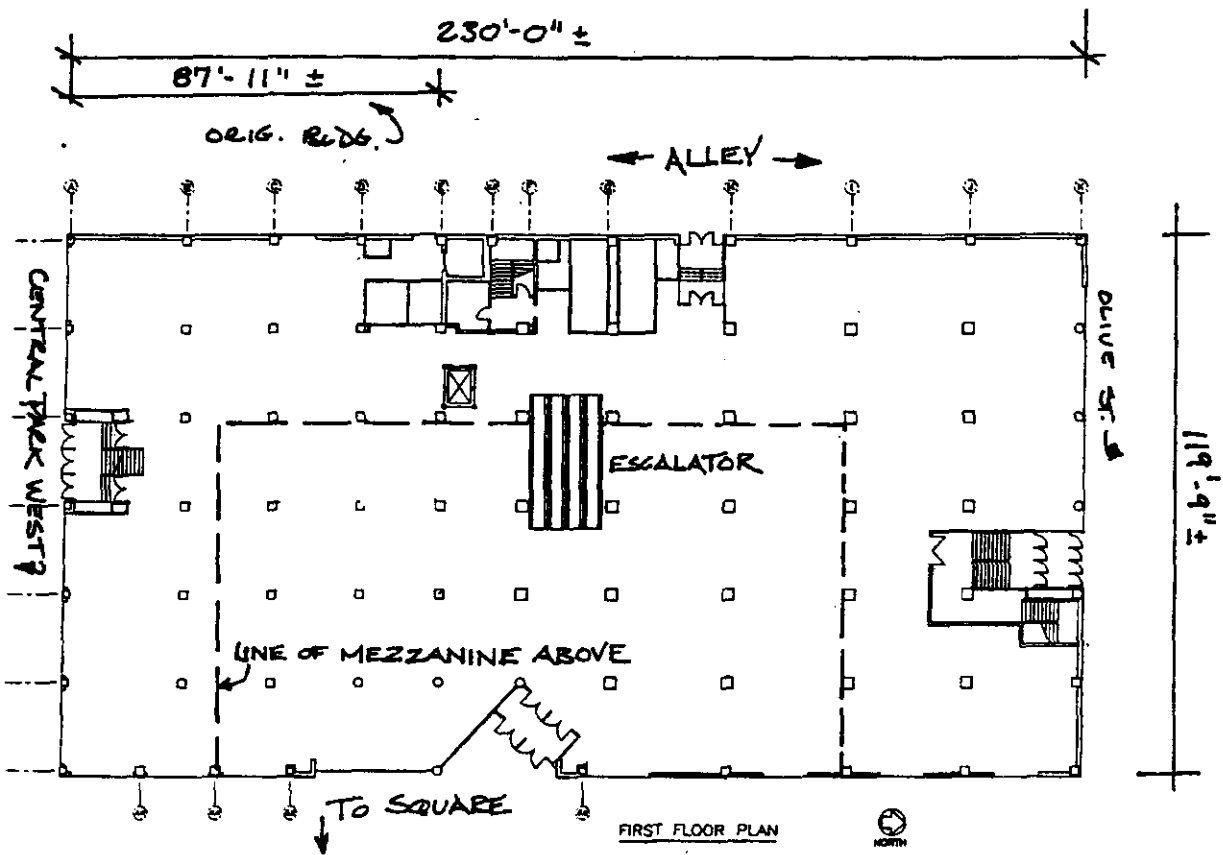
Thanks to the recent removal of the 1960s sheathing, the Heer's building today look much as it did during the period of significance. The planned rehabilitation work will do more to repair damage from the 1967 remodeling, and will ensure that the building is once again a functional part of the public square in Springfield. The building today is immediately recognizable as the home of what was for decades the largest department store in Springfield, Missouri. △

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Figure Three. Ground Floor Plan. The basement and second floors have similar layouts.
Plan drawn by Esterly Schneider & Associates, Inc., AIA; Springfield, MO, with notes by Deb Sheals.



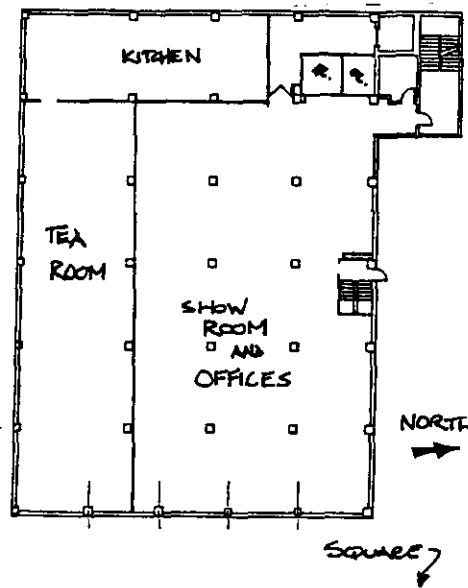
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Figure Four. Fourth Floor Plan. Other upper floors have similar layouts.
Plan drawn by Esterly Schneider & Associates, Inc., AIA; Springfield, MO, with notes by Deb Sheals.



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Heer's Department Store
Greene County, Missouri
Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri

Summary: The Heer's Department Store, at 138 Park Central West (originally College Street) in Springfield, Missouri, is significant under Criteria A, in the area of COMMERCE. The building housed one of Springfield's largest and most prominent department stores for 80 years, and is an important example of the property type "Downtown Commercial Buildings." It meets the registration requirements for that property type set forth in the MPS cover document, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri," and falls under the historic context of "19th and Early 20th Century Commercial Buildings." It is significant in the area of Commerce for its long, prominent role in the commercial history of Springfield. The Heer's Company, which was founded by Charles H. Heer in 1869, operated in Springfield for more than a century. The current Heer's Department Store building was built for Charles Heer's son, F. X. Heer, who headed the company from 1886 to 1940. The Heer's Store played a dominant role in retail activity on the square well into modern times; the building was expanded in 1951 and continued to house the Heer's Store until 1995. The period of significance thus runs from the 1915 construction date to 1952, the arbitrary fifty year cut-off point. The Heer's Department Store, which was often described as the largest department store in all of southwest Missouri, was the most prominent retail operation ever to operate on the Public Square in Springfield. The recent removal of sheathing which was added to the oldest part of the building in the 1960s has largely returned the building to its early appearance, and it once again looks much as it did during the period of significance. Most of the early terra cotta sheathing remains in place, as does the original cornice and most of the original windows. Surviving interior features include a formal tea room which has seen few significant changes since the store opened in 1915, and the first escalator ever used in southwest Missouri. The Heer's Department Store retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling and association, and looks today much as it did during the period of significance.

Elaboration: As home to one of the most prominent and longest-lived retail establishments ever to operate in Springfield, the Heer's building is an important example of the "Downtown Commercial Building" property type. The Multiple Property Submission cover document in which that property type was established stated that to be eligible under Criterion A, "a building must be the site of a business of particular importance to the community, exemplify a particular building type or use, or be associated with an important event or occurrence."³ Although it can be argued that the Heer's building fits all three of those requirements, it is most notable as the home of a business

³ Phillip Thomason, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Springfield, Missouri," National Register Nomination, Multiple Property Submission, 1998, (On file with the Missouri Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, MO), Section F, page 3. See also pages 1-5 of that section for more discussion of the Downtown Commercial Buildings property type.

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of particular importance to the community. The Heer's store is repeatedly described in historical accounts as one of the largest and most prominent local (and often regional) retail businesses of its time. The same cover document which set those requirements, in fact, described it as "Springfield's largest department store and a notable structure in the business district."⁴

The history of the Heer's company pre-dates the current building by almost half a century. German immigrant Charles H. Heer first opened a store in Springfield in 1869. Heer, who had been involved in business pursuits in the Midwest for several years prior to that, was struck by the lively business prospects offered by Springfield when he visited the city in 1868. He later wrote that the "merchants were crowded with business-money seemed to be plenty. I certainly thought I had struck the El Dorado this time."⁵ Heer was so impressed with the city that he purchased land there within 24 hours of his arrival, and soon after arranged to have a store built upon the property. That first store was a few blocks from the public square, at Olive and Boonville Streets.

Heer and his family at that time lived in Waterloo, Illinois, and his initial plan was for the Springfield property to serve only as a long-distance investment. He was, however, so taken by the community that in 1871 he decided to move his family there, as it seemed to him to be a better place in which to raise his children.⁶ Heer's fondness for his family was also reflected in his business; his oldest son, Charles H., Jr, was an early manager for the Springfield store, and his youngest son, Francis X. Heer, eventually took over the entire operation. It was under the management of F. X. Heer that the current building on the square was built in 1915.

The Heer company was first incorporated in 1882, as the Charles H. Heer Dry Goods Company, an event which, according to Missouri the Center State: 1821-1915, "laid the foundation of what has since become the largest retail store in the southwest..."⁷ Other historical accounts show that the company was quite prominent in the region by the end of the 19th century. A county history written in 1883 described it as "one of the largest wholesale and retail...houses in Southwest Missouri," and another written in 1893 noted that the company was at that time "the oldest as well

⁴ Thomason, Section E, p. 7.

⁵ Charles H. Heer, "A Short History of My Life, From 1820 up to 1873," (Typescript from the Heer Collection, History Museum for Springfield and Green County, Springfield, MO) p. 18.

⁶ Heer, p. 20.

⁷ Walter B. Stevens, Missouri the Center State, 1821-1915, Vol. 4., (St. Louis, Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915) p. 245.

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as the largest business of its kind in the city".⁸

In 1886, Charles H. Heer, Sr. passed the management of the business on to his youngest son, Francis X. Heer. F. X. Heer served as the general manager of the company until his father's death in 1897, at which time he became president.⁹ (Charles H. Heer, Jr. also continued his involvement, serving as Secretary of the company until his death in 1911.) F. X. Heer was to spend the next 54 years as head of the Heer's Company. A local newspaper article which publicized his retirement many years later noted that from the time he took over in 1886, "Mr. Heer and his store have never been separated."¹⁰

Just after the turn of the century, in 1903, F. X. Heer moved the business from its original location to the public square.¹¹ Although Charles Heer had started out dealing in both wholesale and retail goods, by the 1890s, the company had dropped the wholesale end of their business, to concentrate on retail sales.¹² The new location on the square was no doubt seen as more appropriate for the now exclusively retail establishment; of the 24 retail dry goods establishments listed in the 1905 Springfield City Directory, 5 were located on the square.¹³

In 1913, a major fire on the square burned that Heer's store to the ground.¹⁴ Although the fire, which destroyed most of the buildings on the north end of the square, was obviously a lamentable event, it ended up laying the foundation for an even bigger new Heer's store. A newspaper account of F. X. Heer's business ventures later noted that although the company lost everything in that fire, "stock, fixtures and all...the fire destruction was covered by insurance, so that there was no loss. Almost immediately, work on the new building—the one still occupied—was

⁸ History of Greene County, (St. Louis: Western Historical Company, 1883) p. 757, and Pictorial and Genealogical Record of Greene County, Missouri, (Chicago, Goodspeed Brothers, Inc., 1893) p. 283.

⁹ Stevens, p. 246.

¹⁰ "After 50 Years At Head of Largest Store in Ozarks Francis X. Heer Wistfully Ponders What He Will Do Next," Springfield News Leader, p. A14, newspaper clipping in the Heer Collection, History Museum for Springfield and Greene County, Springfield, MO, ca. 1940.

¹¹ Williams, Walter, and Floyd Shoemaker, Missouri-Mother of the West, (Chicago: American Historical Soc., 1930) p. 409.

¹² Goodspeed, p. 283.

¹³ Dunham Directory Company, Dunham's City Directory of Springfield, (Springfield: Dunham Directory Co., 1905) p. 501.

¹⁴ Shanna Boyle and Julie March, eds., Crossroads at the Spring, (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co. Publishers, 1997) p. 15.

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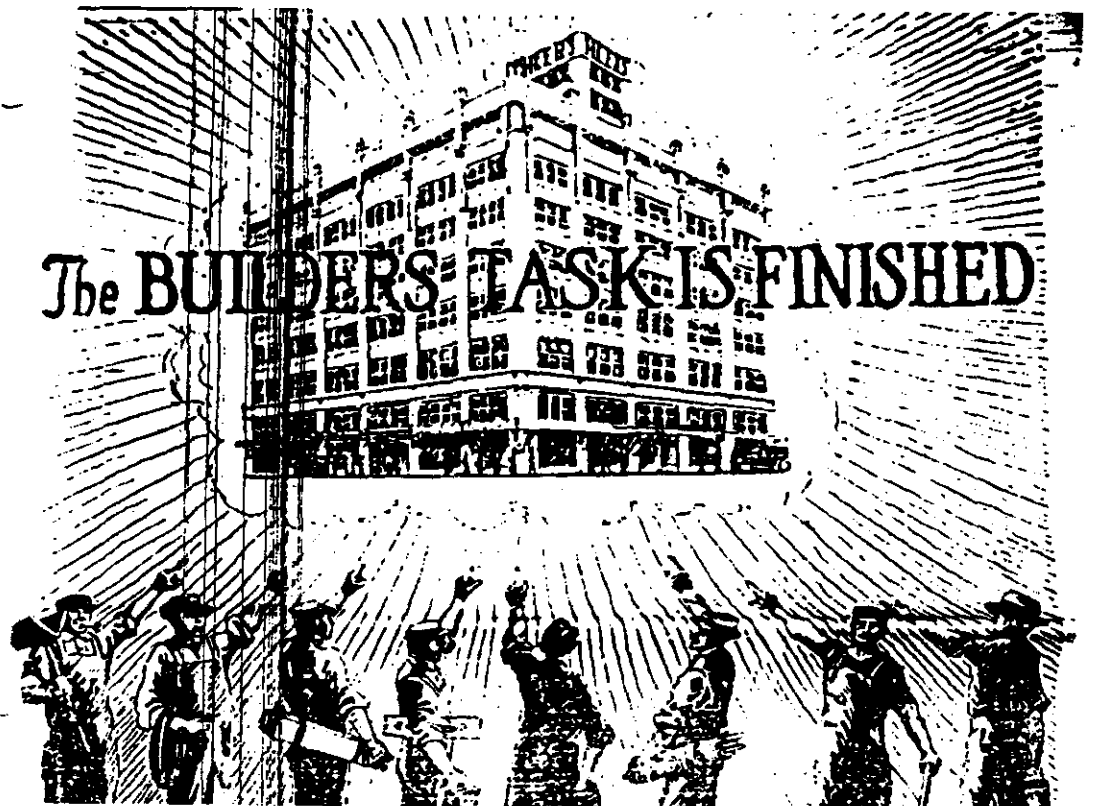
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started."¹⁵

The new seven story tall Heer's building was completed in the fall of 1915, amid great local fanfare, much of which was generated by the Heer's company itself. The company ran ads in the local papers for months prior to the opening, giving updates on the progress and encouraging people to shop in their temporary quarters on St. Louis Street, just off the square. As the opening date approached, the ads grew larger, often covering entire pages, and including artist's renderings of the new building. (See Figure Five.) Those drawings may have been supplied by the architects for the project, Opel and Torbitt, who were from Springfield.¹⁶ Most of the renderings are signed, and all appear to be the work of the same person, Leslie E. Williams.

Figure Five. Part of a full page newspaper ad which ran on p. 3 of the Springfield Leader, Sept 21, 1915. The drawing was done by Leslie E. Williams.



¹⁵ "50 Years," p. A14.

¹⁶ The architects and contractors are named in "Building is One of Best in Southwest," on p. 4 of a supplemental section of the Sept. 24, 1915, Springfield Republican, which was called the "Heer Special". Drawings of the store appeared regularly in that paper and in the Springfield Leader in the weeks leading up to the grand opening.

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The Opel of Opel and Torbitt was Charles Opel, who had been in practice in Springfield since 1885. The firm was also known for a time as Miller, Opel, and Torbitt.¹⁷ The firm had offices in three different Missouri cities around the time the Heer's building was under construction; Springfield, Jefferson City, and Kansas City. They are known to have designed buildings in all three of those cities, with projects ranging in size from small bungalow houses to large industrial and commercial buildings.¹⁸

Although Heer used local architects for the project, he did go out of town for a construction firm; the project was handled by W. D. Lewis Company, General Contractors. Although the Lewis Company had offices in Kansas City and New York, and had experience with large construction projects all over the country, they appear to have been especially proud of this project. A description of the building which ran in the local paper for the grand opening noted that "officials of the Lewis company regard the work here as a masterpiece and reference is made to the structure here" in their bids for other projects.¹⁹ The same publication included a large ad from the Lewis Company, which listed three dozen previously completed projects, with locations in several states and in Canada.

The Heer's newspaper ad campaign also touted the regional prominence the company expected of the new store, and laid the foundation for a huge grand opening celebration. A full page ad in the Springfield Republican referred to the Greater Heer Store as the "Hub of the Southwest", and proclaimed that "every man and every woman within a hundred miles of Springfield should make this store their store."²⁰ A full-page ad which ran in another Springfield paper that same day let the public know that:

Our own corps of workers are now at work arranging the details and making ready for the opening day, and when this event is heralded, we'll expect every man and every woman in Springfield and the adjacent territory to be our guest, to see and to admire the wondrous work that has been accomplished.²¹

¹⁷Journal of the AIA, March 1915, p. 134. Obituary note for Charles Opel. (From the files of the Kansas City Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, MO.)

¹⁸ Inventory of a photo collection of projects by Miller, Opel, and Torbitt, now in the collections of the Avery Library, Columbia University, New York. (From the files of the Kansas City Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, MO.)

¹⁹ "Building is One of Best in Southwest," p. 4.

²⁰ Springfield Republican, September 21, 1915, p. 3.

²¹ Springfield Leader, September 21, 1915, p. 3.

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The company almost hit that goal; on September 24, 1915, some 21,000 people attended the grand opening of the new store. To put that number in perspective, the population of Springfield in 1910 was just 35,201.²² The store officially opened to the public at 2:00 that afternoon, to the sound of a bugler playing Reveille from a second story window. A newspaper account of the event published the next day noted that "from that hour until 10:00 last evening, an average of 44 persons entered the three doors every second."²³

The new building was described in great detail in a special "Heer Section" of the Springfield Republican which was published the day of the grand opening. That publication included numerous drawings of the interior spaces, as well as a narrative tour through the building, floor by floor. The store offered a complete line of retail goods, ranging from home furnishings to toys and shoes. Notable features of the building itself included an observation area in the top of the tower, complete with field glasses for patrons' use, and a rooftop garden which was outfitted with giant umbrellas, linen-covered tables and potted plants.

Heer knew his customer base; many of the extras offered by the new facilities were designed specifically for woman shoppers. The sixth floor included a fully equipped 250-seat theater which was available for public use without charge. The newspaper noted that the auditorium was targeted especially for use by "Springfield's club women."²⁴ Other extra services offered in the new building included a beauty shop, a service window at which customers could pay utility bills, and, on the east side of the mezzanine, "public rest and retirement rooms for women. Luxuriously furnished with large comfortable chairs, it makes an ideal place to gain a few moments of rest from the trials and worries of shopping."²⁵

The newspaper article also noted that the "Fourth Floor is One of Beauty." One of the most prominent features of the fourth floor was (and still is) the tea room. The newspaper described that area as "an extensive enclosure which on every side scintillates with the luster of the solid gum walls and ceiling...All of the gum for this room was taken from a single freakily-shaped log of gum."²⁶ The tea room remained in use as a restaurant throughout the period of significance, and

²² Bartholomew and Associates, "Springfield, Missouri, Preliminary Report on a System of Major Streets," (Manuscript on file at the Springfield Planning Department, 1929, cited in the Springfield MPS cover document), p. 7.

²³ "Heer Store Host to 21,000 During Formal Opening," Springfield Republican, September 25, 1915, p. 1.

²⁴ "The Greater Heer Store Opens Today," Springfield Republican, "Heer Special", September 24, 1915, p. 2.

²⁵ "The Greater Heer Store Opens Today," p. 3.

²⁶ "The Greater Heer Store Opens Today," p. 3.

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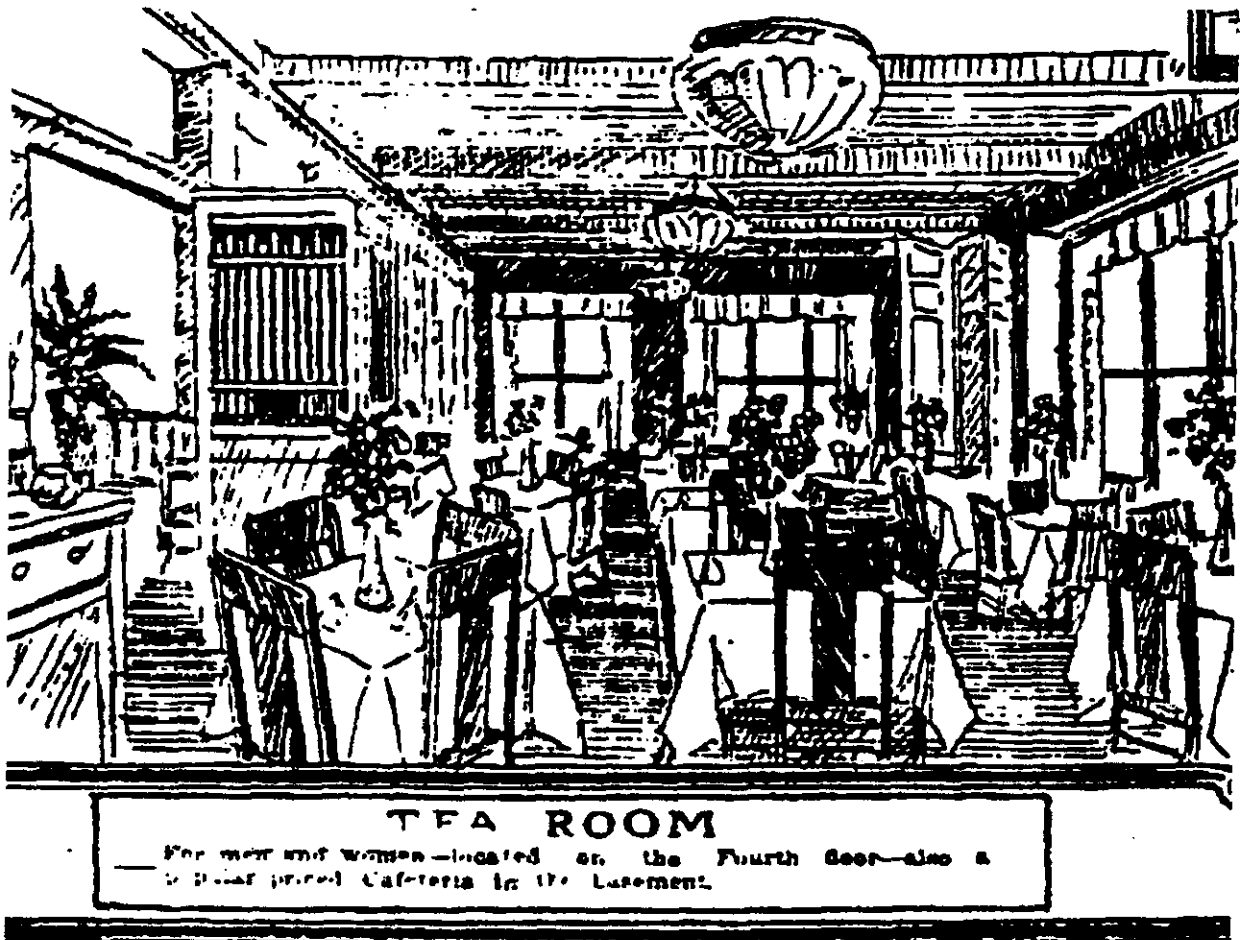
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most of the original woodwork there remains intact and in good condition.

The display windows of the ground floor were also of the latest design. Early photos and drawings of the ground floor show that the display windows of the new store were much larger than had previously been the norm. While earlier stores in Springfield generally utilized wooden storefronts with a traditional bulkhead-display window-transom arrangement, the new Heer's store featured much more open expanses of glass.²⁷ The wide ground floor display windows reached almost to the sidewalk. From the description in the paper: "The show windows on the square and College street fronts of the new building contain more than 2,752 square feet of plate glass, the greatest amount of display space in the central western states."

Figure Six.
Line
Drawing of the
Tea
Room, from
the 1915
Springfield
Republican.



²⁷ The traditional storefront layout is noted Thomason, Section F, p. 4.

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The building also featured especially ornate terra cotta work along the walls which face College and the square. Terra cotta was a relatively new building material at the time, and, like many other features of the Heer building, represented the latest in building technology. The newspaper noted that the "terra cotta of the outside walls is of a rich cream and presents a prettier finished job than other buildings in the city. More than 200 tons of this material were used in the construction."²⁸ Terra cotta was valued not only for the ease with which it could be molded and mass-produced for ornamental uses, but also as "fire proof material."

The disastrous fire of 1913 had made business owners and city officials painfully aware of the value of fire-resistant construction methods, and the Heer's building was designed to be as fire-proof as possible. Buildings erected on the square after the fire, including the Heer's, frequently used such things as masonry construction, metal framed windows with safety glass, and other methods to decrease the likelihood of more fires. Like its neighbors, the Heer's building has a steel and concrete structure, and metal-framed windows along some walls. A description of the building published on opening day noted that the metal windows were there to "provide absolute protection against fire originating on the outside of the building, and similar precautions were taken in the makeup of the remainder of the new home."²⁹ The building also had metal fire doors, and its own sprinkler system. The sprinkler system was fed by a number of gravity-driven water tanks, the largest of which is still in place within the rooftop tower.

Although the grand opening was meant to show off the new seven story building, it should also be noted that the Heer's store was actually housed in two adjacent buildings for at least part of its history. The north wall of the new building of 1915 was connected to an older commercial building, known as the Baker block, which was also occupied by the Heer Company. The five-story Baker Block housed the Heer's furniture department for many years.³⁰ That combined floor space made the new Greater Heer Store the largest retail establishment in Springfield, a distinction it held for decades. A biographical sketch of F. X. Heer which was published in Missouri, Mother of the West, in 1930, noted that F. X. Heer was still "associated with the Heer Store Company, one of the leading mercantile corporations of Southwestern Missouri....The two buildings are now used as a department store, the largest in the whole Ozark region."³¹

²⁸ "The Greater Heer Store Opens Today," pp. 4-5.

²⁹ "The Greater Heer Store Opens Today," p. 5

³⁰ The 1933 Sanborn labels two buildings to the north as part of the Heer's Store; one was a two story building on Olive Street, and the other was the five story Baker Block.

³¹ Williams and Shoemaker, p. 409.

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F. X. Heer continued as the head of Springfield's largest department store for decades after the new building opened. A long newspaper article published upon his retirement in 1940 recounted his 54 years as head of the Heer Company, and noted how closely he had participated in the business throughout that period; "for more than fifty years the man and the store have been virtually the same thing."³² The article noted that many of the people who worked for Heer's had also been there a long time, and that many had been with the company since before the new building had been erected in 1915. Three people had worked for the company over 40 years each, and another woman had been working in the fourth floor tea room since its opening in 1915. Heer's attitude towards his employees may have had something to do with that; he said in an interview that "in all the years I've been here, I've never said that anyone worked 'for' me. They worked with me. It's been a cooperative thing."³³

In reflecting on his long career, Mr. Heer noted that the two things he felt proudest of were that no "outside money" was ever used in the operation of the family-owned store, and that he introduced the "one-price system of selling" to Springfield.³⁴ The many changes and expansions which had made the Heer's Store the largest in the Ozarks had all been "financed using the profits of the store itself." As to the pricing system, Mr. Heer recalled that when he entered the business, it was still customary to barter for goods and/or to haggle over individual prices for everything being offered. As a salesman, "the dickering and the bargaining to reach a price on every sale irritated him intensely" and when he took charge he decided to go to the type of flat rate system which soon became standard for all retail establishments. Mr. Heer recalled that when he announced the change in policy, three of his clerks left, saying there was no use "to try to operate under such a system." As the newspaper pointed out, however, "Heer's has been a one-price store ever since, and has prospered."³⁵

The store prospered even after Mr Heer's retirement, at which time the company and the tall department store building on the square left the Heer family. F. X. Heer sold controlling interest of the business and the building to the Allied Stores Corporation in the spring of 1940.³⁶ The store continued to operate under the Heer's name, however. Many years later, F. X. Heer's obituary asserted that the "building which will continue to carry his name into the memories of

³² "50 Years" p. A14.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

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Springfieldians is, of course, Heer's department store, which Mr. Heer and his father turned into the largest store of its type in the Ozarks."³⁷

Even though the Heer's Store passed into the hands of a large corporation, it continued to be operated as though it were locally owned. The Allied Stores Corporation owned multiple department stores, but operated each semi-independently. As the president of the Allied Stores Corporation explained in 1950, although Heer's was "a member of the Allied organization" it operated as a separate entity. "We believe we have all of the advantages, and none of the disadvantages, of a chain store....Each store is run separately, and Allied Stores is operated as a group of stores, not as a chain."³⁸

At the time the Allied Stores Corporation purchased the Heer's store, they owned and operated more than 30 different department stores in the United States, a number that had grown to 72 stores by 1950. Like the Heer's family operation, stores operated by Allied were department stores, with a wide variety of offerings. And, like Heer's, Allied often catered specifically to female shoppers. One description of the company noted that "Allied Stores handle about any kind of merchandise you can name, but they've always been leaders in the women's fashion field. At present, the 72 stores sell an astronomical average of 25,700 women's dresses a week."³⁹

The Heer's store saw a major overhaul very soon after Allied took over, with dramatic results. The local paper noted in 1950 that "Heer's is one of Springfield's oldest retailers-and certainly its largest department store. And even surpassing Springfield's dramatic growth in the past decade, Heer's has increased its business 500 percent since it became part of Allied Stores."

The impressive jump in sales was accompanied by plans for a million-dollar expansion. Work on a major remodeling project began in the spring of 1950, and continued into early 1951. That project involved demolishing the old Baker Block and another building to the north, and adding a large two story addition to the building erected for F. X. Heer in 1915. A description in the Springfield paper noted that the project would result in a 60% increase in the sales area for the store, and that the foundations of the addition were designed to support additional floors on that section "so that four more floors may be added as the store continues to grow."⁴⁰ (That upward expansion never took place.)

³⁷ "Funeral on Thursday for Francis X. Heer," Undated newspaper clipping, Heer Collection, History Museum for Springfield and Green County.

³⁸ "Heer's in Midst of Expansion," Springfield Leader and Press, November 3, 1950, p.1.

³⁹ "Expansion," p. 1.

⁴⁰ "Expansion," p. 1.

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The Allied remodeling project became as much of a promotional event as had the construction of the original building. Once again, full page Heer's ads included updates for the public, one of the earliest of which had a section, among ads for ladies' hats and lingerie, which read, "Everyone's asking, 'What's Going On At Heer's'. LOOK OUT BELOW! Bricks are falling! Carpenters are working!.....the store we're building will be one of America's finest...and...IT'S FOR YOU."⁴¹

Updates continued throughout the rest of 1950, with notices of things like the installation of air conditioning (which meant the store would have more air-conditioned space than any store within a 150 mile radius of Springfield) and a note that the early tea room had been newly redecorated, and reopened as the "garden room."

One of the most frequently promoted new features was unveiled just after Thanksgiving of that year. Another full page ad trumpeted "THE BIG NEWS OF THE DAY: The First Escalator in the Entire Ozark Empire is Now in Operation at Heer's...See It! Ride It! Everyone Invited! Ride from the Main Floor to Heer's Toyland and Bargain Basement."⁴² The new escalator was, obviously, a source of great pride for the company. Heer's President F. W. McClerkin had mentioned the new escalator in a newspaper interview earlier, when plans for the addition had been unveiled. The newspaper noted at that time that "the use of escalators in Heer's will make Springfield the smallest city to have a department store equipped with escalators."⁴³

When the entire remodeling project was completed in early 1951, the store had a greatly expanded main floor show room, open to the mezzanine above, which seamlessly joined the lower levels of the original building and the new addition to the north. The expansive new sales floor allowed Heer's customers to see many of major departments from the front door. The new space also provided the company with what one corporate official claimed was "more acres of selling space" than any store in the same area.⁴⁴

That remodeling was the last major change to take place on the interior of the building. And, although such things as wall treatments and other interior finishes changed frequently, the building has seen no other major interior alterations since then. The expansive show room created by the Allied Company in 1951 appears today very much as it did when Heer's store ads were urging customers to come and see the new escalator, in what they called "The Dominant Store of the Ozark

⁴¹ Springfield Leader and Press, April 4, 1950, p. 3.

⁴² Springfield Leader and Press, November 30, 1950, p. 3.

⁴³ "Expansion," p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

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Empire."⁴⁵

The exterior of the store, however, did see later alterations. A second, more extensive remodeling in the 1960s involved covering the east and south walls of the entire seven story block with a modern facade. The new facade included semi-opaque orange panels, set between white ribbing which was arched at the overhanging cornice. (See Figure Two.) Although the sheathing had an immense impact upon the appearance of the building, much of the original fabric was left in place beneath the new materials.

The 1960s sheathing has since been removed, and the building today looks much as it did when Allied finished their first addition. Although some of the original terra cotta work was damaged to make way for the new sheathing, a surprising amount remained intact. The historic form and patterns of fenestration remain fully intact, and the massive building today clearly reflects its historic commercial function.

The Heer's store operated in the same building on the Springfield public square from 1915 until 1995. Throughout that period, it was a prominent part of the commercial life of the community. It was home to the largest department store in the region for most, if not all, of the period of significance, and the building itself visually dominates the square yet today. The building today is immediately recognizable as "The Dominant Store of the Ozark Empire." △

Figure Seven. Logo from a 1950s newspaper ad.



⁴⁵ That slogan was used regularly in newspaper advertising after the remodeling began.

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Chronology

From Encyclopedia of the History of MO, vol3(emh), MO The Center State, V4 (mcs), Missouri, Mother of the West, vol 5 (mmw), Heers collection of the Springfield history museum,(shm) local papers(lp), and other local historical sources. Note: most dates are approximate; dates given in published sources often differ, especially in regard to earlier events.

1868 Charles H. Heer buys land on Boonville Avenue in Springfield during a visit to the community. He has a store built on the site soon after, and rents it for commercial use. (1869 is the date the Heer's Co. used as their founding in Springfield.)

1871 Charles H. Heer moves his family to town and runs a business out of that building.

1882 Heer buys out his partner incorporates the now mostly family business as the Charles H. Heer Dry Goods Company.rgc 298, and letterhead "Thus was laid the foundation of what has since become the largest retail store in the southwest". (mcs,p. 245.)

1886 Francis X. Heer, youngest son of Chas. H., takes over "management of the store, becoming president after the death of his father in 1897." (mcs p. 246)

1901 Heer's business called "the oldest and largest retail house in the city." (emh p. 21)

1904 Heer Dry Goods Company opens a store on the square. (mmw p. 409.)

1913 Fire on the square destroys the new store, a temporary location was established on St. Louis Street, a block east of the square. (mmw, p. 409)

1915, September. The Heer Store opens at its present location, incorporating new seven story building and the existing Baker Block. 21,000 people attend the grand opening of the building--the population of Springfield in 1910 was 35,201.

1917, ca. Business is reorganized into the Heer Stores Company, F.X. Heer, president and manager, R. A. Andres, Vice President, M. E. Trowers, Secretary. (mmw, p. 409)

1930 Mother of West calls Heer's "one of the leading mercantile corporations of Southwestern Missouri...The largest in the whole Ozarks region."(p. 409)

1940 F. X. Heer sells store to Allied Stores Co. of New York. Sales increase 500% in the next decade. Article about the retirement refers to Heer's as "Largest Store in Ozarks."

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1950 Allied begins a major remodeling of the interior and ground floors, and replaces the Baker Block and another smaller building to the north with a single large addition which stretched from the 1915 building to Olive Street. Local paper writes "Heer's store is one of Springfield's oldest retailers, and certainly its largest department store." 11-3-50

1995 Heer's Store on the square closes.

1997 Heer's described in a local history as having been "a pivotal business on the public square." (Crossroads, p. 29.) △

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1940, 1955.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the Northeast corner of College St. and Patton Avenue, formerly Patton Alley; thence East along the North side of College Street to the intersection of College Street and the Public Square; thence North along the West side of the Public Square to the Northwest corner of the Public Square of the City of Springfield, Greene County, Missouri; thence continuing on North parallel with the East line of Lot 18, in Block 5, of the original plat of the City of Springfield, Missouri, and 1.11 feet East of such line to the South line of Olive Street; thence West along the South line of Olive Street to the East line of Patton Avenue; thence South along the East line of Patton Avenue to the place of beginning, all in the City of Springfield, Greene County, Missouri, except for any part deeded, or used for street purposes.

Boundary Justification

The current boundaries encompass all of the land directly associated with the store building during the period of significance.

Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Heer's Department Store
138 Park Central Square, Springfield
Greene County, Missouri
Debbie Sheals
May, 2002

List of Photographs

See photo key for camera angles.

1. View from the square, looking northwest.
2. East elevation.
3. South elevation.
4. North elevation.
5. Northwest corner.
6. Alley, west elevation.
7. Detail of cornice and tower sign, looking west from the square.
8. Escalators, from the east entrance.
9. Ground floor sales room, looking north.
10. Fourth floor dining room paneling.
11. Windows, third floor, southeast corner of the building.
12. Third floor interior, posts and beams.

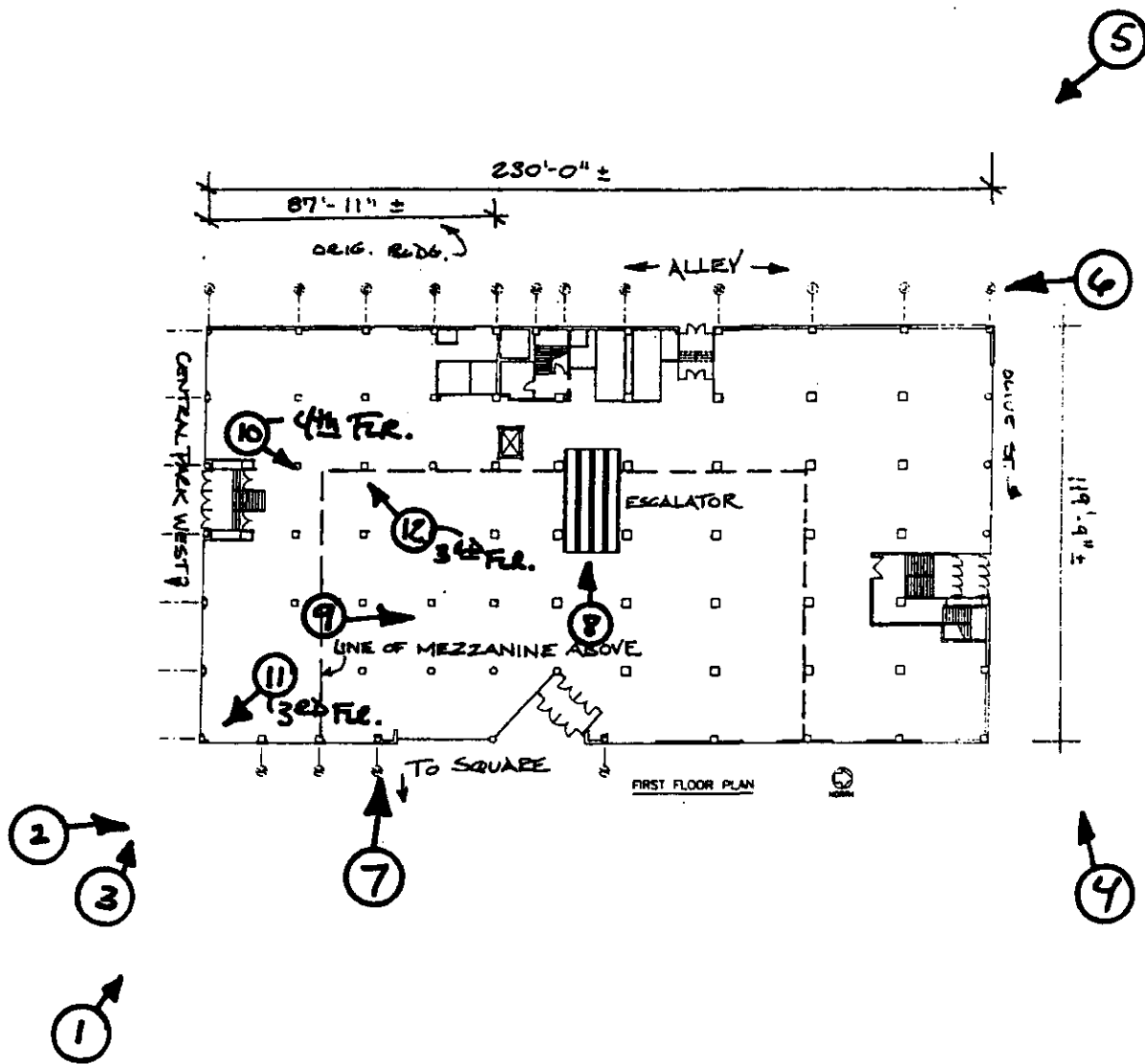
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Photo Key.



SPRINGFIELD QUADRANGLE

MISSOURI-GREENE CO.

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

32 MI. TO MO. 32 FAIR GROVE 13 MI (65) 477 LEBANON 49 MI. 93°15' STRAFFORD 9 MI. 37°15'

7388 / SW (BASSVILLE)

474 17'30" 270 000 FEET

475

R. 22 W. R. 21 W. 476

477

37°15'



3.9 MI. TO INTERSTATE 44 LEBANON 49 MI.

4121

510 000 FEET

4120

4119

4118

12'30"

4117

NEER'S DEPARTMENT STORE
SPRINGFIELD GREENE CO MO
15/474020/
411791

SPRINGFIELD

SOUTHWEST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY



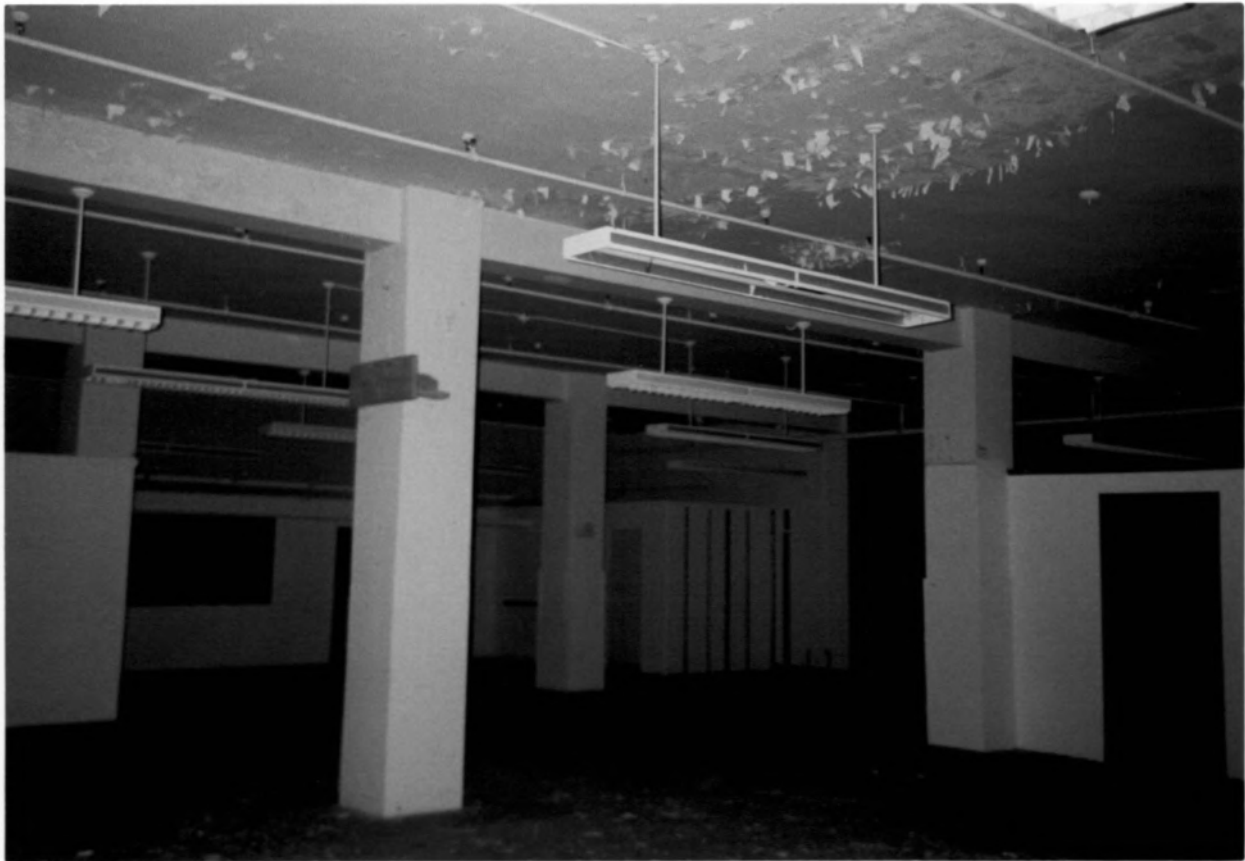
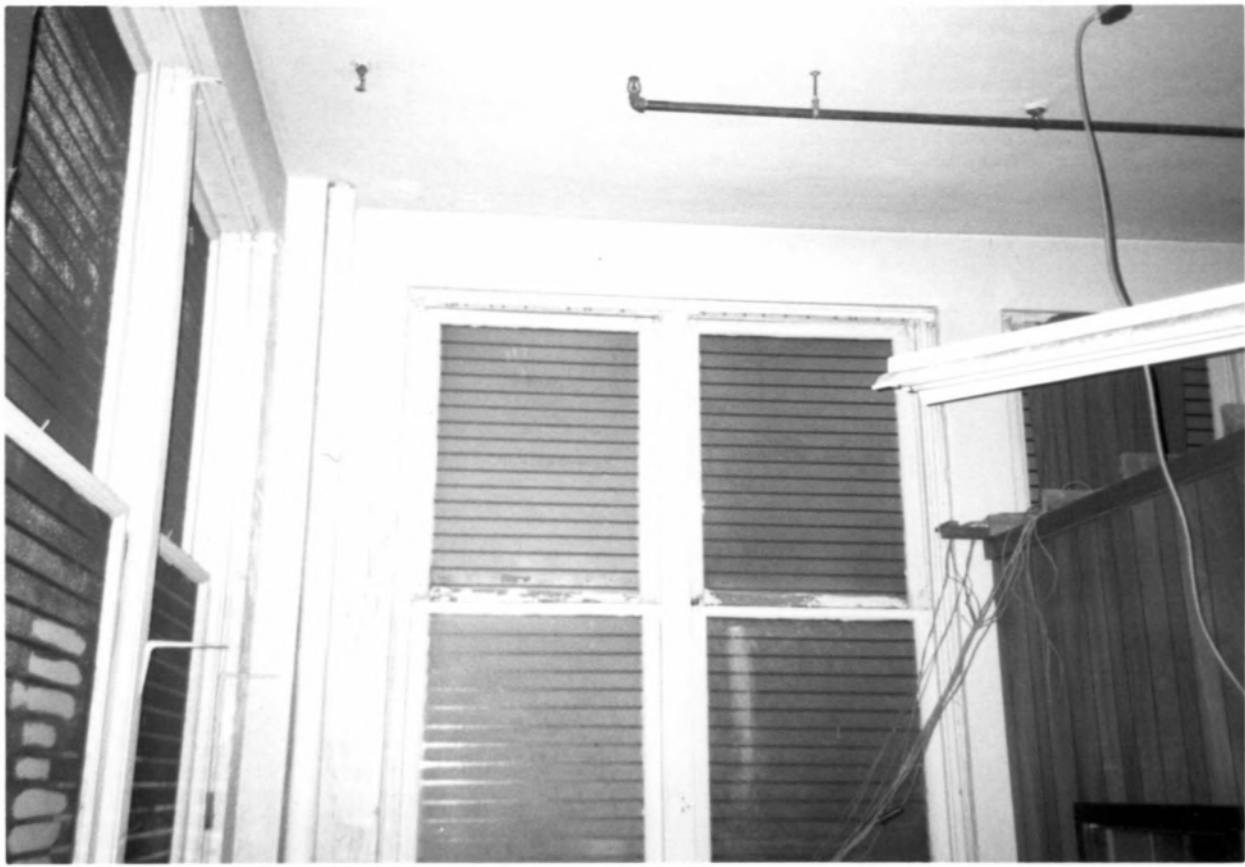












EXTRA
PHOTOS



